CEO WORLD LEADERS

July 2026

Bob Knakal Was Doing Content Marketing Before Content Marketing Existed

BKREA

BOB KNAKAL

BKREA –Bob Knakal

Bob Knakal Was Doing Content Marketing Before Content Marketing Existed

Today, people often describe Bob Knakal as one of the most visible commercial real estate professionals in America. His articles are widely read. His videos circulate across social media. His podcasts generate thousands of views and downloads. He has appeared on more than 135 podcasts, graced more than twenty magazine covers, amassed an audience of more than 135,000 social media followers, and become one of the most recognizable voices in New York City real estate.

To many observers, this appears to be a product of the digital age. It is not. In reality, Knakal has been creating and distributing content for more than four decades. Long before social media existed, long before podcasts, long before websites became commonplace, and long before anyone coined the term "content marketing," he was building one of the largest information-distribution platforms in the commercial real estate industry. The channels have changed dramatically over the years. The philosophy behind them has not.

The story begins in 1984 when Knakal graduated from The Wharton School and entered the commercial real estate brokerage business at Coldwell Banker. Four years later, on November 15, 1988, he and Paul Massey founded Massey Knakal Realty Services. Like many entrepreneurial ventures, the firm began with little more than ambition, conviction, and a willingness to outwork larger competitors. They did not have a nationally recognized brand. They did not have institutional resources. They did not have decades of market share. What they did have was a fundamentally different view of what the brokerage business actually was. While many firms viewed brokerage primarily as a transaction business, Knakal believed it was first and foremost an information business. If a broker could gather more market intelligence than competitors, organize that information more effectively, and distribute it more consistently, clients would naturally gravitate toward that source of knowledge. Transactions would follow information.

That philosophy became one of the cornerstones upon which Massey Knakal was built. Years before email became widely used, the firm began distributing information throughout New York City at a scale that was virtually unprecedented in the brokerage industry. At its peak, Massey Knakal mailed approximately three million pieces of physical mail every year. Three million. The mailings were not traditional advertisements. They were information vehicles. Some announced newly completed transactions. Others highlighted newly listed properties. Some provided neighborhood-specific sales reports. Others analyzed market trends by asset class. The objective was never simply to promote the firm. The objective was to educate the marketplace. Every mailing reinforced the same message: if you wanted to understand what was happening in the New York City investment sales market, Massey Knakal was the place to look.

The most visible manifestation of this strategy was the Building Sales Journal. What began as a modest newsletter evolved into one of the most widely distributed real estate publications in New York City. At its peak, the publication grew to thirty-two pages and reached more than 330,000 recipients every quarter. Most remarkably, the publication was produced without interruption for twenty-six consecutive years. Not a single quarter was missed. Consider what that level of consistency actually represents. Through bull markets and bear markets. Through recessions, terrorist attacks, financial crises, and dramatic shifts in the real estate cycle. Through the rise of the internet and the collapse of traditional print media. Every quarter, the publication arrived. Long before LinkedIn posts, YouTube channels, newsletters, podcasts, and influencer marketing became commonplace, Massey Knakal was creating and distributing original market content at an industrial scale.

The impact was profound. Property owners throughout New York City increasingly came to view the firm not merely as a brokerage company but as a source of market intelligence. When owners wanted to understand values in their neighborhood, they turned to Massey Knakal. When developers wanted to understand land markets, they turned to Massey Knakal. When investors wanted insight into emerging trends, they turned to Massey Knakal.

Over time, information itself became one of the firm's most valuable competitive advantages. The strategy created a self-reinforcing cycle. The more information the firm gathered, the more useful its publications became. The more useful its publications became, the more market participants shared information with the firm. Better information produced better intelligence. Better intelligence attracted more clients. More clients generated more transactions. More transactions generated more information. The cycle repeated itself year after year in what economists would refer to as a positive feedback loop.

What Knakal understood decades ago is something many professionals are only beginning to appreciate today: expertise has limited value if nobody knows you possess it. The smartest person in any industry gains little advantage if their knowledge remains hidden. Expertise must be visible before it can become influential. Long before artificial intelligence entered the mainstream, Knakal was solving a challenge that AI is making increasingly important today: discoverability.

In today's world, property owners conduct extensive research before hiring advisors. They read articles. They listen to podcasts. They watch videos. They review interviews. They search online. Increasingly, they ask artificial intelligence platforms for recommendations and information. But while the tools have changed, the behavior itself has not. People have always sought evidence of expertise before making important decisions. Thirty years ago, they found that evidence in printed newsletters, market reports, and transaction announcements. Today, they find it through digital content. The medium changed. The principle remained exactly the same.

Over the next four decades, Knakal's results would become nearly impossible to ignore. He personally brokered the sale of 2,402 New York City buildings totaling approximately $24.4 billion in aggregate consideration. He sold 278 development sites representing more than 91 million buildable square feet and more than $10 billion in market value. He helped build Massey Knakal into the dominant investment sales brokerage platform in New York City, a firm that sold more than three times as many buildings as its nearest competitor for fourteen consecutive years between 2001 and 2014. Many observers attribute this success to relationships. Others point to market knowledge, specialization, or relentless work ethic. In reality, each of those factors reinforced the others. The firm's commitment to information deepened relationships. Its research strengthened market knowledge. Its content amplified specialization. Together, they created a competitive moat that became increasingly difficult for others to replicate.

What is particularly fascinating is how little the underlying strategy changed as technology evolved. Following the sale of Massey Knakal, Knakal served as Chairman of Investment Sales at Cushman & Wakefield and later Chairman of Investment Sales and then Chairman of New York City's Private Capital Group at JLL. When he launched BKREA in 2024 after being unexpectedly terminated from JLL, many assumed he would simply recreate a traditional brokerage firm. Instead, he doubled down on the same information-centric philosophy that had guided his entire career.

