

CEO WORLD

June 2026

LEADERS

THE HIDDEN
POWER OF
TRADE
SHOWS

THE ORIGINS OF
AN INDUSTRY
HIDDEN IN PLAIN
SIGHT

THE COVID
CRISIS AND THE
INDUSTRY'S
RESILIENCE

A portrait of Larry Kulchawik, a middle-aged man with grey hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue sweater over a light blue collared shirt. The background is a solid blue color with decorative white concentric circles in the corners.

Larry Kulchawik

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.





Kelly Bagla, Esq.

World's Most Fearless Leader in Law, 2026

The Journey

What possessed a 15-year-old girl to leave her family, cross an ocean, and enter a field where few women had succeeded? Even as a young teen, Kelly Bagla possessed remarkable courage and ambition, fearlessly embarking on her childhood dream of practicing law in the United States.

Today an internationally acclaimed corporate and securities attorney, Kelly Bagla, Esq. serves high-net-worth founders, investors, and enterprises navigating the legal complexities of safeguarding their assets, mitigating risks, and achieving long-term success. She is known for her rare blend of legal precision, entrepreneurial insight, and global perspective. Founder and CEO of Bagla Law, APC, Kelly is a trusted advisor to domestic businesses as well as to worldwide clients seeking to enter the United States market.

Fearless Leader in Law

CEO WORLD LEADERS Magazine has named Kelly Bagla, Esq. the World's Most Fearless Leader in Law, 2026. And for good reason. Her entire journey has exhibited a winning combination of ambition, vision, and courage.

Graduating top in her class Kelly earned multiple law and business degrees, in the United Kingdom and the United States, including a Master's degree in law. She then took the bold step of interviewing at the number one Mergers and Acquisitions law firm in the world. It never occurred to Kelly to aim anywhere but for the top. She was hand-selected by Baker McKenzie LLP and spent several years serving both domestic and international clients. The experience was invaluable, enhancing her understanding of domestic and global corporate law. A promising, secure career was afforded her within the prestigious firm. But Kelly made a daring decision that changed the course of her life.



Branching Out

It had become evident to Kelly that too often the legal services of a mega firm fell short for entrepreneurs. Business founders had difficulty navigating the complex legal systems (and cost structures) designed for large corporations. They needed more accessible guidance that could be tailored to early-stage or growth-focused businesses. Entrepreneurs could be better served.

Kelly, a successful attorney, always had a heart for entrepreneurs. Her father was a business owner who worked his way from the ground floor to eventually buy and transform the business. Kelly saw first-hand the dedication, vision, and risk required of an entrepreneur. She inherited her father's entrepreneurial spirit and has modeled her fearless approach after his example.

Remaining at the world's largest firm would have been the safe plan. But Kelly saw that she could provide entrepreneurs something better. She founded Bagla Law Firm, APC, specializing in business formation & asset protection with a vision of shaking up the corporate legal field, by putting the client's best interests at the forefront of every interaction and decision. For more than two decades, she has provided founders with tailored legal strategies to protect their assets in all phases of starting, growing and exiting their businesses. Bagla Law Firm's boutique services include entity formation, securities law, mergers and acquisitions, and international market entry.

Kelly's revolutionary transparent flat-fee structure lets business owners know up front what their legal fees will be. No longer are they suddenly surprised with hidden billable hours.

Her bold move to start her own firm has earned her great success and numerous accolades including California's Attorney of the Year and the 2025 and 2026 Lawyer International Legal 100 Award.

The Entrepreneur's Attorney

An entrepreneur at heart, Kelly is always envisioning the next opportunity. Kelly is CEO and founder of two additional enterprises, GoLegalYourself.com, a Do-It-Yourself online legal protection company to help entrepreneurs acquire the right legal documents, and *Pitbulls 'n Pearls*®, a business and personal development coaching company. She hosts her *Biz Queen*® Podcast, – listened to in 26 countries and named in the top 20 Business Law Podcasts. And she is the author of 5 books, including a New York Times, best seller, *Go Legal Yourself!*®. Kelly is a compelling online and broadcast guest, including her roles as a judge on the Emmy award-winning tv series, *Everyday Edisons*® and on *The Blox*®, an entrepreneur reality show in its 20th season.

