

Getting to Know TRAVELSAVERS and NEST

written by [Taylor Harker](#) | Posted on August 8th, 2012

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Seven of American Marketing Group's leading executives met at the recent Travel Market Conference. From left to right: Rick Mazza, president and CEO of American Marketing Group; Tom Hayden, senior v.p. of luxury sales, The Affluent Traveler Collection; Kathryn Mazza-Burney, executive v.p. of sales and service for TRAVELSAVERS and president of NEST; Nicole Mazza, CMO, TRAVELSAVERS and NEST; Anne Marie Moebes, executive v.p. of Acclaim Meetings and Well-Being Travel; Jack Maraffi, editor, The Affluent Traveler (The Affluent Traveler Collection's semi-annual luxury lifestyle magazine); Spencer Gaines, chairman.

After **American Marketing Group's** recent annual *Travel Market 2012*, we thought it would be a great time to get reacquainted with two of its flagship brands, **TRAVELSAVERS** and **NEST**, as they continue to grow. We caught up with Kathryn Mazza-Burney, executive v.p. of sales and service for TRAVELSAVERS and president of NEST, and Nicole Mazza, CMO of both brands.

Taylor Harker: For those who don't know, what exactly do TRAVELSAVERS and NEST do as a company, and for its associated agents and agencies, and how do they differ?

Nicole Mazza: TRAVELSAVERS is a global travel marketing organization made up of more than 3,200 independent agencies in 25 countries. We provide our agencies with very targeted marketing and sales support to help increase their profitability. TRAVELSAVERS is dedicated to brick-and-mortar agencies.

NEST (Network of Entrepreneurs Selling Travel) is a brand for home-based agencies. NEST offers the same products and services, but in a way that is catered specifically with the home-based agent in mind. NEST is the only group of its kind in the industry.

TRAVELSAVERS and NEST are two of 19 brands owned by **American Marketing Group**. What sets us apart is the range of products and services offered under the American Marketing Group umbrella—we are a one-stop-shop for travel professionals because we cover all aspects of the travel industry.

TH: Okay, so with that in mind, what does TRAVELSAVERS' expansion into Quebec mean for agents there?

Kathryn Mazza-Burney: It marks the completion of a national presence which is very exciting. Our Canadian agencies have tremendous pride in their TRAVELSAVERS affiliation. With 275 agencies in Canada, it's important to us that we do everything we can to customize our tools, products and services specifically for that market. That's why we waited to complete our expansion into Quebec despite the requests we'd been receiving. We refused to make our move until we had all the pieces perfectly aligned. That included translating our materials, hiring the right team and testing the products and services that will best help those agencies boost their bottom line.

TH: How many countries does the TRAVELSAVERS brand extend into?

KMB: TRAVELSAVERS works with travel professionals in 25 countries. We're constantly tapping into the world's hottest source markets—for example, we now have a presence throughout Asia and Latin America.

The beauty of our programs is that they can be tailored to suit international markets. We realize that what works in the U.S. won't necessarily work elsewhere, so we're always making sure that everything we do reflects individual needs and respects the culture of each market we have a presence in.

TH: What tools do these two brands provide their agents to help them drive business and be more successful?

NM: We offer comprehensive marketing programs designed to suit the personal preferences of all of our agencies. Some of our agencies prefer a more traditional, direct mail marketing campaign while others embrace—or want to embrace—social media as a means of client communication. We offer solutions for both strategies.

For example, later this year we'll be rolling out a new social media program that is fully customizable and designed to target all of the most popular social networks through a user-friendly platform our in-house team designed. We also just launched an e-marketing program at our global conference, *Travel Market 2012*, this past June. The program produces professionally designed and customized e-mails that are created on the agent's behalf and feature exclusive special offers. Travel professionals choose which offers to take advantage of, and then we take care of the rest.

We also launched a new complimentary loyalty program for TRAVELSAVERS and NEST clients in the U.S. this year called *Travel Club*. The program is a great win-win for both the agent and his or her client because it's designed to drive traffic directly to travel professionals through a customized URL while also encouraging consumers to travel with an even greater variety of exclusive offers, special perks and a dedicated e-newsletter.

More traditional marketing tactics are never forgotten though. We offer a number of themed, multi-supplier direct mail pieces to our travel professionals. Themes vary each year based on agent feedback and travel trends—this year for example, we focused on romance; family; luxury; epicurean; mind, body and soul, and cultural niches. These complement individual supplier pieces and our quarterly lifestyle magazine, "JOURNEYS." For our luxury brand, **The Affluent Traveler Collection**, we issue a semi-annual publication called "The Affluent Traveler." Everything is fully customizable and sent on the agent's behalf.

Continuing education is another important focus for us. *Travel Market 2012* placed an emphasis on educational workshops and networking, but we also put together some fun evening events. Agents had dozens of workshops to choose from, ranging from technology and sales to marketing, niche travel and corporate that was led by some terrific industry leaders and motivational speakers. The ever-popular Nolan Burris led a workshop on how travel and technology go hand-in-hand, while the publisher of "Bridal Guide" talked about romance travel. **Travel Channel's** Samantha Brown headlined the show and was phenomenal. We're all very happy with the feedback the agents shared upon their return home.

