

#1

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Thursday, April 21, 2022 10:18:11 AM
Last Modified: Thursday, April 21, 2022 10:33:53 AM
Time Spent: 00:15:42
IP Address: 12.230.230.194

Page 1: Active Member Candidate Information

Q1

First and Last Name

Justin Shuler

Q2

Company Name

Group Travel Network, Inc.

Q3

Company Address

9907 8th Street
Box 430
Gotha, FL 34734

Q4

Email Address

justin@grouptravelnetwork.com

Q5

Phone

4073475921

Q6

SYTA Board of Director (Active)

I am nominating myself for the position of:

Q7

Yes

I am the current designated representative or primary contact of my organization.

Q8

Small - under 100 employees

Please indicate your company size.

Q9

Please indicate your company type. Select all that apply.

**Education,
Performance,
International**

Q10

Please indicate where your company does business.

**United States,
North America,
Internationally**

Q11

If applicable, please describe your experience with the international travel industry.

GTN has worked extensively with international partner organizations in the planning efforts of student/youth travel overseas.

Page 2: Candidate Questions

Q12

Please describe your experience as a volunteer within or outside the travel community.

I have personally volunteered with the SYTA organization for more than a decade including previous BoD and Executive Board participation. In addition, I have been active in volunteering within the Special Olympics organization both locally (Orlando), statewide (Florida) and with the USA Games.

Q13

Please describe your professional experience in the student travel industry.

I have been directly involved with the student travel industry for 25 years, building my own company from the ground up beginning in 2004. From a single employee-run organization to a double-digit staff that works with student groups around the world.

Q14

Please describe other professional or personal experience that would benefit you as a Board member.

As a previous member of the SYTA BoD, with Executive Board experience during a pivotal transition period for SYTA, I believe I could bring stability, insight, and historical perspective to our industry's rebuilding efforts.

Q15

Please describe why you would like to serve as a Board of Director (Active) or Vice President (Active).

I am eager to assist an industry that I have literally grown up in as we rebuild the foundation that was rocked during the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe that the future is bright, and with the right efforts in place, we can learn, build and thrive for as far as we can imagine.

Q16

What do you see as the challenges facing the student travel industry? What can SYTA do to meet those challenges?

Rebirth, Reconnection, Rebuilding is a glaring challenge that is present for ALL members (Active and Associate). Staffing, education, leadership training, connecting members, advocacy at the local/state levels in key industry-leading states, government relations, and having a voice are all key necessities that would benefit all member companies.

Q17

Respondent skipped this question

What initiatives are you passionate about that you would like to see further implemented in our industry?

Q18

Is there anything else you'd like to share with the Nominating Committee?

I thank you for considering my nomination and eagerness to join the BoD for a new term, to assist with providing content, direction, and tools for all member companies to recommit to the success of our beloved industry.

#2

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Friday, April 22, 2022 3:07:15 PM
Last Modified: Friday, April 29, 2022 10:44:10 AM
Time Spent: Over a day
IP Address: 73.69.61.75

Page 1: Active Member Candidate Information

Q1

First and Last Name

Courtenay Betts

Q2

Company Name

EF Explore America

Q3

Company Address

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Q4

Email Address

courtenay.betts@ef.com

Q5

Phone

6176191549

Q6

SYTA Board of Director (Active)

I am nominating myself for the position of:

Q7

Yes

I am the current designated representative or primary contact of my organization.

Q8 **Medium - 100-999 employees**

Please indicate your company size.

Q9 **Education**

Please indicate your company type. Select all that apply.

Q10 **North America**

Please indicate where your company does business.

Q11

If applicable, please describe your experience with the international travel industry.

During my time with EF in Canada, while I focused on the domestic market even then, I was on a team that worked with our international products as well. My exposure was mostly focused on our international events or emergencies overseas.

Page 2: Candidate Questions

Q12

Please describe your experience as a volunteer within or outside the travel community.

As you know, I am currently sitting on the BOD in a 2-year at large position. I have been taking great pride in helping see the organization and its membership through the pandemic. Prior to joining the board, I volunteered to plan and coordinate the 2020 SYF trip to New York City. That experience was a lot of fun and it was great to work in tandem with SYTA staff and NYC & Co. At the start of the Pandemic, I joined the safety committee to help ensure that we were supporting the membership as best we could during such a confusing and scary time. In 2016, I volunteered at the Paralympics in Brazil on the media team. In that role, I was responsible for helping coordinate interviews between international press agents and the athletes at the Track & Field events. In the past, I volunteered with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada where I developed and led music and drama programming, the Special Olympics, and Relay for Life events.

Q13

Please describe your professional experience in the student travel industry.

