



Press Pack

The face of group travel is set to be transformed forever next month, with the launch of the MySwift app.

Experts in group travel, MySwift specialise in taking the hassle out of planning, booking and paying for group holidays. The first and only WhatsApp & Facebook Messenger based travel service in the UK. The travel planners are the go-to for millennial groups and young professionals, saving organisers hours of research time by providing packages personalised to the needs of each group. Delivered via an easy-to-share link, they subsequently facilitate separate payments to avoid those awkward payment pains and remain available in-chat, in-destination with restaurant suggestions & activity bookings.

Their experience dealing with thousands of organisers over the past two years has led them to realise there's often another, much bigger, problem to overcome. Getting a group of busy, pre-occupied people to agree on when, where and how they should getaway.

The MySwift app will help groups sidestep the chaos of WhatsApp groups and email chains, allowing groups to vote on their preferences and decide on the best holiday option, as well as store travel info like passport details and dietary requirements.

MySwift are one of the first small businesses in the world with access to the nascent WhatsApp Business API and their app will be one of the first with an option to have WhatsApp notifications.

About the Founders

Tom and Jasper originally met at Durham University, although they went in very different directions before meeting again years later at a start-up in London.

Jasper knew from a young age that he wanted to run his own business but didn't have that killer idea when he left university. He was advised by a successful entrepreneur, and family friend, that he couldn't have done it without an accountant by his side. Jasper figured this was a great place to start and would set him up for when that idea came along. He spent four years with Grant Thornton, then the 5th largest accountancy firm in the UK, qualified, and went in search of more hands-on experience with a start-up, True Search, unaware that Tom would join not long after.

Tom worked for a student ski company at uni before joining full time on graduation and helping grow it to the largest in the UK. Like Jasper, he knew he wanted to lead an entrepreneurial life and start something for himself. He joined True as a senior sales associate and they found themselves commuting on the same train each morning. It didn't take long for Tom to ask why on earth Jasper had become an accountant and after Jasper explained why, they realised they had similar goals.

The Start of MySwift

At the time, Tom had been working with an ecommerce client who was selling high end fashion items exclusively over WhatsApp and seeing the success they were having, had begun putting some ideas down about applying the same principles to travel.

In April 2017 he tentatively showed Jasper his concept, giving him from Waterloo to Clapham Junction to read through his rough plan for chat-based travel.

They had discussed before how both found it near impossible to find time to arrange a holiday with their mates. No-one volunteered to do the hours of research needed, or visit a high street travel agent, which meant that trips either didn't happen, or didn't quite live up to expectations.

Tom and Jasper realised that they mostly used WhatsApp to chat with their mates and plan their holidays, and they thought that if this is how we chat to each other why not chat to a business in the same way? Even the super-busy find time to chat on WhatsApp.

Mark Zuckerberg's \$19 billion acquisition of WhatsApp back in 2014 hinted at the potential value of chat-based commerce. In China, WeChat has grown massively through enabling users to book doctor's appointments, pay bills, and even do their weekly shop through the messaging app. Chat-based commerce still has a long way to go but the potential for it to dominate the future of business is clear, Zuckerberg reaffirmed this in March 2019 stating that private messaging would be the future of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

People today want instant responses. Messenger and WhatsApp facilitate this without sacrificing personal relationships with customers. They allow flexibility, privacy and are more convenient for today's customers who are busier and more distracted than ever.

With a rough plan, Jasper and Tom began working on the idea during evenings and weekends. By September 2017, they'd emptied their savings, quit their jobs and launched the business specialising in ski holidays. Speaking about the launch, Jasper confesses, "It was all pretty rudimentary to begin with. We threw up a basic website, linked it to WhatsApp & Messenger, and waited for people to get in touch. Luckily they did."

Leveraging Tom's contacts in the ski industry, they secured contracts with the biggest tour operators in Europe, plus hundreds of smaller ones, all of which allow them to price-match, and often beat, what their customers could find themselves.

MySwft Today

The business has come a long way since the early days, when it took almost 4 hours to serve each customer with quotes put together using PDFs!

Since launching ski, they have extended their offering to city breaks and summer holidays, applying their hassle-free brand of holiday bookings to stags, hens, big trips with family or friends and company getaways.

They have invested in developing a fully integrated ecommerce travel site, with over 400,000 hotels from around the world, as well as thousands of chalets, villas and apartments. All feeding directly into their platform, massively reducing the time it takes to provide customers with holiday recommendations. Significant time has gone into researching the accommodation and activities they know their various group types love.

Group Holidays Handled

Initially launched for everyone, it quickly became apparent that the service was most loved by those with big group trips on their plate.

With a focus on the organiser, the team carried out research into what people booking group holidays go through, with the same problems repeatedly cropping up:

- Research is time-consuming
- There's pressure to get it right
- Collecting money from everyone is painful
- Many sites allow for max bookings of 9 people
- Collecting travel details is long-winded
- Getting commitment from everyone is hard
- Finding suitable dates is tricky
- Reaching agreement on budgets and accommodation

Managing everyone's demands over budget, destination and the right dates to make their escape is challenging. MySwft's service saves people time, facilitates payment and with the introduction of the app, overcomes perhaps the biggest hurdle, organising people, on when, where and how.

No other company is making it as easy for groups to plan, book and pay for group holidays. So MySwft decided to make it their niche and chose the tagline "**Group Holidays Handled**".

In December 2018 they successfully raised funds from angel investors, which allowed them to expand their team and invest in the next technological step of the business, developing the MySwft app.

The Future

August 2019 will see the launch of the MySwift app. Likened to a lovechild between Doodle and WhatsApp, the MySwift app will alleviate the pressure on the group organiser, helping them sidestep the chaos of WhatsApp threads and email chains, making planning a group holiday a breeze.

Most travel companies serve customers at the booking stage. With the app and their WhatsApp and Messenger service, MySwift are able to help customers before, during and after booking.

A genuinely full-service group holiday company.

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