



## VIRTUOSO® INCUBATOR SEEKS EMERGING TRAVEL TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES TO JOIN 2017 PROGRAM

### Now in its Third Year, Virtuoso Incubator is Responsible for Cultivating Some of Travel Advising's Biggest Innovations

**NEW YORK (October 5, 2016)** – [Virtuoso®](#), the international network of luxury travel agencies, is inviting innovative travel technology startup companies to apply for its 2017 Incubator program. Heading into its third year, [Virtuoso Incubator](#) mentors travel tech startups that are developing tools to enhance advisor productivity and client service. Recognizing a void in this space, Virtuoso launched the industry's first formal program to foster these technologies. Incubator's goal is to nurture promising tools to enrich service levels and provide efficiencies, ultimately helping Virtuoso's travel agency members preserve their competitive edge.

Virtuoso Incubator enables travel technology developers to gain real-world insight into what travel advisors and agencies need, allowing participants to iterate and refine their products to increase functionality and better fulfill market demand. As part of the record-breaking program this year, 276 Virtuoso travel advisors in six countries tested Incubator solutions and provided feedback on how they currently use the technology and what they would like to see from future versions. Once the testing phase is complete, Incubator participants are considered for full Virtuoso partnership.

“Virtuoso Incubator is at the forefront of improving the experience clients have with their travel advisor,” said David Kolner, senior vice president, Global Member Partnerships at Virtuoso. “Through the program, Virtuoso travel advisors are innovating by adopting cutting-edge technology, demonstrating their flexibility and staying ahead of the curve. With the solutions curated and cultivated by Incubator, our advisors are bridging the gap between a traditional consultant and a technology-enabled advisor.”

Of the 2016 Incubator participants, two have graduated successfully from the program:

- **Tandem Cruise Booking Engine:** A B2B tool that finds, compares, quotes, and books cruises from a single web-based system. A version of the tool customized for Virtuoso is now in use.
- **Engage:** An integrated chat and video communication tool that helps advisors sell immediately online on any device, and makes clients accessible to advisors any time with a single click. Engage has been accepted as a preferred partner. Virtuoso is using Engage's solution to offer a live-chat feature 24/7 to visitors on [www.virtuoso.com](http://www.virtuoso.com) who want to connect with an advisor. Initial testing resulted in a 20-50 percent conversion rate and initial sales up to \$80,000.

“Virtuoso not only shares our vision to empower consumers and travel advisors with real-time communication capabilities, but has also been willing to put in the time and work necessary to validate and expand this program,” said Engage CEO Lief Larson. “I can't fully articulate how valuable this partnership is to us and how highly we think of everyone in the Virtuoso organization.”

Six companies remain active in the Incubator program:

- **Addo:** A content marketing and communication management system designed to find, select and personalize content from travel suppliers.
- **Alanna:** A database management system that helps automate agency and advisor communication and marketing. The multilingual platform also increases client knowledge to improve sales and trip personalization.
- **ITeXplorer:** A productivity tool that creates complex itineraries and allows easy changes to bookings within itineraries in real time. It provides custom, global, and multi-destination itineraries in mere minutes. Already a network preferred tour operator, ITeXplorer has custom-built this platform for Virtuoso.
- **Travefy:** A collaboration platform for group travel, including money collection and custom itineraries. Advisors invite travelers to a shared platform for discussions, polling and managing itineraries.
- **Tripchamp:** A booking tool that allows advisors to see fares from their GDS as well as other sources not available on the GDS, and access the marketplace on a zero markup basis to re-purpose and sell to clients.
- **Yonderbound:** The world's first travel knowledge monetization platform, where verified professional users create stories featuring hotels and experiences for anyone to book, marketing advisor trips and contact information.

Virtuoso Incubator has announced a new partnership with Phocuswright Innovation Platform to locate startups with potential and leverage research in travel technology. This partnership will enhance Virtuoso's innovation as well as its ability to navigate the world of startups, furthering its aim of enticing emerging technology companies to the travel space.

Virtuoso Incubator is now accepting applications for the 2017 program, with a focus on companies that want to improve tools for enhancing agency productivity and client servicing. Companies can submit an expression of interest form [here](#). The deadline for applications is November 30, 2016, and decisions will be made by January 2017. For additional information, please visit [www.virtuoso.com/incubator](http://www.virtuoso.com/incubator).

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#### **About Virtuoso**

**Virtuoso®** is the leading international travel agency network specializing in luxury and experiential travel. This by-invitation-only organization comprises over 390 agency members with more than 11,400 elite travel advisors in 41 countries throughout North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. Drawing upon its preferred relationships with 1,700 of the world's best hotels and resorts, cruise lines, airlines, tour companies and premier destinations, the network provides its upscale clientele with exclusive amenities, rare experiences and privileged access. More than (U.S.) \$15.5 billion in annual travel sales makes Virtuoso a powerhouse in the luxury travel industry. For more information, visit [www.virtuoso.com](http://www.virtuoso.com).

#### **Media Contacts:**

Misty Ewing Belles, CTA  
Managing Director, Global Public Relations  
Virtuoso  
202.553.8817  
[mewing@virtuoso.com](mailto:mewing@virtuoso.com)

Lauren Wintemberg  
Account Director  
Alice Marshall Public Relations  
212.861.4031  
[lauren@alicemarshall.com](mailto:lauren@alicemarshall.com)