

A Rare Opportunity

Future historians will remember the early 21st century as the epoch wherein the promise of a global community finally came to fruition. What Napoleon failed to accomplish with bullets and bayonets, was instead wrought with TCP/IP packets and microprocessors. For those of us who've come of age during this transition, the juxtaposition is striking: we grew up using "road maps" and "pay phones," but now live enmeshed within a worldwide cybernetic neurology—never lost, and always on the line.

Many industries have experienced major transformations as a direct consequence. The list of examples is lengthy and need not be enumerated exhaustively here: Apple transformed the music industry, as did Amazon in publishing, and Netflix in entertainment, and so on, to name only a few... All of these corporations innovated with technology. However, recently, some began doing so in a way qualitatively different: companies like Uber and Airbnb not only transformed their respective industries, transportation and hospitality, they also empowered their customers to become entrepreneurs.

The team at Pictoura firmly believes that the revolutionary nature of their business model has yet to be fully realized. While we do acknowledge that the so-called "sharing economy"—an umbrella term for all online services that enable people to rent cars, boats, beds and other assets directly from each other—is well past its infancy, we also recognize that the technological factors that enabled its birth will grow in significance by many orders of magnitude in the coming decade, and that one of its most exciting applications remains untouched. Digital technology enabled people to disaggregate and consume physical assets (e.g. cars and beds) as services because large data sets and sophisticated communication methodologies reduced transaction costs. Websites match inventory with demand, GPS enabled mobile devices radically simplify key logistics, social networks and peer review systems establish trust, and online payment vendors handle the billing. But, the true power of this toolbox will only manifest when the range of assets on offer within the "sharing economy" grows to encompass things more intangible, but not less valuable for being so. And the real limiting factor is a scarcity of vision, not exponentially increasing technological resources.

Simply put, the intangible assets under discussion here are "Travel Experiences"—or, more precisely, the ability to provide those experiences to others. To be clear, we are not talking about the airplane tickets, the restaurants, the beach sand, or even the cool breeze over misty mountain peaks. Instead, we aim to satiate the yearning for different cultures, new ideas, and spiritual transformation that compels people to explore the world in the first place. We believe there is an ocean of potential demand for these types of experiences, and a vast inventory: all the people in the world that have something to share, dear to themselves, and, potentially, of great value to someone else.

That shareable "something" could be a specific skill-set derived from work experience or a hobby; alternately, it could be as common-place as the *joie de vivre* of an affable local, eager to help travelers have an *authentic* experience in his/her community. The type of connections we're talking about happen all the time—but mostly by the grace of serendipity. We want to take the happenstance out of the process—and add a healthy dose of financial incentive. There's a lot of people out there just waiting for the right matchmaker; that's who we want to be.

So, when we use the term "Travel" we mean it in the broadest sense possible: it's a "state of mind" that seeks enrichment, rather than the contents of a tourism brochure. However, appropriating the vocabulary of the Travel & Tourism industry—a trillion-dollar industry, ripe for transformation—serves us as a logical starting point. Specifically, this means entering the arena of professional tour guide providers, many of which, we hope, will choose to join our inventory of layman tour guides themselves.

A website that enables people to market themselves as tour guides doesn't sound very radical; if anything, it sounds sensible (and maybe even like a good investment). But, we hope, it will be the start of much, much, more. Steve Jobs was right when he said that, sometimes "people don't know what they want until you show it to them." We believe that this is one of those times. People can't see it yet, but innovative organizations will one day provide them with avenues for personal development and enrichment unavailable to previous generations. It's going to happen because the demand is real and the material resources for satisfying that demand exist. It's only a question of when, and which companies will rise to the challenge.

The GYDR Brand – In Depth

Pronunciation [g/’ider] A GYDR is an individual with unique and authentic knowledge of a locale or field of interest that he or she is happily willing to share

Synonym: guide, local, expert, attendant, travel agent, tour operator, docent, chaperone
e.g. Gandalf, Sacagawea, Yoda, Dr. Henry Jones Jr., Neil Armstrong, Jack Kerouac

Acronym for: Get Your Destination Right

The logo or brand of a corporation is a condensation, a symbolic totality that captures the essence of a world of desire—the most visible manifestation of the intelligence and aspirations of the people behind it. An effective brand does more than act as a calling card, it serves as both lighthouse and lodestar. It steers consumer demand towards it, and helps its organization stay on course. When it’s done right, it’s something that can be felt viscerally.

We think it’s self-evident that, with GYDR, we’ve found a brand identity that works as such. It says so much, so quickly. Instantly, you know what it means: no one gets through this life without needing a little guidance from time to time, and most of us have experienced the satisfaction of providing that service on occasion. But, at the same time, it sets itself apart: a GYDR is more than just a guide, it’s something new... it’s something more. What that “more” means exactly, of course, is a story that we still need to tell. But, we think people won’t need to be told what kind of story to expect. GYDR is the kind of word that would feel right at home in a broad range of sub-cultures: graffiti artists, hackers, revolutionaries... All of them dedicated to the values of *freedom* and *self-expression*. People will expect the same from us, and the only way that will change is if we give them cause to do otherwise.

GYDR also functions as a constant reminder of our founder’s original aspiration for the company: it’s an acronym for Get Your Destination Right. That simple phrase sums up just about everything Marc Miller wanted to provide people when he incorporated Pictoura LLC. Marc practices transactional law as a profession, but he’s also a man with deep expertise in other domains, most notably travel and photography. After many sojourns across the globe in search of things both beautiful and true, Marc had an intuition that something was wrong with the way travel plans were made, executed, and remembered. He knew what kind of experience he wanted to have: he didn’t want something superficial—he wanted to connect with the *lived experience* of a culture, to dive deep, and see the world through a set of eyes much different from his own. And he didn’t want to scramble, back and forth, between a bunch of different online resources to get it done; he thought that there should be one digital destination where he could do everything: plan, book, and share.