Kelly's dual perspective, being both an award-winning attorney and a celebrated entrepreneur makes her the ideal Entrepreneur's Attorney. She understands the unique risks and challenges of business owners. And she knows how to navigate complex corporate law to create strategies for advancing her clients' dreams while protecting their assets.

The Essence of Courage

Kelly has been more than fearless throughout her career. She has been courageous. In her view, courage is the best foundation for fearlessness. In other words, taking risks fearlessly simply for the adrenalin rush can be fun but pointless unless it is grounded in a greater purpose.

Each of her corporate enterprises was founded on her mission to inform, equip and inspire entrepreneurs. Her purpose to help others achieve success provided the courage to undertake each business venture.

In addition to her companies, Kelly has embarked on surprising risky endeavors requiring other forms of courage. Entering the 2010 Ms. Southern California BODYBUILDING CHAMPIONSHIP presented Kelly with the opportunity to push herself beyond what she had believed she could achieve. The extreme training and discipline tested, broke, and built a new level of confidence. Everything she learned through the grueling experience has fortified her confidence and benefitted her career. Kelly won Ms. Southern California BODYBUILDING CHAMPIONSHIP and was the first Indian female to win it.

Kelly entered an entirely different kind of competition after she happened to visit a toy fair in Los Angeles. Walking up and down the aisles all she saw were unattractive, imported toys with very little emotional substance. She had an idea, researched the market, spoke with a patent expert and toy designer and invented the plush toy collection, Eardorables®. She entered a television contest THE TOY BOX on ABC, won the Mattel® Award and entered into a licensing agreement. The knowledge and experience she gained have applied to all of her business ventures since.

It also takes courage to stand up for one's values and to persevere in the face of opposition. Kelly is unapologetic for her strong belief in the American Dream. She crossed an ocean to follow her dream and now speaks boldly to audiences of aspiring entrepreneurs and professionals to assure them that America is still the Land of Opportunity. A British immigrant, and naturalized citizen, Kelly has become a walking, breathing example of the successful American Entrepreneur with a mission to help others on their journey.



Future Ventures

Kelly will continue building her brand and expanding her enterprises and global influence to advise entrepreneurs and investors in building durable businesses. She has no intention of slowing down but sees her momentum grow as her domain expands.

Outside of her career Kelly is a staunch supporter of veterans, evident through her pro bono work with the Veterans Chamber of Commerce and the various magazine publication contributions she provides to outlets like Homeland and San Diego Veterans Magazine. Bagla Law Firm, APC offers veterans discounted legal fees to say “thank you” to everyone who has defended this country. Kelly’s husband, Brent Waters is a retired US Marine and her most trusted advisor in all aspects of her career and personal life. They are both devout American Patriots.

The other passion in Kelly’s life is rescuing dogs! (5 rescues and counting...) The cause nearest and dearest to her heart is ensuring every dog finds its “fur-ever” home with a loving family. Bagla Law Firm, APC regularly donates to and supports Last Chance At Life: All Breed Rescue and Adoption, where Kelly enjoys donating her time. The focus of the non-profit is helping the animals in San Diego County. They have a special fondness for boxers, which Kelly shares! Kelly and Brent have always chosen to adopt dogs. The couple currently has three (3) four-legged rescues in their family. Affectionately known as “the girls,” the pups join Kelly each morning on a daily run.

Together Kelly and Brent share a vision to open their own dog sanctuary. The planning and dreaming have been in the works for years. Their goal is to treat canine guests in the sanctuary like family. Dogs will be properly fed with nutritious food, enjoy exercise and loving care. Stay tuned for this and other adventures ahead for Kelly.

Every challenge will be met with fearless courage and every success will be grounded in the values that have guided her through the decades.



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DEREK CAFFFERATA

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.



My World



Amanda Steele



658
POSTS

12K
FOLLOWERS

9K
FOLLOWING

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.

