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SPECIALISTS IN THE ART OF TRAVEL

## **BUILDING TRUST, GLOBALIZATION AND 'GETTING NAKED' IN LAS VEGAS: 26TH ANNUAL VIRTUOSO TRAVEL WEEK PULLS IN RECORD ATTENDANCE**

LAS VEGAS, Aug. 11, 2014 -- International luxury travel network, Virtuoso®, kicked off its 26th annual Virtuoso Travel Week event before a record number of attendees – 4,420 people from 92 countries. Taking place this week at Bellagio Resort & Casino, the network is embodying the event's theme of "enriching lives through human connection" by bringing together the travel industry's most prominent players. Virtuoso Travel Week is a buying extravaganza like none other, allowing travel advisors to serve as personal shoppers for their upscale clients and ultimately shaping the way travelers will see the world in the year ahead. Sales efforts resulting from the event lead to a staggering figure of \$450 million.

Known for its hallmark characteristic of one-to-one appointments – almost 354,000 of them in four days – the event fosters relationships between the network's travel advisors and world-renowned travel companies by ensuring every Virtuoso-affiliated agency has an opportunity to meet with every travel partner. Each element of the event is intended to lead to more customized travel experiences for consumers who choose to travel under the guidance of a Virtuoso-affiliated travel advisor.

The event officially began with the Opening Session, hosted by Virtuoso Chairman and CEO, Matthew D. Upchurch, CTC. Speaking on the importance of attracting the right travelers and creating preference, Upchurch noted that by pooling the brands of its affiliated travel agencies and travel providers, Virtuoso and its partners have collectively built the world's first and only global travel advisory brand. Standing for a set of ideals with trust at its core, Upchurch further explained that building a brand is about creating an idea that captures the imagination of consumers and provides structure in order to enable a connection of mutual value.

Driving the need for brand preference is the massive rise in globalization and affluence in the world. With UNWTO reporting that 2012 was the first year where 1 billion tourists crossed international borders, and an estimated five-to-six billion tourists traveled within their own countries, the growth in travel and tourism is the envy of many other industries. Combined with a Capgemini/RBC Wealth Management report showing a global pool of 13.7 million global millionaires, travel advisors and the services they provide their clients are in more demand than ever.

Upchurch explained the prioritization of life experiences, especially travel, has become top of mind for a rising pool of global affluent individuals, the Boomer generation, and for the Millennials for whom travel has been embedded in their DNA from birth and who now spend more per diem than any other generation. He noted that Virtuoso's travel advisors are serving two types of core clients: travelers who benefit from an advisor's specialized knowledge of specific travel destinations or products, and those who benefit from a specialist in the traveler.

"In either case, there is a relationship with trust, value and collaboration as the basis, not simply a transactional means of booking travel," says Upchurch. "With so many ways of researching and booking travel today, and lots of new ways coming, our real value lies in the totality of the relationship between the advisor and the client throughout the travel lifecycle. If working with a travel advisor is seen as just another way of booking travel, we've probably lost before getting started."

Diving further into the issue of trust, particularly as it pertains to the client's relationship with a travel advisor, Upchurch referenced keynote speaker Patrick Lencioni's groundbreaking book "Getting Naked." He went on to say that "Naked Service" boils down to the ability of a service provider to be vulnerable – to embrace uncommon

levels of humility, selflessness, and transparency for the good of the client. It's at the heart of any business or profession that involves ongoing client relationships.

Lencioci provided insight on how people are craving authentic professional collaborators who make their lives more enjoyable, less complex and give them the gift of time. He also delved into the challenges of being transparent and vulnerable with clients, as well as overcoming the issues that sabotage long-term client loyalty. He noted that loyal clients are distinctly different from repeat customers, and that loyalty lives in Trusted Advising.

Upchurch brought the conversation back to the event's theme, which also serves as his company's core purpose: Enriching lives through human connection. Virtuoso Travel Week, running August 9-15, 2014, will provide the opportunity and foundation to do just that. Let the travels begin.

About Virtuoso: Virtuoso® is the industry's leading luxury travel network. This by-invitation-only organization comprises over 340 agencies with more than 8,900 elite travel specialists in 20 countries in North and South America, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand, as well as over 1,700 of the world's best travel providers and premier destinations. The network's member agencies generate over \$12.5 billion annually in travel sales, making the group the most powerful in the luxury travel segment. Their relationships with the finest travel companies provide the network's affluent clientele with exclusive amenities, rare experiences and privileged access. For more information, visit [www.virtuoso.com](http://www.virtuoso.com). To view Virtuoso's latest videos, go to [www.youtube.com/user/VirtuosoTraveler](http://www.youtube.com/user/VirtuosoTraveler).

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