



Is your dynamic packaging technology giving you the best service? Emily Ashwell looks at what new systems can help you achieve

All systems go

Dynamic packaging has matured and evolved from the days of bundling together a low-cost airline, bed bank and car transfer.

In 2012 dynamic packaging and the associated technology is smarter, faster and savvier. If you're not sure whether your dynamic packaging system is working hard enough for you, here's what it could be doing:

● PROMPT MORE PURCHASES AND UPSSELL

Dynamic packaging technology can help agents sell more by prompting them to buy additional elements or upgrade the elements they're considering.

This means a customer wouldn't simply go on a website and book one element, but throughout their journey they would be encouraged to buy other elements such as accommodation or car hire, or upgrade. Multicom managing director John Howell says: "Technology is starting to upsell through the customer journey. Customers are being encouraged to package even if they didn't initially want to package."

● SEARCH WIDER AND FASTER

Gone are the days when customers simply searched certain routes on specific departure dates.

Now they can simply ask what's good value in Spain in the summer holidays, for example. The technology has also evolved so the search results are produced much more quickly. This is because websites cache, or store, information. Some will search millions of dynamic packaging holiday combinations overnight to offer to the customer the next day.

Jon Pickles, product director at Comtec, says: "Dynamic packaging is stressful in the system. Going out to lots of places, getting the packages together, that's a big challenge on software to do that in speedy times. There are millions of options in the mix."

Intuitive commercial director Andy Keeley added: "Once you have got that (cache of packages) you can do so much with the data. For example, you might have a tool that says 'inspire me' or 'don't know what you're looking for', this enables a broad search such as Christmas

or Easter holidays, or 'any beach holidays in August under £300'. Because the millions of holidays are stored 'locally', options are returned incredibly quickly."

● STICKINESS BETWEEN VISITS

Today dynamic packaging technology can build a profile of who is visiting your website, and what they're looking for. Once you know something about that customer, you can target them with relevant offers.

Amazon already does this suggesting products based on previous purchases or visits. Intuitive's Keeley says: "What you

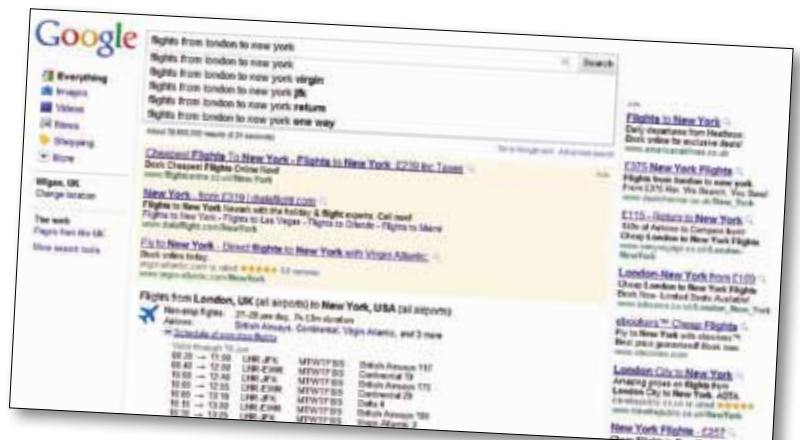
know about that customer is very important. You can start to get clever about what you promote and when. You can give them targeted offers, including price-matching to previous visits."

The only thing that detracts from this is the tightening of cookie laws and asking if users want to opt out.

● MAKE UP AND PROMOTE YOUR OWN PACKAGES

Technology is starting to enable agents to wrap up a dynamic package, and promote it as a bookable product.

Limits can be set on live pricing, so if any of the elements take ▶





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the overall package price above a certain point, the package isn't offered. Peter Wittle, sales and marketing director at Traveltek, says: "It's giving the agent control over what product they're featuring and what price they can sell it at."

SEAMLESS RESULTS BETWEEN DEVICES

Intuitive's Keeley says: "This is about saying that you know who the customer is, or at least have given them a way to link their visits together (by a quote reference, for example)."

"Now technology allows agencies selling dynamic packages to, for example, automatically bring up results on the customer's PC from a search done earlier on their mobile."

DYNAMICALLY PACKAGE EXCLUSIVES OR PACKAGES TO DISTRIBUTE TO OTHER AGENTS

When dynamic packaging first started, one of the benefits was the low risk of not having committed stock.

However, Multicom's Howell says that some of the larger online travel agents (OTAs) are starting to go back the other way and commit to create a competitive advantage. "Agents need to offer extra components to differentiate and add margin. This could be their own stock or from other systems like ours, such as parking, car hire or attractions." With the Atol changes, larger agents are starting to distribute their dynamic packages to other agents for resale.

COMBINE COSTS

As customers get more sophisticated at putting their own packages together, the line between what the agent uses to book and what the customer uses is increasingly blurred.

Multicom's Howell says: "Both the OTA technology and the booking tool that would be used in a call centre are consolidating. There is a clear benefit of the consolidation of these systems."

"The vast majority of the technology is the same. In reality you want to search the same stuff. You might want to allow the agent a bit more functionality, for example to alter margins. There's a clear cost benefit to the agency of using the same system."

PUT TOGETHER YOUR OWN FRONT END

Comtec's Pickles says: "Clever retailers are putting their own front end together. They are able to access the old green screen - viewdata - and also go to websites such as easyJet in the same piece of technology."

MERGE WITH THE BACK OFFICE AND THIRD PARTY SYSTEMS

Dynamic packaging systems now have the technology to amend or cancel bookings, without the agent having to contact the product provider, such as the airline to add API information.



With the new Flight-Plus system, it's important that any dynamic packaging system connects to other tech systems. Peter Whittle from Traveltek says: "Technology should be linking through to the back office," adding that it can link through to produce the new Flight-Plus Atol Certificates.

MOVE TO THE CLOUD

Why pay for server hosting space that is only fully used at peak booking times? Intuitive's Keeley says: "Hosting is expensive. We are putting websites on to the cloud. You need all the services at the peak booking times, but the beauty of moving some of the technology to the cloud is that you move from hosting and hardware to match peaks and troughs." **TW**

TOP TIP
Save time by using Multicom's new Amend and Cancel feature on Medhotels' booking platform

OTA technology and booking tools used in a call centre are consolidating



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