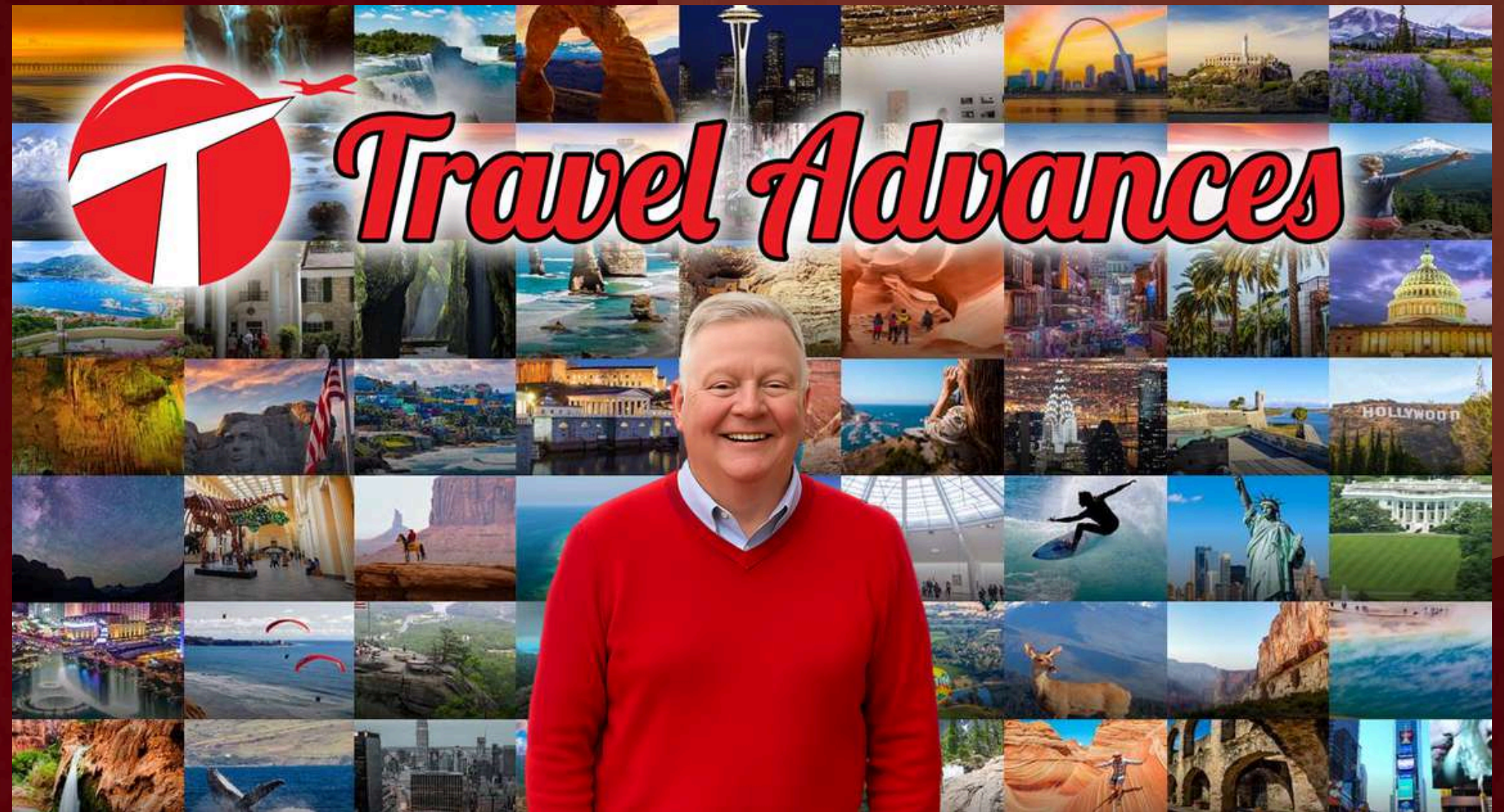
Leadership is the heartbeat of that philosophy, and I have always believed that a company's quality is a direct reflection of its people. I built Travel Advances on a foundation of clarity, discipline, and team-driven execution. Clarity is treated as a strategic asset, not a communication style. Discipline 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.

