



**2014 [VIRTUOSO®](#) SYMPOSIUM LEADS WITH A
STRONG MESSAGE TO THE TRAVEL COMMUNITY:
DATA + HUMAN CONNECTION = OPPORTUNITY**

BERLIN (April 30, 2014) – Leading international luxury travel network, **Virtuoso®**, kicked off its annual Symposium in Berlin this past weekend, bringing together more than 500 of the industry’s most prominent travel agency owners and managers as well as top-level executives from the group’s preferred travel partners. Attendees from 38 countries congregated in Berlin to network, discuss key issues impacting travel today, and to take in the sights of the dynamic city playing host to them.

The event’s general session conveyed a central message of optimism for the travel advisor community: luxury travel is not a transactional business; it needs human interaction to make it truly successful. Virtuoso Chairman and CEO, Matthew D. Upchurch, went on to cite examples of how in today’s data-driven world, the role of the travel advisor is to “automate the predictable so that you can humanize the exceptional.”

“While there is no doubt that big data is instrumental in targeting consumers, at Virtuoso we have what McKinsey & Company calls ‘unstructured data’ – in our case, conversations – to provide context and meaning to the numbers,” says Upchurch. “It allows us to utilize the data to attract and retain clients by zeroing in on what it is they really want.”

He continued, “Today’s consumer is looking for honesty and transparency when seeking knowledge and ultimately they crave human connection, which bodes well for our travel advisors who have spent their careers becoming experts not only in certain destinations or types of travel, but also experts in their clients wants and needs.”

Upchurch went on to speak about Virtuoso’s data-driven initiatives that are associated with its newly re-launched web site, Virtuoso.com: lead generation for its advisors and consumer-generated reviews and recommendations of Virtuoso advisors and travel partners that are completely verifiable, both possible due to the network’s steady data stream. He explained that combining the data with client insights gleaned from its member agencies will propel the network to greater success by optimizing its product portfolio, segmenting advisors to maximize sales, creating benchmarking for advisors and preferred partners alike, and ultimately raising the return on investment for the group’s participants.

Virtuoso’s Symposium also allowed time for networking and exploration outside of the two general sessions. Events included a reception at the German Historical Museum, a lunchtime cruise along the River Spree, festive dinners at Virtuoso preferred hotels Rocco Forte Hotel de Rome and Hotel Adlon Kempinski, a wide range of intimate tours showcasing the city and the 25th anniversary of the Berlin Wall’s fall, and a gala reception at the historical Tempelhof Airport. Additional top-tier sponsors of the event included Visit Berlin, Lufthansa German Airlines and The Ritz-Carlton Berlin.

Virtuoso counts 340 agencies with more than 620 locations throughout North and South America, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand amongst its membership. All told, that represents more than 8,900 travel advisors and upwards of \$12.5 billion in annual sales. Virtuoso is the leader in the luxury sector, and has exacting standards for both travel agency and preferred supplier partners.

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About Virtuoso:

Virtuoso® is the leading network of luxury travel advisors and entities. This by-invitation-only organization comprises 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. To view Virtuoso's latest videos, go to <http://www.youtube.com/user/VirtuosoTraveler>.

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