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## TMCnet.com ARTICLES

[January 08, 2004]

### The Road Less Traveled, A Success Story

Campbell Travel, a subsidiary of Campbell Resources Ltd., is one of the largest independently owned travel management companies in Texas. Established in 1983, and 4-time winner of the Dallas 100 award, Campbell is enjoying great success and tremendous growth, with an innovative new strategy, all while traditional travel agencies are struggling just to survive. Campbell's leading-edge technology helps corporate clients with cost reduction strategies paired with fees 50% lower than most of its competition. A local journalist took the opportunity to learn about this aggressive market-leading company, in an interview with Bob Campbell, Chairman and Founder of Campbell Resources, and Bill Campbell, President and CEO.

Interviewer

“Since 9/11, the travel industry has been turned upside down. What exactly has Campbell done to spawn so much success?”

Campbell

“The past 2 years have been both exciting and chaotic. We have introduced so much change into our business; and, the industry has encountered so much change that it's hard to keep up at times. We recognized early on that the traditional model for travel agencies, would not survive the future. Much of what the major airlines are facing, in comparison to the Southwest Airlines of the world, holds true to our business model as well. We made a conscious decision to dramatically lower operating costs, while increasing productivity, which, in turn allowed us to pass on the savings to our clients. So we really have done two things right. First, we invested in state of the art technology; and second, we viewed the business from the outside in, and made the decision to embrace competitive market segments, thereby creating a stronger value proposition for our clients.

INTERVIEWER

“What kinds of efficiencies have been realized, and how does this benefit your clients?”

Campbell

“Although painful, we never deviated from the commitment to investing in technology over the past two years. Through the economic downturn we made enhancements that only the Expedia's of the industry have in place. This allowed Campbell to dramatically increase productivity, while lowering our cost curves. This two-year journey places Campbell in the position to offer a price-point of about 50% of market. For example, traditional agencies offer agent assisted transactions for around \$40, while Campbell offers the same service for \$20. We also offer online transactions on three platforms,



starting at \$0 and ranging to around \$8.50. The \$8.50 platform is the most advanced booking platform around, allowing multiple source connectivity, integrated Internet search, and advanced pre-trip and policy functions. All services also include a comprehensive online reports suite.

INTERVIEWER

“You mentioned that you embraced competitive market segments. What do you mean?”

Campbell

“We saw the emergence of fractional jet programs, web conferencing, and online agencies, such as Expedia, Travelocity, and Orbitz, and automated expense management systems as competitive in nature; however, the potential benefits to these services are extremely important for our clients. Campbell decided to embrace these and other services with a focus on reducing overall costs for our clients. This came with a change in philosophy. The traditional agency mindset is to steer their clients to one carrier to increase agency income. Our philosophy is to find the lowest fare for our clients, regardless of carrier or source. Campbell sells what our clients prefer, so we have migrated away from the traditional agency mindset. I guess you could say that we are an Amazon.com of sorts, vs. a Sony distributorship.

INTERVIEWER

“That’s interesting. So Campbell is similar to a Travelocity in terms of pricing; however, very different in terms of what you can offer your clients. Do you compare your service to that of an Orbitz, or other online agency?”

Campbell

“Well, yes and no. Our goal is to provide more value at the same price point as Expedia, Orbitz, or Travelocity. We are already there. We don’t just search one database. If you use Expedia, you search Expedia. We search them all: Travelocity, Hotwire, Sabre, Orbitz, Expedia, Airline Websites, Low Cost Carriers, Hotels.com, and the list goes on. Most importantly, our advanced booking engine, ResX, captures all of the data on Internet bookings. This gives travel managers the power to report on fares found at Orbitz, and to use them for negotiation with the carriers. From a pricing standpoint, we are in line with the major portals. From a search, reporting, and policy control standpoint, we are much more advanced. Also important to note – that \$20 price we mentioned, for agent-assisted reservations, means you dial in to a dedicated team of 4 to 6 agents, and not into a call center with thousands. So we put our service in a different league as well.

INTERVIEWER

“How about other traditional agencies, can they copy Campbell?”