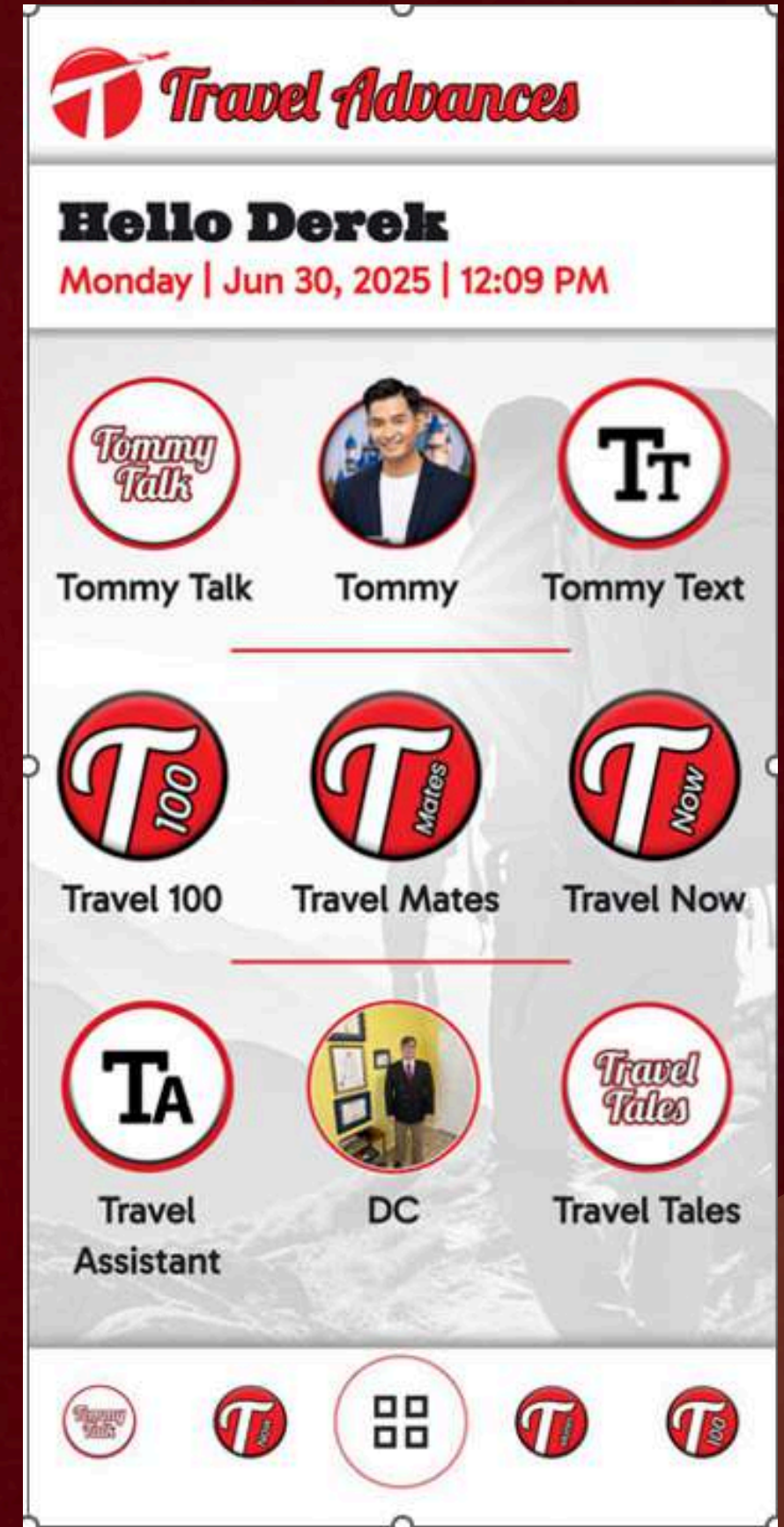


The long-term opportunity is not just to build a platform. Platforms come and go. Movements endure. What we are building is a movement that reshapes how people experience the world, one emotionally intelligent interaction at a time. I want Travel Advances to be the quiet confidence behind every great 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.





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