BKREA immediately began investing heavily in proprietary intelligence platforms. The firm developed the Knakal Map Room, a comprehensive system tracking development activity throughout Manhattan. It launched the Knakal Land Index, which analyzes thousands of development site sales to identify market correlations and pricing patterns. It created the Developer Ranking System, evaluating more than 1,800 developers based upon acquisition activity, bidding behavior, execution history, and other performance metrics. The company regularly publishes white papers, market studies, articles, podcasts, videos, interviews, and educational content designed to help owners better understand the marketplace.

To many observers, these initiatives appear to be sophisticated branding exercises. In reality, they are simply the digital descendants of the Building Sales Journal. The technology evolved. The philosophy endured. The same belief that drove three million pieces of annual mail now drives podcasts, videos, white papers, research reports, and social media content. The objective remains unchanged: create value through information, build trust through education, and demonstrate expertise through consistent market intelligence.

This continuity helps explain why Knakal's transition into the age of artificial intelligence appears so natural. While many professionals are still trying to determine how to remain relevant in an AI-driven world, Knakal has spent decades creating the very type of information AI systems are designed to analyze and surface. When artificial intelligence evaluates expertise, it looks for evidence. It looks for transaction history. It looks for specialization. It looks for authorship, research, thought leadership, interviews, market studies, and educational content. Those are precisely the assets Knakal has been building for more than forty years. In many respects, AI is not changing his strategy. It is validating it.

The broader lesson extends far beyond commercial real estate. Whether someone is a broker, attorney, accountant, consultant, entrepreneur, executive, or business owner, the same principle applies. Expertise alone is no longer enough. People must be able to find it. The professionals who consistently organize, document, and share what they know create an ever-expanding body of evidence that compounds over time. Every article adds credibility. Every interview adds visibility. Every presentation builds authority. Every market study reinforces expertise. Over years and decades, those individual contributions accumulate into something much larger: a reputation that exists independently of any single transaction, client, or business cycle.

Bob Knakal understood this long before most people. He understood it when information arrived through the mailbox rather than the smartphone. He understood it when newsletters were printed instead of posted. He understood it when market reports were physically delivered instead of digitally downloaded. And perhaps that is the most important lesson from his career. Technology will continue to change. New platforms will emerge. Artificial intelligence will transform how information is discovered and consumed. But the underlying principle remains remarkably constant. The individuals and organizations that consistently create, organize, and distribute valuable information will continue to earn trust. And trust remains the foundation of every successful business.

Long before social media. Long before podcasts. Long before artificial intelligence. Long before content marketing became a recognized discipline. Bob Knakal built a career around the belief that information creates opportunity. Forty years later, the rest of the business world is finally catching up.

Yuka Hongo

Bridging Cultures, Building Trust, and Redefining Cross-Border Estate Planning

Leading with Purpose in a Globalized Legal Landscape

In today's interconnected world, legal challenges increasingly transcend borders, languages, and cultures. Few professionals understand this reality better than Yuka Hongo, Owner and Managing Attorney of Hongo Law Office, LLLC. Through her unique bicultural perspective and specialized expertise, Hongo has established herself as a trusted legal advisor for individuals and families navigating complex estate planning and administration matters across the United States and Japan.

Her journey is not simply one of professional achievement; it is a story of cultural understanding, perseverance, and a commitment to serving a niche community that often struggles to find legal guidance tailored to its unique needs.

From Japan to the United States: A Journey Shaped by Two Cultures

Born in Japan and raised in both Japanese and American environments, Yuka Hongo's life has been defined by her ability to navigate multiple cultures. While her family built a career in accounting, Hongo chose a different path—one that would ultimately allow her to combine her international outlook with her passion for helping others.

Determined to become an international lawyer, she attended law school in Los Angeles, California, one of the world's most diverse and globally connected cities. The experience provided her with a strong legal foundation and reinforced her desire to work in cross-border environments.

After law school, she gained valuable international experience in Japan before an opportunity emerged that would shape the next chapter of her career. When her family launched a business venture in Hawaii, Hongo relocated to Honolulu and established her own legal practice.

What began as a professional move soon evolved into a mission-driven career.

As she observed the challenges faced by many of her father's Japanese accounting clients, she noticed a recurring issue: estate planning and asset management concerns often lacked adequate legal support from professionals who truly understood both the American and Japanese perspectives.

While many Japanese-speaking attorneys in the United States focus on corporate law or immigration law, Hongo identified a significant gap in estate planning and estate administration services for Japanese and international clients. Recognizing this need, she dedicated her practice to helping individuals and families protect, manage, and transfer wealth across jurisdictions.

Finding Purpose Through Service

For many legal professionals, success is measured by the size of a firm or the number of clients served. For Hongo, success is defined differently.

Her daily motivation comes from knowing that there are people who need legal guidance from someone who understands not only the law but also the cultural nuances that influence important family and financial decisions.

"I know there are clients out there—especially Japanese and international clients—who need help from a lawyer who can speak their language and assist them with U.S. and cross-border estate planning and administration needs," she explains.

What makes her approach distinctive is her humility. Rather than focusing on accolades or titles, Hongo concentrates on providing practical solutions for clients facing complex legal situations.

Her bicultural background enables her to bridge communication gaps, clarify misunderstandings, and create legal strategies that align with both cultural expectations and legal requirements. This ability has become one of her greatest professional strengths and a defining feature of her practice.

Staying Relevant in a Rapidly Changing Legal Environment

The legal profession is constantly evolving. New regulations, changing tax laws, shifting economic conditions, and emerging global trends require attorneys to remain informed and adaptable.

For Hongo, continuous learning is not simply a professional responsibility—it's a daily habit.

One of her most notable initiatives is the creation of a monthly newsletter distributed to clients, professional contacts, and industry connections. Through this publication, she analyzes developments in U.S. and Japanese laws, tax regulations, and estate planning strategies.

