

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **OTA & Travel Distribution Update - Airbnb continues its evolution into a traditional lodging company and/or distributor; Priceline Group, Inc. announces name change to Booking Holdings**

By Greg Duff on 3.2.18 | Posted in OTA Update

This week's OTA & Distribution Update for the week ending February 23, 2018 is below. Other than Airbnb's much publicized rollout of its 53 new product lines (an exaggeration, but not by much), last week was a relatively slow week in the world of distribution. Enjoy.

### **[Airbnb Continues Its Evolution \[SHORT-TERM RENTALS / OTA / LOYALTY\]](#)**

*("Airbnb adds loyalty program, site inspections as new rules restrict core business," USA Today - Technology News, February 22, 2018)*

Anyone who follows the travel and lodging industries was inundated last Thursday with widespread reports of Airbnb's many announcements at its recent host meeting. For those of you who didn't bother to dig into the details, suffice it to say that Airbnb is steadily continuing its evolution into a traditional lodging company and/or distributor. Highlights of CEO Brian Chesky's many announcements are below.

- Introduction of four new property categories – existing listings will be divided into vacation homes, unique spaces, bed and breakfast and boutiques (which should work well with its recently announced partnership with Siteminder);
- Introduction of two new service tiers - Airbnb Plus (subject to prior Airbnb inspection) and Beyond by Airbnb (luxury homes);
- Introduction of new special "Collections" listings - Airbnb for Family and Airbnb for Work, initially, and new collections to come for social, weddings, honeymoons, group and dinner parties; and
- Introduction of a new (and entirely undefined) membership loyalty program.

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Not surprisingly, Airbnb's announcement garnered the attention of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), which identified both Airbnb Plus and the new boutique product type as further evidence of Airbnb's traditional lodging company DNA. If it walks and talks like a duck...

**Say Goodbye to William Shatner [OTA]**

*("Priceline Changes Its Name to Booking, Reflecting Key Revenue Source - Bloomberg," Bloomberg news, February 21, 2018)*

Priceline Group, Inc. (parent company to Priceline, Booking.com and Kayak, among others) announced plans last week to change its name to Booking Holdings in recognition of its powerhouse booking engine, Booking.com.

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Other news:

**Travel scam or 'the way things work'?**

*USA Today - Travel News, February 18, 2018*

A recent study found that 55 million bookings a year are made on websites posing as either online travel agencies or emulating hotel websites.