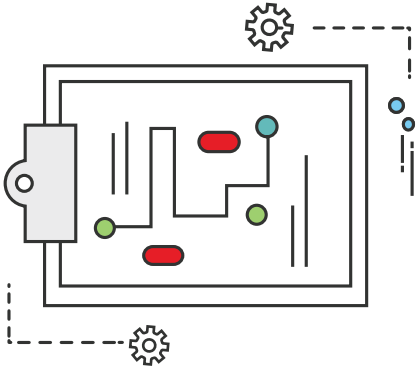# 7 STEPS TO CREATING YOUR ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCY

How to build the foundation for your online success

For today's travelers, the best experience can mean a friendly, helpful travel agent across the desk plus an always-on website. If you have the "physical" part down but are less sure about the "virtual", here are 7 steps to help you build a successful online presence.

1

Create a marketing strategy that includes:

- Online value proposition and differentiation
- Vision, objectives and KPIs
- Customer targeting, engagement and loyalty plans

2

Determine the right technology mix.

- Decide your best 'tech stack' that includes digital tools you'll need to get started.
- Plan for future technology growth.
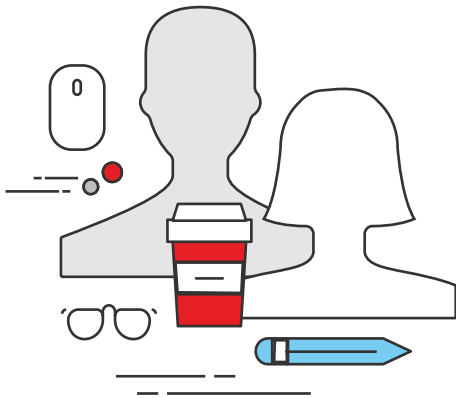- Determine how flexible your solution should be.
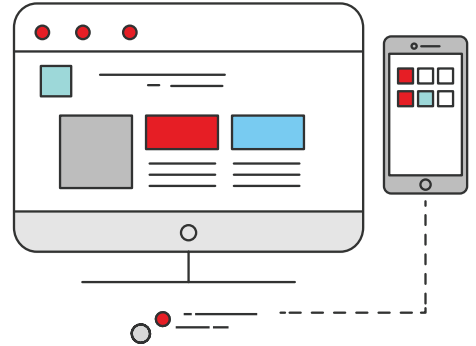
3

Define the kind of employees you need.

You'll need to recruit beyond the traditional sales and back-office functions, including:

- In-house development talent
- Data and analytics teams
- Social media experts and content strategists
- E-commerce specialists
- Senior team

4

Outline your tech requirements.

Gone are the days of buying software packages and servers. Now, technology is "on demand", stored via cloud computing, faster, cheaper and less complicated. Plus, you can have access to:

- Data analytics
- Customer relationship management (CRM) tools
- Audience modelling
- Digital ad serving

5

Run through a tech supplier checklist.

The best travel technology partner gets you started today yet helps guides you to tomorrow. To find that perfect partner, ask these questions:

- Do they have 24/7 access to knowledgeable staff for product support?
- Do they know what's happening with global customer travel patterns so that you can make the best recommendations to your customers?
- Do they know the travel business inside and out and beyond agencies?
- Is there a track record of innovations?
- Will it be a flexible partnership so that it works for your particular business?

6

Recognize possible pitfalls.

- Overly long tech evaluation: it's better to launch then tweak than be to slow to market.
- The "if you build it, they will come" trap: you need a digital marketing strategy, budget and knowledge of customers' shopping preferences.
- Too many distractions: the sheer amount of online tools and services can paralyze you. Instead, focus on those things that will drive traffic and boost sales.
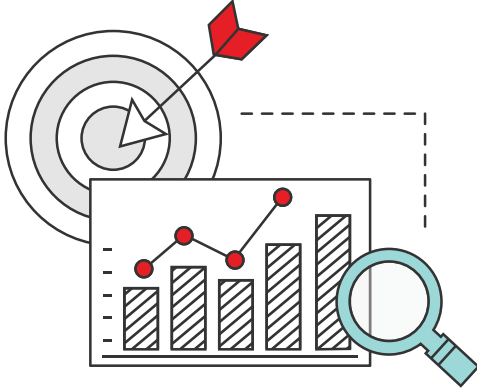
7

Create a great user experience

- Make things as convenient as possible for customers
- Optimize your website for all devices (computer, tablet, mobile).
- Seamless authentication across devices.
- User-friendly and secure payment function.
- Prominent branding, along with your brand promise through the experience, online and off.