The process requires extensive research and a commitment to staying informed about changes that could impact her clients.

Beyond legal research, Hongo also dedicates time to reading books on finance, wealth management, and broader economic topics. This multidisciplinary approach allows her to understand the bigger picture surrounding her clients' financial and personal goals.

By combining legal expertise with financial awareness, she ensures that her advice remains relevant in an increasingly complex world.

Building Knowledge Through Global Collaboration

Although Hongo Law Office remains a boutique practice, collaboration plays a significant role in its success.

Hongo maintains strong relationships with attorneys, accountants, and professionals in Japan who regularly exchange knowledge, referrals, and insights. These professional partnerships provide valuable perspectives on developments occurring in both countries and help her deliver more comprehensive support to clients facing cross-border issues.

These collaborations also reflect one of the core principles that guide her career: meaningful professional growth rarely happens in isolation.

By remaining connected to a network of experts across multiple disciplines and jurisdictions, she continues to expand her knowledge while creating stronger outcomes for clients.

The ability to leverage international relationships has become increasingly important as globalization creates more complex legal and financial situations for families with ties to multiple countries.

A Specialized Practice Serving Unique Client Needs

At the heart of Hongo Law Office is a commitment to personalized service.

The firm's primary areas of focus include estate planning, estate administration, probate matters, trusts, wills, and U.S. estate tax filings for non-residents. Additionally, the practice provides guidance on cross-border legal and financial issues affecting international clients.

Many of the firm's clients include Japanese nationals, Japanese-American families, international investors, and married couples in which one spouse is Japanese. These clients often face unique legal considerations that require specialized knowledge of both U.S. and Japanese systems.

Whether helping families preserve wealth across generations or assisting individuals in navigating estate administration after the loss of a loved one, Hongo approaches each matter with sensitivity and attention to detail.

Her ability to communicate effectively across cultures has become a key differentiator in a field where trust, clarity, and understanding are essential.

Leadership Through Empathy and Client-Centered Service

As an entrepreneur and legal professional, Hongo views leadership through the lens of service.

While she acknowledges that her organization is still growing, she has a clear vision for the culture she hopes to build in the future. Rather than focusing solely on operational efficiency or financial metrics, she emphasizes the importance of understanding the client's perspective.

In her view, successful legal representation begins with listening.

Clients seek legal assistance during some of the most important and emotionally significant moments of their lives. Whether creating an estate plan, administering a loved one's estate, or managing cross-border family assets, clients need professionals who genuinely understand their concerns.

Hongo believes that by carefully listening to client needs and delivering thoughtful, personalized solutions, legal professionals can build lasting relationships based on trust.

This philosophy not only enhances client satisfaction but also encourages long-term loyalty and referrals—two critical components of sustainable business growth.

Lessons Learned Through Entrepreneurship

Building a business is rarely a straightforward journey, and Hongo openly acknowledges the challenges that come with entrepreneurship.

Like many business owners, she has faced uncertainty regarding which decisions, strategies, or investments would produce the best results. Yet these experiences have taught her one of the most valuable lessons in leadership: perfection is not always possible.

Instead, success often comes from making the best decision available with the information at hand and adapting as circumstances evolve.

Her perspective reflects a level of resilience that many entrepreneurs develop over time. Mistakes, setbacks, and unexpected outcomes are inevitable, but they also create opportunities for learning and growth.

Rather than allowing challenges to become obstacles, Hongo views them as part of the ongoing process of building a meaningful and sustainable practice.

Creating Balance in a Demanding Profession

The legal profession is known for its demanding workload and high-pressure environment. Maintaining personal well-being can be difficult, particularly for entrepreneurs who manage both client responsibilities and business operations.

For Hongo, balance comes through simplicity.

She enjoys cooking and taking walks along Hawaii's beautiful beaches—activities that allow her to recharge and gain perspective outside of work. Although she continues to explore new hobbies and interests, these moments of relaxation play an important role in maintaining both personal well-being and professional effectiveness.

Her approach serves as a reminder that sustainable success requires more than professional accomplishment. It also requires time for reflection, self-care, and meaningful personal experiences.

Looking Toward the Future

As she continues to expand her practice, Hongo remains focused on growth opportunities that align with client needs and market demand.

One area of particular interest is real estate law, which she hopes to explore further in the future. Given Hawaii's unique real estate market and the growing number of international investors with interests in U.S. property, this expansion represents a natural evolution of her expertise.

At the same time, she remains committed to strengthening the firm's existing capabilities in estate planning, estate administration, and cross-border legal services.

Her long-term vision is not simply about growing a larger practice. It is about creating greater value for clients while continuing to serve as a trusted bridge between cultures.

A Legacy Beyond the Practice of Law

When asked about the legacy she hopes to leave behind, Hongo's answer extends beyond legal accomplishments or business success.

As someone who was born in Japan and moved to the United States during her teenage years, she has spent much of her life navigating two cultural identities.

Rather than viewing this experience as a challenge, she has transformed it into a source of strength.

Her goal is to demonstrate that bicultural and bilingual individuals possess unique advantages that can create meaningful impact in professional and personal settings. By embracing both sides of her identity, she has built a career dedicated to helping others navigate complex cross-cultural environments.

For future generations of professionals, entrepreneurs, and leaders, her story offers an important message: differences can become strengths when used to serve others.

Through her work, Yuka Hongo continues to prove that legal expertise combined with cultural understanding can create extraordinary value. In a world where international connections are becoming increasingly common, her commitment to bridging cultures, building trust, and empowering clients stands as a powerful example of modern leadership.

As she continues her journey, one thing remains clear—her impact reaches far beyond legal documents and court proceedings. It is reflected in the families she helps, the relationships she builds, and the example she sets for professionals navigating multiple cultures in an increasingly globalized world.