Campbell

“They can try, but we doubt they will succeed. We saw the need to become efficient, and acted upon this need about 24 months ago. We procured next generation technology that would automate nearly 40% of traditional agent processes, allowing reduced cost curves. We also procured a world-class, multimedia contact center CTI solution with VOIP capability, which helped us to better staff the organization. Our statistics are nearly double the efficiency of our peers. We have achieved this efficiency, while also allowing our consultants to earn more. I am not saying that other agencies can’t move in this

direction; however, the ramp-up time of 24 months was on an accelerated timeline. I don't think the traditional agency can make the investment, and second, they don't have 24 months. We think that survival means being a change leader, instead of reactive. We were very proactive. Most of our peers still operate on a traditional phone system, like a Nortel where they don't have unified messaging, and cannot gather statistics on email and voicemail. Most are also reliant on first generation QC systems like CoRRRe where they rely on internal programmers, instead of next generation systems, such as CorreX. Most do not have automated invoicing, automated itineraries, automated upgrades, automated ticketing, and automated scheduled trip notification. We can spend more time assessing the customer's needs and are much more accurate, due to our process automation. What we really see happening in the market is knee-jerk reaction and chaos. Peers in Dallas and in other areas are changing their names, trying to sound more global or technical, and trying to just weather the storm. Some are focusing on your travel, or really your transactions, looking for ways of making more incremental revenues. We just cannot believe the nickel and dime tactics we see today. Campbell is charging what the market dictates and earning a fair margin on greater operating efficiencies.

INTERVIEWER

"It sounds like Campbell is ready for the future, and positioned to be a market leader. What does the future hold?"

Campbell

"Campbell is not stopping here! In the future, we see the market getting more complex, and more price-driven. The traditional agency must become a data aggregator, and must have the technology to capture and report on the data, regardless of the source. Agents and travelers alike must have access to a platform, which allows rapid search and retrieval of content from all sources. This is a challenge that Campbell has prepared for. We think that market deregulation is probable, and that companies should select an agency partner that is prepared for this, so they don't end up only accessing a tiny sliver of the pricing in the market. Should GDS deregulation take place in January 2004, Campbell is prepared to offer content from multiple channels, to include supplier direct connects, on a single platform that agents and travelers can interface with. The search time will be lightning fast with Campbell; whereas, with a traditional agency, they will have to search multiple times, and in multiple places, translating into longer search times, reduced service, and higher operating costs. We are also prepared for increased price competition. Campbell has setup offshore operations, and is awaiting the need for this service. At some point in the future, we will possibly offer after-hours service at no additional charge, and are prepared to offer our clients an agent-assisted price, near the \$10 level. Should our clients request an offshore reservation environment, Campbell will be able to offer this service, while maintaining the small team atmosphere. We don't intend on eroding jobs at Campbell, and that is why this is offered only as a secondary service, specifically requested by our clients."

INTERVIEWER

"It sounds as if you have done a great job at reinventing the business."

Campbell

"The credit to Campbell's success has to go to our staff. I have never worked with a more professional group of people. We have a really great team, and each and every member of the team has contributed to our success. Looking back at things, I would say we have done about 90% right, and I am satisfied with that. The rapid transition impacted service for a while, and we left some casualties along the way. From here forward, things are only getting better. Our biggest challenge has been communication.

From one perspective, we wanted to keep our re-invention under wraps to avoid the competition from getting wind. On the other hand, we failed to share much of this information with our customers. That is going to change. All of our corporate accounts now have this new pricing structure.”

“We are very excited about our strategy, and about our growth, over the last 12 months. We can see the pace of change accelerating in the future, and we don’t think that CFO’s want their travelers to pay \$35 to \$40 to speak to a local travel agent, when they can call Campbell for \$20.”

#### INTERVIEWER

“Thank you for your time, and how may someone contact Campbell Travel if they are interested in learning more.”

Campbell

“They can contact our main number 972-716-2500, and select sales from the automated menu.”

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Campbell Resources, Ltd. has been serving the DFW community with exceptional management and travel based programs for more than 20 years. Campbell has built their corporate and leisure travel divisions with the idea that the customer always comes first. Along with this, their corporate travel department has accomplished an online adoption rate of over 60%, with the release of the top-rated travel management program RESX. Campbell has been successful in motivating corporate clients through its incentive based offering from RYI Solutions. RYI Solutions is a division of Campbell that markets and provides fulfillment to client’s looking to bring high productivity with managed results to the workplace. Campbell’s group and incentive department focuses on clients looking to energize their staff while staying within their yearly budget. Offering the best value and service to our clients keeps Campbell as one of the top-rated firms from around the country. (<http://www.campbellresources.net>)

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Technology Marketing Corporation,  
One Technology Plaza, Norwalk, CT 06854 USA  
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