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Finding Our Voice: 3 Ways The Travel Industry Can Unify For Good

Travel employs 1 in 10 of the world's workers, makes up 10 per cent of global GDP and generated almost £200 million for the UK's economy in 2019. But our sector's size belies one undeniable fact: we lack a unified industry voice or trade body. And if the recent crisis has taught us anything, it's that travel must come together as one to protect the future of our industry.

Leading the charge is George Morgan Grenville, CEO of Red Savannah, whose Quash Quarantine campaign recently garnered over 500 travel industry signatures. Created to challenge the UK government's now-defunct quarantine period for inbound travellers, we called on George and close collaborator, The PC Agency's Paul Charles, to tell their story to our global community – from the highs and lows of organising a grassroots campaign to potential solutions for successfully lobbying governments moving forward.

You can watch the full discussion [here](#) – and below, discover George and Paul's key learnings from the campaign and their hopes for a more unified future.

1. Travel may be a fragmented industry, but we've all been adversely affected by the coronavirus.

As CEO of This is Beyond, Serge Dive, observed, industry inclusivity was a key marker of the Quash Quarantine campaign. “George and Paul have been incredibly inclusive, acting together not only for the benefit of their companies but for their entire industry,” he remarked. From huge hotel groups to tiny luxury boutiques, creator, George described the petition as “previous ‘foes’ uniting together for a common aim.”

Indeed, a critical part of the campaign was first to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the UK's travel industry – and the results were “horrific”, George explained. Two-thirds of travel companies surveyed predicted they would have to make up to 75 per cent of their staff redundant; 85 per cent said their entire summer book would be lost if quarantine was implemented; and one-third feared they would not make it to the end of the year if the policy was enacted. With no part of the travel supply chain left unaffected by the pandemic, finding unity should be easy, but as George explained, each subsection also has divergent interests. From inbound DMCs, to hotels and baggage handling companies, no single trade body has yet stepped up to represent the industry as a whole – or defend them against potentially harmful government policies.

2. Successful lobbying demands funds. Travel companies big and small must be willing to contribute to the cause.

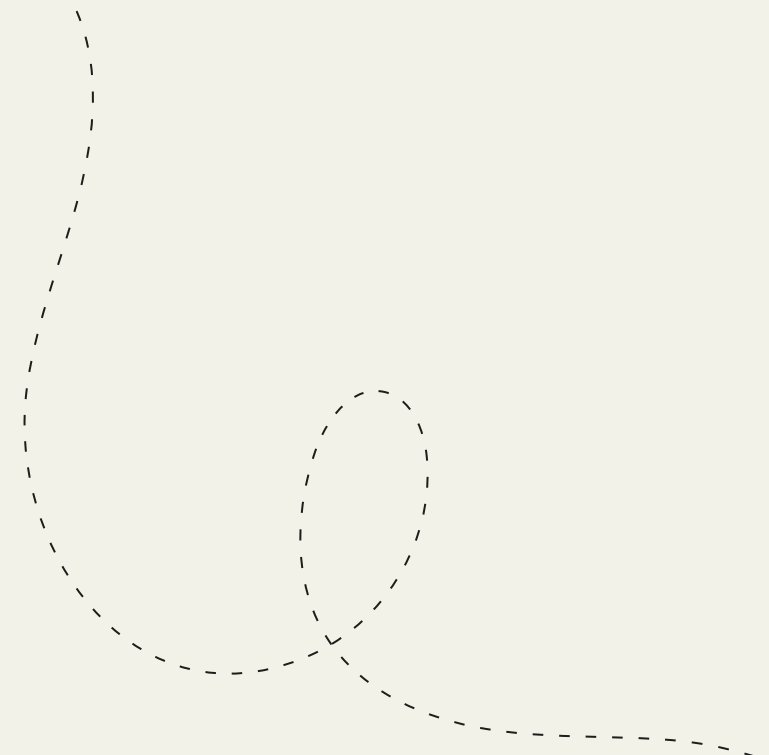
“(Travel) is not an impossible group to try and get together. But when you’ve got no money to fight, it’s very difficult to make governments listen,” urged George. Lobbying isn’t cheap – the goal of Quash Quarantine was to raise £300,000 – and while times are tighter than ever for those of us in travel, it’s vital we dig deeper if our industry is to affect radical change. Happily, boutique operators – often those most at risk from economic damage – were by far the most generous, including many of the companies who attend This is Beyond events, George revealed. “An industry that cares about its future must be prepared to put their hands in their pockets every now and then,” he urged.



3. Travel is notoriously conservative, but making noise is necessary for change to happen.

“The travel industry is not used to rabble rousing,” acknowledged George. “I started this campaign because no one was making a noise – it’s about time that the government started taking this industry seriously.” With travel and tourism an integral part of many global economies, it’s crucial our needs are taken into consideration when legislation is being passed. And like other industries – construction and pharmaceuticals, for example – that regularly lobby governments to make their voices heard, travel must be more visible and vocal in the future. While there are existing travel trade bodies in the UK and elsewhere, they must work harder to lobby governments successfully, as must any newly created unions. “If we create a new travel industry body, it has a duty to stand up and fight hard for the industry it purports to represent,” concluded George.

And for those outside the UK...



1.

Act local, think global.

To lobby individual governments, the most effective campaigns are locally or regionally focused – like the UK-based Quash Quarantine. Restricting your campaign’s support to your home country strengthens your cause and makes governments more likely to listen to, and act on, your demands.

2.

Don’t restrict your campaign to luxury travel – represent all areas of the industry.

From big chains to tiny boutiques, high-end hotels to mid-range properties, a solid campaign is representative of a cross-section of the travel industry, and is more likely to get noticed by governments. Remember, there’s strength in numbers.

3.

Cross-industry consistency and unity should be your eventual goal.

For a fragmented industry like travel, it’s important to think big and encourage unity above all else. Your eventual goal should be to establish greater intra-industry consistency – getting hotels to think the same as duty-free shops; baggage handling agencies; airlines and DMCs, and adopt a more unified approach to policymaking.