The Invisible Industry

the Hidden Power of Trade Shows

By all appearances, trade shows are temporary events. Booths rise overnight, crowds flood convention halls for a few days, and then everything disappears as if nothing had happened. Yet behind those brief moments lies one of the most powerful economic engines in the modern world: an industry responsible for millions of jobs, billions in tax revenues, and the launching pad of products and partnerships that shape global commerce.

For more than fifty years, Larry Kulchawik lived inside that world. As an exhibit designer, executive, industry leader, author, and international advocate, he witnessed firsthand how trade shows evolved from local exhibitions into a trillion-dollar global ecosystem. Today, through his books The Invisible Industry and Trade Shows from One Country to the Next, Kulchawik is finally giving this hidden business community the recognition it deserves.

“Every major business deal, every product launch, every brand that changed the way you live your life, somewhere along the way, a trade show was involved,” Kulchawik explains. “Yet almost nobody talks about the industry that made it all possible.”

This realization became the driving force behind his writing and his mission: to shine a spotlight on an industry that has long operated beneath public awareness while quietly fueling economies around the world.

The Origins of an Industry Hidden in Plain Sight

The roots of modern trade shows can be traced back to the great World’s Fairs of Europe and America. Those historic exhibitions introduced revolutionary inventions, new technologies, and groundbreaking ideas to the public. They became the stages where nations demonstrated industrial progress and businesses unveiled their innovations that would transform society.
According to Kulchawik, the World Fairs inspired industries to create specialized events dedicated to their own products and services. Early exhibitions in the United States included automobile shows, bicycle shows, electrical expositions, and home and garden fairs. Over time, the concept evolved into business-to-business trade shows where attendance was limited to qualified professionals and buyers.

As industries expanded, hotels could no longer accommodate the scale of these gatherings. Major American cities responded by building convention centers that became the backbone of a rapidly growing events industry. Around these centers emerged a sophisticated support network of contractors, designers, logistics providers, hospitality workers, marketers, and production specialists, as well as hotels and restaurants.

What began as a simple exhibition eventually transformed into a financial ecosystem generating more than a trillion dollars in economic impact for each city.

“The convention and events industry does not make products,” Kulchawik says.

“It makes the conditions under which products are introduced to the world.”

That distinction defines the true power of the trade show industry. It is not merely about displays and exhibits. It is about creating environments where relationships are formed, deals are negotiated, ideas are exchanged, products are displayed, and industries prosper.

A Career Built by Accident and Passion

Ironically, Larry Kulchawik never planned to enter the trade show business.

After studying design at Southern Illinois University, where legendary futurist and inventor Buckminster Fuller influenced his thinking about creativity and problem-solving, Kulchawik returned to Chicago searching for a job. At that exact moment, Chicago's famous McCormick Place convention center had suffered a devastating fire and was being rebuilt.

This reconstruction created opportunities in exhibit design, and Kulchawik took a position in the field almost by chance.

"I had a degree in design," he recalls. "But design what?"

That accidental beginning became a lifelong calling.

Kulchawik eventually joined Greyhound Exhibitgroup, then the largest exhibit company in the world, where he rose through the ranks to become president of the Chicago division. Along the way, he developed a deep understanding of how trade shows influenced industries, economies, and international business relationships.

But more importantly, he discovered something else: almost nobody intentionally entered the industry.

"Most people working in this industry had never gone to school to prepare for it," Kulchawik explains. "Like me, they stumbled into it and learned by trial and error."

Yet once they discovered the energy and excitement of the business, many stayed for life.

Trade shows require rapid problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, technical skill, and the ability to perform under pressure. Every event comes with hard deadlines and high expectations. For people who thrive in dynamic environments, the work becomes addictive.

"A trade show is only three or four days long," Kulchawik says, "but it can take three months to prepare for, unlike a building that can take a year."

The Industry Nobody Sees

Despite its enormous economic influence, the trade show world remains largely invisible to the general public.

Unlike concerts or sporting events, most trade shows are private gatherings restricted to industry professionals. They receive little mainstream advertising because attendance is invitation-based. As a result, millions of people pass convention centers every day without realizing the economic activity unfolding inside.

Kulchawik compares the industry to a stealth operation working quietly beneath the surface.

"Trade shows are stealth bombers flying below the radar," he says. "They nurture businesses, launch products, and stimulate local economies without most people even noticing."

Behind every successful event exists a vast workforce. Carpenters construct booths. Electricians wire displays. Graphic designers produce branding materials. Forklift operators move freight. Audio-visual technicians create immersive experiences.
Caterers feed thousands of attendees.
Travel coordinators manage logistics. Marketing teams promote exhibitors. Event managers oversee operations.