My entire 15+ -year tourism career has been solely focused on Student Travel. In 2006 I entered the industry as a Tour Guide for a Canadian company called Keating Educational Tours as a Tour Guide leading trips throughout Canada and the US. In 2011 I was hired by EF Tours Canada, a Canadian division of EF Education First, to take on a role on their Canadian Operations team. Since then I have remained with EF Education First but have transitioned through a few roles, products, and offices. When I was a Tour Guide, I worked with both middle and high school-aged groups leading them through excursions across North America which gave me a great understanding of their needs, desires, and educators' curriculum objectives. Since then, at EF I have held a few different roles, but all have been centered around ensuring a positive tour experience. I have held roles that have touched almost all aspects of the tour experience; operations, product development, sales, safety, and now focusing on Partnerships and vendor strategies.

Q14

Please describe other professional or personal experience that would benefit you as a Board member.

In our industry there tends to be a lot of turnovers which causes teams and companies to start from scratch repeatedly because they consistently lose context. I have been lucky enough to be with the same company for 11 years and during my time with EF, as mentioned, I have had the opportunity to learn about all aspects of the business. I believe that my internal opportunities have provided me with more knowledge than someone else who has been in the sales role for 11 years. Because of my well-rounded experience in the student industry, I feel that I have increased understanding and empathy toward both active and associate members. While I live and work in the US, I am Canadian and have great pride in my home country. I know the tourism industry in Canada as well and when required will be able to be a support for that sector of the membership. Starting my career as a Tour Guide allowed me to hone essential skills that would position me well for the tasks of sitting on the board, such as being flexible and adaptable, believing that nothing is impossible, thinking quickly and how to work through a crisis, as well as how to collaborate with all sorts of different personalities and ideas. I am a good listener and a confident decision-maker.

Q15

Please describe why you would like to serve as a Board of Director (Active) or Vice President (Active).

I have really enjoyed my time as an at-large member but I think that a 2-year term is just too short to truly make an impact. I want to continue the work we have been doing and continue to support the membership, SYTA staff, and fellow board members.

Q16

What do you see as the challenges facing the student travel industry? What can SYTA do to meet those challenges?

It's no secret that travel is not friendly to the environment and generally negatively affects the planet. Each generation becomes more focused on finding ways to cut down on their carbon footprint and I believe that these next generations of middle and high school students are going to start to hold companies accountable for their sustainability practices and policies. We need to start thinking forward about how we can make changes to keep up with the concerns of these students.

Q17

What initiatives are you passionate about that you would like to see further implemented in our industry?

As mentioned above, I am passionate about sustainability. Currently, I am leading a task force centered around how to bring sustainability into the SYTA community in a way that members will understand and embrace. This is not a project that happens overnight, and our work so far has been limited but we have great plans for the future. I would love to continue to be able to lead this charge and help build out the task force into a true committee in the future.

Q18

Is there anything else you'd like to share with the Nominating Committee?

I am dedicated to this industry and would truly appreciate the opportunity to continue with the board and help SYTA evolve into the future.

#4

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, May 04, 2022 9:05:49 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, May 04, 2022 10:00:03 PM
Time Spent: 00:54:13
IP Address: 108.27.238.22

Page 1: Active Member Candidate Information

Q1

First and Last Name

Gaurav Namit

Q2

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Fourwinds Tours and Travels

Q3

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Syosset, NY 11791

Q4

Email Address

gaurav@fourwindstours.com

Q5

Phone

2123900438

Q6

SYTA Board of Director (Active)

I am nominating myself for the position of:

Q7

Yes

I am the current designated representative or primary contact of my organization.

Q8

Small - under 100 employees

Please indicate your company size.

Q9

**Education,
Performance,
International**

Please indicate your company type. Select all that apply.

Q10

**United States,
North America,
Internationally**

Please indicate where your company does business.

Q11

If applicable, please describe your experience with the international travel industry.

Inbound we have worked with schools from Australia and China to tour around the US, primarily the east coast and westcoast. Outbound, we have taken student groups all around to every continent except Antarctica. Pre-pandemic about 20% of our business was international and currently it trends pretty similar although the destinations have been limited to the Caribbean and Europe post pandemic we expect to return to more destinations next year. We primarily work with DMC's in destination to help with local logistics.

Page 2: Candidate Questions

Q12

Please describe your experience as a volunteer within or outside the travel community.

I worked with solar lighting company called socialite that designs and delivers solar lighting systems to rural communities in west africa. We work for providing light at the end of road for those who subsist on less than 2 dollars a day using a centralized charging system to minimize costs for communities.

Q13

Please describe your professional experience in the student travel industry.

My mother started Fourwinds when I was 9 years old and I have been around it my whole life. After my previous career focused in technology, I joined mom 7 years ago to work with mom to help modernize and grow the company. Leading to the pandemic we had seen our largest YoY growth for three years and largest sales year ever. Currently I oversee the recovery of the company through post pandemic travel.

