

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **OTA & Travel Distribution Update - Wyndham Joins the Loyalty Discount Program Bandwagon; Expedia Adds Event Tickets to Offering; Expedia Cuts Jobs in the Northwest**

By Greg Duff on 2.23.18 | Posted in OTA Update

Our weekly OTA & Travel Distribution Update for the week ending February 16, 2018 is below. Loyalty and direct booking make an appearance again in this week's Update after an extended absence.

### **[Better Late Than Never: Wyndham Joins the Loyalty Discount Program Bandwagon \[LOYALTY/DIRECT BOOKING\]](#)**

*("Wyndham begins offering loyalty discounts", TopHotel News, February 15, 2018)*

Wyndham finally announced plans this past week to offer discounted rates to members of its loyalty program, Wyndham Rewards. According to Wyndham, the planned discount of 10% will be one of the largest among Wyndham's competitors. According to Geoff Ballotti, CEO of Wyndham, the delay in rolling out the discount program was attributable to many factors, including challenges with Wyndham's technology platform, website and OTA contracts. Time will tell whether the planned discounts ultimately drive the direct booking volume necessary to outweigh their costs.

### **[Expedia Adds Event Tickets to Offering \[OTA\]](#)**

*("Expedia selling event tickets, Travel Weekly, February 14, 2018)*

Expedia announced last week a partnership with ticket reseller TicketNetwork through which the online travel platform will now offer tickets for sporting events, concerts and theater.

### **[Expedia Job Cuts in the Northwest \[OTA\]](#)**

*("Travel giant Expedia cuts jobs in tech infrastructure and operations teams," GeekWire, February 12, 2018)*

As many of you know, our local daily NW technology newsletter, Geekwire, often provides valuable insight into the workings of several local travel companies, particularly Expedia and Amazon (yes, I still consider Amazon a travel company). Geekwire featured a story this past week on the recent layoffs at Expedia, which many (wrongly) attributed to Expedia's recent

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poor quarterly report. According to Geekwire, the approximate 30 layoffs occurred within Expedia's HQ technology infrastructure and operations team (approximately 7.5% of the team's 400 employees) and most of those laid off will be given new positions elsewhere in the company.

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Other news:

### **Google now allows hotel bookings through search results**

*Hotel Management, February 15, 2018*

Google is trying to make it easier for consumers to use their smartphones to directly book travel from a Google search. The tech giant announced that hotel and flight reservations now can be scheduled directly from a search result on mobile—without the user ever having to leave their results list.

### **What Winding Tree's ICO And Its Blockchain-Based Technology Mean To The Travel Industry**

*Forbes Business, February 12, 2018*

The Internet was supposed to disrupt the middlemen. Yes, it created some peer-to-peer technology and services. However, middlemen are doing better than ever. Uber and Airbnb, with their lack of hard assets, are quintessential middlemen. In the travel world, Expedia, Priceline, Kayak, and Booking.com are also middlemen par excellence.