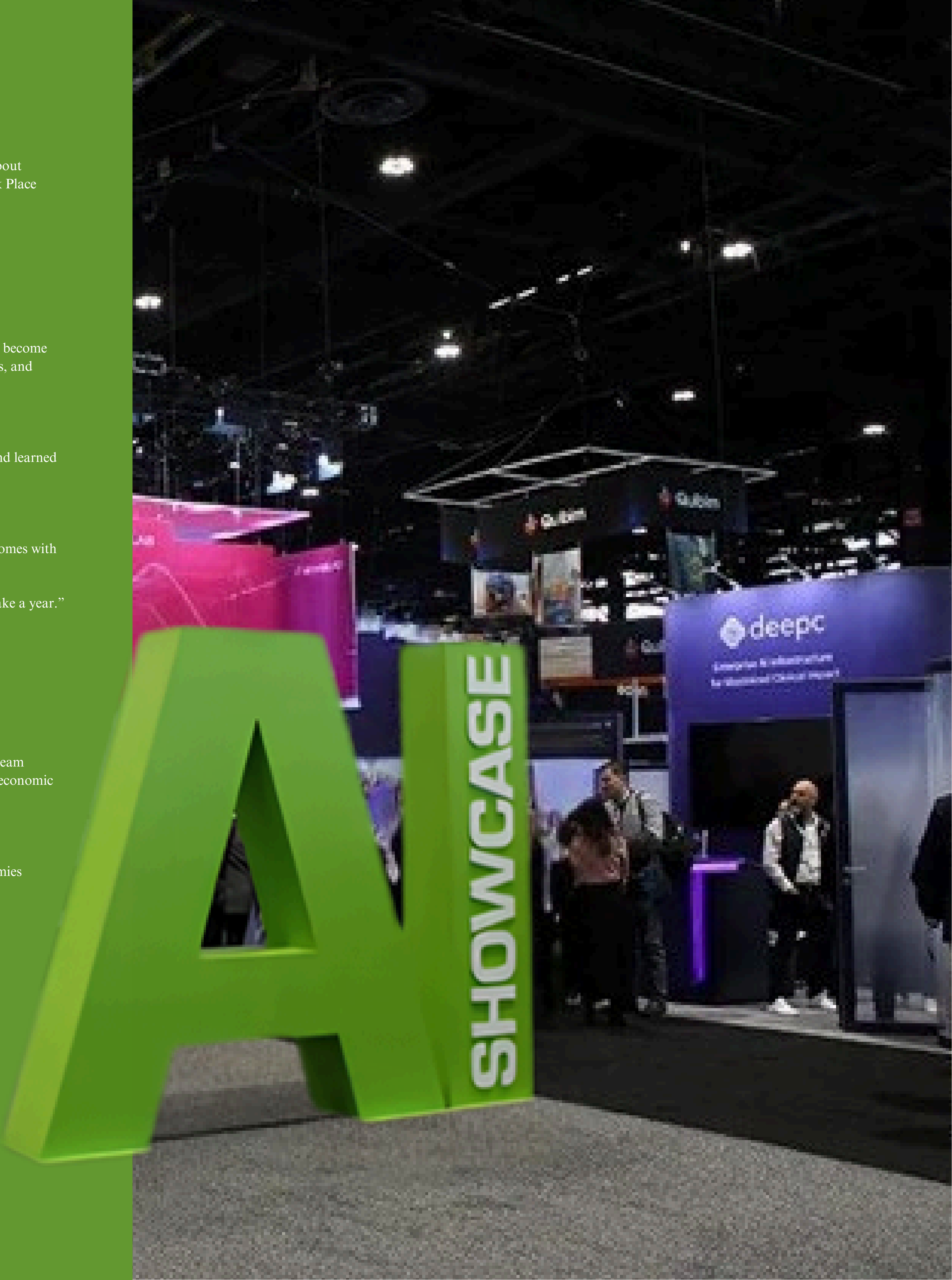
Together, these professionals form an intricate support system that allows exhibitions to function seamlessly.

The scale of each event is staggering.

In the United States alone, the events and exhibitions industry supports approximately 6.6 million jobs and generates hundreds of billions of dollars in direct spending across hotels, restaurants, airlines, transportation services, retail businesses, and entertainment venues.

Yet for decades, the people driving this economic engine rarely received public recognition.

That invisibility became one of the central themes behind Kulchawik's book The Invisible Industry.



Writing the History of a Hidden World

After fifty years in the business, Kulchawik retired in 2025 alongside colleague and co-author Bob McGlincy. Rather than simply stepping away, the two veterans decided to document the history and evolution of the trade show industry for future generations.

McGlincy, a passionate historian, focused on the origins of World's Fairs and the early development of exhibitions in Europe and America. Kulchawik concentrated on the rise of convention centers, exhibit companies, industry associations, and the individual people who shaped the modern events business.

Together, they created a comprehensive narrative explaining how trade shows became one of the world's most influential economic systems.

Their work also addresses an important educational gap.

For decades, there were few formal pathways into the industry. Most professionals entered through unrelated careers and learned on the job. Kulchawik believes that must change.

"The industry realized we could no longer depend on people simply fumbling into it," he explains.

Today, universities and professional organizations are beginning to create structured training programs in exhibit design, event management, and meeting planning. Institutions such as UNLV, Auburn University, Bemidji State University, and FIT in New York now offer specialized programs connected to the events industry.

Industry groups, like IAEE (International Association of Exhibitions & Events), and the Exhibition and Events Workforce Development Federation, and others continue to play a vital role in shaping talent pipelines, strengthening industry awareness, and driving long-term innovation across the sector.

"The gears are now in motion," Kulchawik says. "The industry is no longer going to remain invisible."

The COVID Crisis and the Industry's Resilience

Perhaps no event tested the trade show industry more severely than the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtually overnight, conventions, meetings, and exhibitions around the world came to a halt. Convention centers emptied. Workers lost jobs. Supply chains collapsed. Many businesses faced uncertainty about whether live events would ever fully recover.

Virtual meetings briefly emerged as an alternative. Companies experimented with online exhibitions and digital networking platforms. But according to Kulchawik, the industry quickly discovered that technology could not replicate the emotional power of face-to-face interaction.

"No other communication method could replace the power of in-person selling," he says.

Human connection remains central to business relationships. Buyers want to see products firsthand. Companies want direct conversations with clients. Exhibitors want emotional engagement that digital screens simply cannot deliver. When restrictions were lifted, the industry rebounded with remarkable speed.

Trade shows returned stronger than expected, proving that live experiences still hold enormous value in a digital world. However, the pandemic also revealed workforce shortages, prompting renewed efforts to recruit and train skilled labor across the industry.

For Kulchawik, the recovery reinforced a simple truth: trade shows are not optional luxuries. They are essential drivers of commerce, innovation, and economic growth.

Taking Trade Shows Global

While The Invisible Industry explored the historical and economic foundation of exhibitions, Kulchawik's second book tackled a different challenge: international trade show strategy.

