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Fox World Travel Teams With Professor Brad Seitz For New School

By David Jonas • April 18, 2017

Topaz International CEO Brad Seitz is leaving the travel auditing company he led since 2003 to build resources for corporate travel pros. The idea is to do some consulting, create a buyer community, conduct research and, along with Fox World Travel, formulate an education curriculum.

The last part would address both newbies and those looking for ongoing professional development.

For those entering corporate travel for the first time, there are a few collegiate programs out there, like at [Metropolitan State University of Denver](#). The Association of Corporate Travel Executives' Around the World program offers entry-level training and internships for beginners. The Global Business Travel Association runs a course on travel management fundamentals and the Ladders mentoring initiative.

Sometimes local GBTA chapters get active with area colleges.

Feedback from Fox clients pointed the travel management company down the path. It plans to launch the Fox Travel Manager Institute in the second half of this year. Fox World Travel vice president of client solutions and event strategy Michael Farrell described a two-week pilot class as "extremely successful."

"The industry is evolving," Farrell said. Rather than travel agents filling corporate travel management positions, "other departments are starting to inherit those responsibilities — human resources, procurement, finance. Those professionals don't have a baseline understanding of all the intricacies of the industry."

The Fox Travel Manager Institute will offer week-long 101-like classes for employees of

its clients involved with running travel programs. Fox expects eventually to market the service beyond its customer base.

The program also will offer one- and two-day classes. These more advanced sessions will dive deeper into specific industry topics. Both Seitz and Farrell mentioned contract [negotiations](#) and [duty of care](#) as potential subject areas.

"Travel Management 101, that's easy," Seitz said. "Where it gets difficult is going deeper, and trying to pique interest of people who have been at it for a long time."

A professor of business at the University of Southern Maine, Seitz will be one of several instructors. Farrell said some Fox employees also will get involved, shadowing Seitz to gain teaching experience.

The plan is to conduct classes in multiple U.S. cities. There may be a virtual learning component, but Farrell said "that's not our preference. There are lots of webinars out there. We feel learning in-person will be best."

Farrell would not divulge the university with which Fox has had conversations, but he mentioned a possible partnership with

the [Society of Collegiate Travel and Expense Management](#).

"We haven't spoken to GBTA yet about this program," he added, "but would not be opposed to having our classes be part of their certification process."

GBTA offers the Global Travel Professional certification, the Global Leadership Professional designation (via the University of Virginia [Darden School of Business](#)) and the Certificate in Meeting Management (in conjunction with Meeting Professionals International).

ACTE's Around the World also includes a [program](#) for travel pros looking to learn more. The Institute of Travel Management for the United Kingdom and Ireland has workshops for buyers and administers the GTP exam for partner GBTA. The Institute for Supply Management has certification programs for purchasing pros.

Beyond The Classroom

The educational work with Fox is one component of Seitz's new venture. He called his company Agilis, Latin for "agile." It is "built on the premise that travel programs need to be more agile in what they do," Seitz said.

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***Fox World Travel's
Michael Farrell***

Another pillar of his plan is a consulting service, taking on specific projects or designing outsourced travel management functions. Seitz agreed that there is no shortage of consultants in corporate travel and acknowledged the challenge.



Brad Seitz

Before Topaz, Seitz spent 10 years managing travel at Xerox. In between he worked for Carlson Wagonlit Travel and Rosenbluth International. From 2005 to 2009, Seitz volunteered as ACTE's treasurer.

A first step for the new company will be building a community of travel buyers.

"It would be at a high level," Seitz said, "not the minutiae."

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Additional info: Distinct from the new Fox Travel Manager Institute, the TMC also runs the Business Travel Institute. It is one of several schools designed to [train travel agents](#).

[GBTA Ladders](#) is coming to the local chapter level. The Silicon Valley BTA, for example, "will find the industry veterans from our membership as mentors and then form a group of mentees," according to SVBTA vice president Makiko Barrett.

At Topaz, current vice president and part-owner Tricia Wischmann will take the reins.

Within it, members will exchange information and hear Seitz's industry observations and product reviews.

Seitz anticipates collecting subscription fees that are tiered based on the number of participants from a given company. He declined to specify pricing.

Independent research would enrich a travel manager's membership. Access to it will be part of the subscription fee. There will be no sponsors.

Seitz said the needs and wants of the community will determine research topics.

One that has "nagged" at him for 10 years is an examination of the financial benefits of online booking versus agent-assisted booking. It would get into the costs associated with each, as well as time and productivity studies.