Travel Market 2012 was preceded by the first-ever *Well-Being and Medical Travel Conference*, which was open to the industry and also well-attended. Medical and wellness tourism is a multi-billion dollar niche that is well worth tapping into. The conference was designed to provide a comprehensive education on this niche, but we take it one step further for our agents with our medical travel resource, **Well-Being Travel**. The luxury travel advisors of our Affluent Traveler Collection brand also had the opportunity to participate in a more intimate symposium.

To complement our conference, we organize *Lunch 'N Learns*, regional bootcamps and webinars. But the greatest resource are our business development managers (BDMs.) BDMs serve as a personal, day-to-day TRAVELSAVERS or NEST contact who is on hand to provide one-on-one sales and marketing support to assist our travel professionals in growing their business with preferred suppliers.

TH: What kinds of itineraries can agents build with their TRAVELSAVERS and NEST connections? Can they create a full itinerary for any destination, including air, hotel, and excursions?

KMB: Our TRAVELSAVERS and NEST travel professionals have a reputation for delivering even the loftiest of travel dreams. If there's a mode of transportation to get there and a place to stay, our travel professionals can bring any itinerary to life. They have access to a wide array of exclusive offers from our preferred suppliers ranging from tour operators and cruise lines to airlines and trains that offer terrific value-adds, perks and benefits. The experiences our agencies have the ability to create are truly remarkable. For example, travelers can learn to drive a Ferrari racecar with a 360 track experience on some of the greatest racing tracks in the U.S. or dine with a production executive from the hit Broadway show *Spider-Man Turn Off The Dark*, watch the show from the VIP section and meet some of its cast members for a private question and answer session.

TH: What perks or benefits do agents have access to for being affiliated with these brands?

NM: The goal in everything we do is to provide our agencies with all of the tools they need for success, and that means dynamic marketing programs, personal one-on-one sales assistance, comprehensive training sessions, a global conference, after hours service, medical travel resource, air fulfillment solutions and proprietary B2B and B2C cruise booking engines. We also offer a complete corporate travel program, inclusive of a behind-the-scenes corporate resource and fulfillment center to help agencies generate new corporate business, meeting planning resources, international networking assistance and more. Later this year we'll be rolling out a B2B hotel booking engine as well. We are truly a one-stop-shop for independent agencies.

Our BDMs are a terrific resource for agents and really, truly one of the best benefits that comes with TRAVELSAVERS or NEST affiliation. No matter what the size of an agency is or which American Marketing Group brand they are a part of, our travel professionals will always have a BDM in their corner to help address every possible need. That could be anything from helping agents take advantage of the educational opportunities that best suit their individual needs to assisting with the creation of a comprehensive marketing program or helping to develop a successful sales strategy—our BDMs are on hand to serve as an extension of each agency's sales and marketing team.

TH: What about clients? What perks do travelers receive for booking through a TRAVELSAVERS or NEST travel professional?

NM: Clients of TRAVELSAVERS and NEST agencies have access to exclusive perks, benefits and special offers that are otherwise unavailable such as upgrades, shipboard credits, bonus savings, VIP amenities, complimentary meals and more.

Our new *Travel Club* is a complimentary customer loyalty program for clients of TRAVELSAVERS and NEST travel professionals. The benefit of *Travel Club* is that it's a win-win for agents and clients alike because its model seamlessly drives traffic directly to our travel professionals through a

customized URL while also providing potential travelers with an even greater variety of exclusive offers and special perks to entice a new booking. Offers vary by supplier but can include discounts, VIP amenities, upgrades, spa treatments and more. We compile a quarterly *Travel Club* e-newsletter called “Travel Edge” that agents can send to their clients that promote special offers and provide helpful travel advice.

Consumers are also receiving peace of mind that a trusted advisor is in their corner when they work with a TRAVELSAVERS or NEST travel professional. Our advisors are travel experts who can provide advice and knowledge on any destination. In the event that something should go wrong while traveling, our travel professionals are on-hand to find a solution for their clients. Many of them take advantage of our after hours services, *Travel Helpline* and *agent24*, as well. The services provide assistance to clients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week so agents know that travelers are in good hands in the event they are unavailable.

TH: So how does an independent agent or agency become affiliated with TRAVELSAVERS or NEST?

KMB: We have a strict quality control system in place to ensure that our travel professionals are truly amongst the best in the industry, and we have a dedicated business development team who seek out and extend invitations to select agencies. We receive an overwhelming number of applications to affiliate with us each year and certainly review them all, but our focus for TRAVELSAVERS and NEST isn't quantity. It's quality.

Brick-and-mortar agencies can learn more about TRAVELSAVERS by visiting travelsavers.com, e-mailing sales@travelsavers.com or by calling **(800) 366-9895**. Home-based agencies can learn more about NEST by visiting jointhenest.com, e-mailing amascolo@jointhenest.com or by calling **(888) 245-6378**.

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