After serving as president of the Exhibit Designers & Producers Association (EDPA), Kulchawik recognized that many American companies lacked experience exhibiting overseas. While European and Asian businesses had long embraced international trade fairs, U.S. companies traditionally focused primarily on domestic markets.

That began to change in the early 2000s as globalization accelerated and companies sought new opportunities abroad.
Kulchawik became deeply involved with IFES, the International Federation of Exhibition and Event Services, eventually becoming the first American president in the organization's history.

His work exposed him to exhibit professionals from dozens of countries, each with unique business customs, cultural expectations, labor systems, and exhibition styles.

He soon recognized a recurring problem: companies often assumed their domestic trade show strategies would work the same way internationally. "They don't," Kulchawik says bluntly.

A successful exhibit approach in Las Vegas may fail completely in Dubai, Paris, Shanghai, or São Paulo. Cultural expectations differ dramatically. Communication styles vary. Business etiquette changes from country to country.To address these challenges, Kulchawik gathered insights from exhibition experts across 45 nations and compiled them into Trade Shows from One Country to the Next — a practical guidebook designed to help companies navigate international exhibiting successfully.

His core message is simple but powerful:

"There is no right way or wrong way," he explains. "There is only a different way."

The book emphasizes cultural awareness, adaptability, and respect for local business practices principles increasingly critical in today's interconnected economy.

The Human Side of Trade Shows

Beyond economics and strategy, Kulchawik believes the exhibition industry ultimately revolves around human behavior.

Trade shows create environments where people gather to exchange ideas, build trust, solve problems, and create opportunities. In many ways, they reflect one of humanity's oldest instincts: coming together in marketplaces to share goods and knowledge.

"We didn't invent trade shows," Kulchawik says. "We inherited them, and we made them better."

That perspective helps explain why the industry has endured despite technological disruption, economic downturns, and global crises. Human beings still crave direct interaction. Relationships still matter. Experiences still influence decisions.

In an age increasingly dominated by automation and digital communication, trade shows continue to provide something irreplaceable personal connection.

A Legacy Beyond Exhibits

Today, Larry Kulchawik's legacy extends far beyond exhibit halls and convention centers.

Through his leadership roles, international advocacy, and writing, he has helped document the history of an industry that quietly shapes the modern economy. More importantly, he has elevated awareness about the millions of people whose careers depend on live events and exhibitions.

His books are not merely historical records; they are calls for recognition.
Recognition for the designers who create immersive brand experiences.
Recognition for the crews who work overnight to build convention floors.
Recognition for the organizers who coordinate massive events behind the scenes.
Recognition for the educators preparing the next generation of professionals.
Recognition for an industry that drives innovation while remaining largely unseen.
Trade shows may still operate behind the scenes, but thanks to voices like Larry Kulchawik's, the world is finally beginning to understand their true impact.
And perhaps that is the greatest achievement of all: transforming an invisible industry into a visible force worthy of appreciation, investment, and future growth.

CEO WORLD
LEADERS

DEREK CAFFERATA

Founder of Travel Advances

TRAVEL ADVANCES

The industry is now at an inflection point. The global travel market is projected to surpass $11 trillion over the next decade, with digital platforms capturing an increasingly dominant share.

TRAVEL ADVANCES:

Why I Chose to Build a Movement Instead of Another Travel App

I created Travel Advances because I saw something the industry had stopped seeing. After decades of leading teams, scaling brands, and building systems across continents, I realized that travel, one of the most emotional experiences in a person's life, had been reduced to a transaction. It had become a marketplace of noise. Every platform promised the "best deal," the "smartest itinerary," or the "top ten must-see attractions," yet travelers were not feeling any smarter or more confident. If anything, they were more overwhelmed. They were drowning in options, starving for clarity, and increasingly unsure of who to trust. At some point, the industry had mistaken chaos for innovation. I knew the world did not need another travel app. It needed a movement. It needed a platform that advanced not just where people go, but how they feel while going there.

My background shaped that conviction long before Travel Advances had a name. I had spent years architecting organizations where clarity, emotional intelligence, and disciplined execution were the difference between momentum and mayhem. I learned that people do not respond to noise. They respond to confidence. They respond to connection. They respond to feeling understood. And if you can deliver that consistently, people will follow you anywhere, even across time zones. I had seen this play out in boardrooms, in global operations, and in the countless teams I had the privilege to lead. The pattern was unmistakable. When people feel supported, they perform better. When they feel seen, they trust more. When they feel guided, they move forward with conviction.

Meanwhile, the travel industry was moving in the opposite direction. It was becoming more transactional, more algorithmic, and less human. The irony was almost comedic. Travel is one of the most human things we do. We travel to celebrate, to heal, to reconnect, to escape, to rediscover ourselves. Yet the tools guiding us had become some of the least human experiences imaginable. I remember thinking, "If travel platforms were people, most of them would be shouting at you from across the room." That was the moment I knew something had to change.

That insight became the philosophical foundation of Travel Advances. I set out to build a platform that restored emotional intelligence to travel, something the industry desperately needed but had never prioritized. I wanted to create a space where travelers felt guided rather than pressured, supported rather than sold to, and understood rather than analyzed. I wanted to build technology that behaved more like a trusted companion and less like a vending machine.

The entrepreneurial journey that followed was defined by intentionality. In the early days, our prototypes looked like everything else in the market, feature-heavy, data-dense, and indistinguishable from competitors. If you squinted, you could barely tell which app was ours and which belonged to a billion-dollar incumbent. That was my wake-up call. Through rigorous testing and honest internal debate, I recognized that complexity was the enemy of confidence. Travelers did not need more buttons. They needed more breath. They needed a platform that felt like a guide, not a puzzle. So, I made a decisive pivot to simplify the experience, sharpen the language, and make clarity the core product value. That pivot became our first defining milestone. It aligned the team around a philosophy that would ultimately become our competitive advantage. And it taught us something important. When you remove the noise, people finally hear what matters.

