



# Redefining travel agents' valuable role in 21st century

The Association of Southern African Travel Agents (ASATA) has released member research results on what it takes to be a 21st century travel agent. Key skills, seen as non-negotiable, are relationship management, great communication and personality.



## Consumer driven industry

In this digital age, where clients can go online and search for the information they need to make their travel decisions, the respondents identified the growth of self-service, more online direct bookings and traveller's tendency to access their travel information themselves as well as online check-in, as the current top three travel trends; adding that travellers are increasingly demanding better, exclusive travel deals and after hours personalised service.

Otto de Vries, CEO of ASATA, said that this industry has now become entirely consumer driven, that the customer is savvy and informed. "Our role has changed and has to be clearly defined and promoted to show the value proposition for a customer when engaging a professional travel agent. Travel agents must understand that the customer experience not only begins before the time of sale but also extends well after purchase and travel."

## Become travel experts

The survey suggests that travel agents recognise the potential for customers to go online and book their travel, with over 60% saying that their top priority must be to convince customers that they're better than the internet and, more than ever, they need to become travel experts.

"That the vast majority of ASATA survey respondents indicated they felt over 60% ready to fulfil the roles and demands of a 21st century travel agent is encouraging. We must define our value, we must sell it and promote it, and we must do it collectively and cohesively," concludes de Vries.

For more information, go to [www.asata.co.za](http://www.asata.co.za).

