

HARNESSING IT

INTERVIEWS

Scott Pawley

MANAGING DIRECTOR



Taylor Made
COMPUTER SOLUTIONS

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In a series of interviews with Taylor Made Computer Solutions, directors reveal what they perceive to be the issues if IT is to deliver key objectives.

The interviews will be brought together as a report to be published by DECISION magazine and then as a digital book.

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DESPITE ITS RELIANCE on IT, managing director Scott Pawley likes to describe Global Travel Management as a human-to-human company.”

Right from the start, a twenty-four-hour helpline was put in place, which Pawley reminisces was once just him and his wife and co-founder, Natalie, before the business got to its current £20 million turnover. “In the old days it used to be just us with our mobile phones beside the bed. And when you get a call at two thirty in the morning you know it’s not going to be someone ringing to let you know they’re having a great time!”

Pawley says there have been vast changes in travel industry IT, most of them in the past few years and largely forced on travel agents and management companies. “We are totally beholden to the airlines. If we don’t embrace their IT, we can’t get their inventory,” he says.

Meanwhile, the airlines want to cut out the travel distributor which companies like Global Travel Management (GTM) buy their tickets from, and go direct to a GTM. That might sound a good thing, but Pawley points out that – aside from the fact the airlines could equally well go direct to the consumer – the change will mean the current IT set-up probably won’t work. “Our IT works with what the distributor has got but every airline will have its own system for booking. We need to find ways to deal with that. We are a beta tester for one of the airlines so we will tell them if it doesn’t work properly. But there are bound to be cost implications and we have to make a judgment as to whether that can be passed on to our customers.”

Referring to the role in the supply chain of the distributor, known as the GDS, Pawley says the time it takes to source the best fare by going through the GDS or other third parties inspired him to develop an online booking tool called Farefinder, which checks all the available fares on Expedia and other well-known sites, and comes back with the lowest price in forty-five seconds – far quicker than the 30 minutes it can take to go via existing methods.

Pawley is chair of the technical panel at a travel consortium called Advantage Focus Group; the tool has since been adopted by their members and has collectively saved them £36million. But he modestly says he knows “nothing” about IT. “But I know what I want and I know third parties who can provide it.”

The more complex the client’s travel plans, the more the reliance on IT having to deliver. “There are so many sources for getting an airline fare,” explains Pawley, “and half of the people who phone us asking for a price for London to New York and back again will have already checked the internet and will know what the lowest price is - or they will check the Internet after they speak to us. But what people don’t appreciate is that if you have more than two legs to your journey, for example Paris to London to Beijing to New York, most online booking tool systems don’t have the logic to break it down into legs to find the best price. It will either say ‘I can’t give you a fare because this is too

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complicated', or it will give you the highest available fare because it doesn't know how to break the journey down to find less expensive fares. That is why it can be easier just to phone and speak to the travel agent or management company."

IT also gives GTM valuable information which the company couldn't have assembled before, Pawley says. "We can look at how many bookings a client has made and is generating in terms of profit for us. And we can easily measure which are our top airlines and routes, which enables us to ask or discounts on multiple bookings to the same destination."

But IT has its issues of course. Pawley comments: "We have become so reliant on IT that when it doesn't work a business can be in real trouble. It could be something quite simple, but you have to drill down to find the root of the problem. Everyone assumes IT save you money but does it? Over a long time, perhaps. For example an online booking tool licence can cost us £10,000."

The company's web presence aims for something that strikes the balance between no-frills and highly sophisticated. "The more complex you make it for the client, the less people want to use it," Pawley observes. "They don't want to go through sixteen stages to get to the booking stage."

Until quite recently, GTM didn't do much social media but they are doing an increasing amount, via an external agency, mainly to provide information about destinations to the younger, social media-savvy generation of customers. "We want them to think 'GTM have the knowledge, we'll will go to those guys'," says Pawley.

They are also looking into doing more with YouTube, believing that there is increasing interest among the public in watching videos online. Pawley tested the theory by making a video for a non-work-related organisation he's involved with, and found that it got three times the number of hits that a photo of the same event did.

Being cloud based will in turn help with flexible working, he believes. He makes reference to what GTM refer to as their 'snow plan'. During a particularly bad winter a couple of years ago only a couple of staff made it to the office. But everyone else was able to work remotely."

That flexibility is particularly attractive given that almost all the staff are women. "If there's some reason you can't get to work you can remote in. Family comes first, and work-life balance is the most important consideration," explains Pawley. "IT means it can be achieved but not at the expense of the company or its customers."

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I N T E R V I E W S



Established in 1994, Taylor Made Computer Solutions are one of the largest and most highly-ranked IT service and support organisations in the south, currently employing over 110 staff.

Taylor Made are the first technology company in the region to have gained a third consecutive gold award from Investors in People. Taylor Made are also ISO 9001:2008 certified.

The company has been ranked in the top 10 managed service providers in Europe the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) in a leading annual industry survey from MSPmentor since 2012.

Taylor Made are a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, HP Preferred Partner and a NetApp Silver Partner.

Services include:

IT support, IT strategy, IT consultancy, hosted telephony, project management, Securo online back-up, hosted solutions, remote management and monitoring, cloud solutions, disaster recovery, remote access, outsource engineering, security, service desk support.

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