As the vision sharpened, I knew I needed partners who could elevate the mission. When Roger Thomson, Vice Chairman and former Chief Operating Officer of Capital Markets for HSBC, joined as a strategic co-author of the movement, everything accelerated. Roger brought global financial discipline, narrative clarity, and a rare ability to translate vision into investor-ready language. He helped articulate what I had always believed. Emotional intelligence is not a soft differentiator. It is a strategic one. His influence transformed Travel Advances from a promising concept into a compelling investment thesis.

But vision alone is never enough. To build something that could scale globally, I needed a technology leader who could turn philosophy into architecture. That is where Rakesh Mittal entered the story. With his background as a Managing Director at Genpact, Rakesh brought the engineering discipline, architectural rigor, and operational clarity required to build a platform capable of global expansion. He engineered the systems that transformed Travel Advances from a beautifully designed idea into a resilient, enterprise-grade product. His approach was methodical and uncompromising. Every system had to be transparent. Every workflow had to be reliable. Every feature had to reinforce our philosophy of emotional intelligence. Under his leadership, the technology became a fortress, scalable, secure, and built for long-term growth. Investors immediately understood the significance. With Rakesh, the company was not just visionary. It was structurally sound.

From the beginning, I designed our business model around a single belief. Travelers do not need more tools. They need more trust. They need a platform that reduces noise, restores confidence, and helps them make decisions with clarity rather than anxiety. Every part of Travel Advances exists to solve that problem. I built the company to remove friction, not add to it. I built it to guide people, not overwhelm them. And I built it to create a travel experience that feels human, intuitive, and emotionally intelligent. The strength of our model comes from that purpose. It is simple, scalable, and grounded in a universal truth. When people feel supported, they travel more. When they trust the platform guiding them, they stay loyal. That is why Travel Advances works.

My growth strategy has always been rooted in clarity and discipline. I have never believed in chasing trends or building features just for noise. I have seen too many companies sprint toward whatever is fashionable that quarter, only to discover they have built a product that impresses everyone except the people who actually use it. We expand intentionally, guided by data, user behavior, and emotional resonance. The innovation is not in the number of features, but in the intelligence behind them. Travel Advances is not trying to outdo competitors. We are trying to clarify them. And in a world where travelers are overwhelmed by choice, the platform that reduces friction and increases confidence will win.

Leadership is the heartbeat of that philosophy, and I have always believed that a company's quality is a direct reflection of its people. I built Travel Advances on a foundation of clarity, discipline, and team-driven execution. Clarity is treated as a strategic asset, not a communication style. Discipline is embedded in every decision. We move with purpose, not noise. And our breakthroughs come from collaboration between product and engineering, editorial and design, leadership and frontline teams. I have worked with many teams in my career, but this one is different. This one is built on trust, candor, and a shared belief that emotional intelligence is not a luxury. It is a competitive advantage

Roger Thomson amplifies that belief in a way only he can. Roger is the kind of leader who can take a complex idea, strip it down to its essence, and articulate it with such clarity that investors lean forward in their chairs. His background as Vice Chairman and former Chief Operating Officer of Capital Markets at HSBC gives him a global perspective and a strong financial discipline that strengthens every strategic decision we make. But what makes Roger invaluable is not just his experience. It is his ability to elevate the narrative. He helps translate the heart of Travel Advances into language that resonates with sophisticated audiences. He brings a calm, steady intelligence to the table, and he has an uncanny ability to see around corners. When Roger speaks, people listen. And more importantly, they understand.

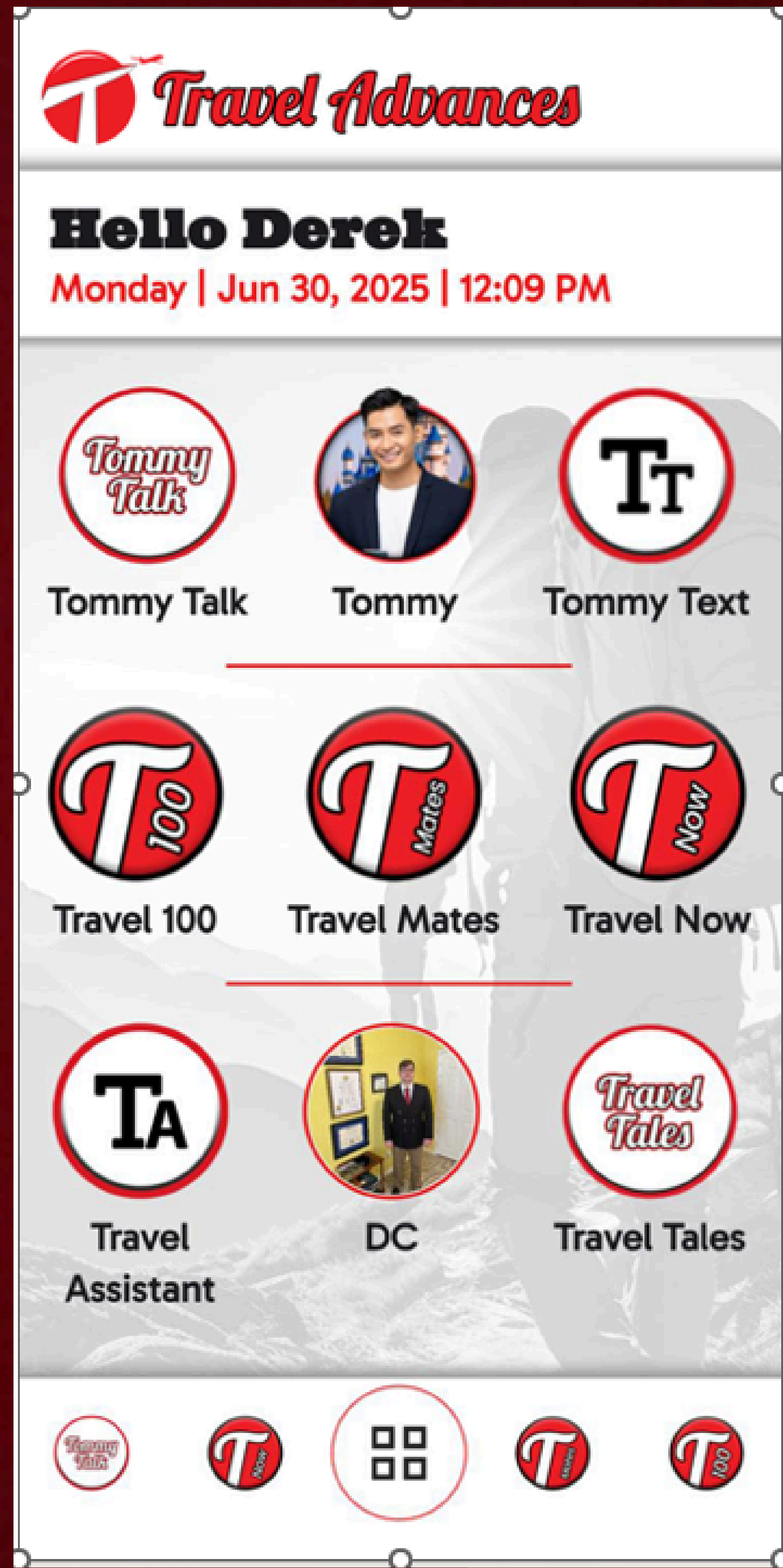
If Roger is the voice that amplifies our mission, then Rakesh Mittal is the architect who ensures it can scale. Rakesh brings a level of engineering discipline and operational clarity that is rare in any industry. His background as a Managing Director at Genpact means he has built systems that not only work but also endure. When Rakesh joined, he did not simply refine our technology. He rebuilt our foundation. He engineered the systems that transformed Travel Advances from a beautifully designed idea into a resilient, enterprise-grade platform. His approach is methodical, rigorous, and uncompromising. Every workflow must be reliable. Every system must be transparent. Every feature must reinforce our emotional-intelligence philosophy. I often joke that if emotional intelligence had a structural engineer, it would be Rakesh. Under his leadership, our technology became a fortress, scalable, secure, and built for long-term growth.

Together, Roger and Rakesh represent the two sides of Travel Advances: the narrative and the architecture, the story and the system, the vision and the execution. And the broader team reflects that same balance. They bring creativity, resilience, and momentum. They challenge assumptions. They push for clarity. They care deeply about the traveler's experience. I have always believed that great teams are built, not found. And this team is the strongest proof of that belief.

The challenges along the way have shaped us. The travel technology sector is crowded, and early skepticism was inevitable. Some questioned whether emotional intelligence could truly differentiate a platform. We proved that it could. Others wondered whether simplicity could scale. Rakesh's engineering systems demonstrated that it could. And as we grew, we faced the challenge of maintaining emotional resonance at scale. Roger's narrative clarity and our editorial discipline ensured that growth did not dilute the mission. Each challenge became a catalyst for refinement and alignment. And each challenge reinforced something I have always known. When you build with the right people, you can build anything.

The industry is now at an inflection point. The global travel market is projected to surpass $11 trillion over the next decade, with digital platforms capturing an increasingly dominant share. Yet the space remains fragmented, noisy, and largely undifferentiated. Most platforms compete on price or convenience, leaving a wide-open lane for a brand that competes on trust, clarity, and emotional resonance. Travel Advances is positioned precisely in that lane. We are not participating in the travel market. We are redefining it.

My vision for the future is ambitious and global, and I say that without hesitation because ambition without direction is noise, but ambition with clarity is momentum. I want Travel Advances to become the world's most trusted travel companion, emotionally intelligent, globally connected, and universally accessible. Not the loudest platform. Not the flashiest. The most trusted. The one traveler's instinctively opens when they need clarity, reassurance, or simply a moment of calm in the middle of a chaotic airport. The roadmap ahead reflects that intention. We are building deeper AI-driven personalization that feels less like technology and more like intuition. We are expanding Travel Mates globally to help people find meaningful connections in a world that is increasingly mobile yet often emotionally disconnected. We are curating travel experiences that resonate more deeply, the kind that stay with you long after the suitcase is unpacked. And we are forging partnerships with airlines, hospitality brands, and cultural institutions that understand the value of elevating how people feel, not just where they stay.



The long-term opportunity is not just to build a platform. Platforms come and go. Movements endure. What we are building is a movement that reshapes how people experience the world, one emotionally intelligent interaction at a time. I want Travel Advances to be the quiet confidence behind every great journey, the companion that makes people feel supported, understood, and empowered. If we do that well, the rest will follow.

And at the center of that movement, I remain guided by the same conviction that started it all. Travel is emotional. People want clarity. People want confidence. People want to feel understood. These truths are universal. They do not change with trends, technology cycles, or the latest buzzwords. They are the constants that define human experience. Travel Advances is my commitment to building technology that honors those truths rather than ignoring them. It is my answer to an industry that forgot the emotional side of travel, somewhere between the price comparison widgets and the endless pop-ups insisting you “book now before someone else does.”

The message I want to leave readers, investors, and future leaders with is simple. The most powerful innovations begin with a person who sees the world differently. Not louder. Not faster. Differently. I believe the future of travel belongs to those who understand not just where people want to go, but how they want to feel along the way. That belief is what drives me. That belief is what built Travel Advances. And that belief is what will carry this movement forward.

Because at the end of the day, travel is not about miles. It is about the meaning. And meaning is something worth building for.

CEO WORLD

LEADERS