Q14

Please describe other professional or personal experience that would benefit you as a Board member.

Prior to this I worked on several startups in Silicon Valley including two of my own. In that time I raised money, was part of YCombinator, and had one of my companies sold to a UK based marketing agency. Through these experiences I spent a great deal of time learning about different parts of fundraising, strategies for growing businesses, and technological opportunities. As we navigate forward as an industry in our interconnected world, it is vital to keep in mind how to expand our community both domestically and abroad and understanding the different challenges that will face companies at all stages will be critical. I feel that my experience with these things will help the greater community as we best navigate our growing but turbulent future.

Q15

Please describe why you would like to serve as a Board of Director (Active) or Vice President (Active).

Over the years I have felt SYTA has continued to grow and serve our industry as a center point for vendors and operators alike to help connect different parts of our industry to continue to serve student needs. Whether it's about finding bus companies in states we don't usually operate to, to help with IRS rules, SYTA has continue to offer guidance and support within the industry. For all the benefits I have reaped from being a long-standing SYTA member, I would like to give back and help SYTA continue to move forward as it continues to grow back along with our industry.

Q16

What do you see as the challenges facing the student travel industry? What can SYTA do to meet those challenges?

Turbulent pricing, uncertainty around travel, re-staffing and re-tooling to meet increased demands are what I see as the major challenges over the next 18-24 months. Pricing fluctuations in gases continue to fluctuate with such wild abandon that we have to communicate changes and demands that we have never seen before. SYTA can continue to offer support to our members with useful communique's about these trends in the travel industry that is driving some of this uncertainty. Things like, infographics showing the sharp increase in gas prices, regional hotel prices, or airline prices could help our members communicate this to clients. Get ahead of the questions that they will start asking.

Q17

What initiatives are you passionate about that you would like to see further implemented in our industry?

SYTA has been working on industry trend research to help provide guidance to companies about how the industry as a whole is recovering. This is particularly useful as a benchmark about parts of the industry that each specific company may not be focused on. For example, our company does not focus on sports trips frequently, but seeing trends for companies that do can help guide sales calls in the case a client may have a sports travel needs. I would love to see us increase our efforts here for more granular data across the student travel space, internationally as well as domestically.

Q18

Is there anything else you'd like to share with the Nominating Committee?

Through the pandemic I think many of us had many questions and doubts and were wondering if this was the right space for the long term. After many nights wondering how long the endless COVID restrictions would last, I will say that I left realizing that although it was a more than challenging time for all of us, there is no place else I feel better suited to be for the next decade or more of my career.

#5

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, May 04, 2022 10:09:08 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, May 04, 2022 10:36:39 PM
Time Spent: 00:27:30
IP Address: 24.50.224.148

Page 1: Active Member Candidate Information

Q1

First and Last Name

Alex J Urdaneta

Q2

Company Name

Viajes A plus Inc.

Q3

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Q4

Email Address

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Q5

Phone

787-374-2949

Q6

SYTA Vice President (Active)

I am nominating myself for the position of:

Q7

Yes

I am the current designated representative or primary contact of my organization.

Q8

Small - under 100 employees

Please indicate your company size.

Q9

Education,

Please indicate your company type. Select all that apply.

Performance,

International

Q10

United States,

Please indicate where your company does business.

Internationally

Q11

Respondent skipped this question

If applicable, please describe your experience with the international travel industry.

Page 2: Candidate Questions

Q12

Please describe your experience as a volunteer within or outside the travel community.

Doing community work through volunteerism has always been one of my passions. Beyond my volunteer commitment to SYTA, I've been active in environmental conservation and with food distribution for the poor. I've learned so much from these experiences and I've enjoyed the friendships this work has generated.

For years I have been a volunteer for the organization Para la Naturaleza —protecting, educating and raising awareness concerning the balance of nature on the islands of Puerto Rico. This is the island conservation trust. I've helped with their annual events to support the protected areas. And I've been active in tree planting programs.

Beach cleaning is something that most of the inhabitants of the Caribbean Islands are interested in now. Every year, the Scuba Dogs Society organizes several solid waste collection campaigns on the north coast of Puerto Rico. I participate in these campaigns most every year.

I'm also interested in food distribution and security. I have volunteered with organizations that provide prepared, warm food for disadvantaged and sometimes homeless people.

Within the tourism industry I have been a consistent volunteer at the annual SYTA conferences. I also had the opportunity to co-host the SYTA Summit 2020 in Puerto Rico. This was an unforgettable experience that filled me with great professional satisfaction. And what a thrill to showcase our "Island of Enchantment."

Currently I'm one of the members of the SYTA Board of Directors

Q13

Please describe your professional experience in the student travel industry.

Student travel; it's been a part of my life since my college days in Venezuela. It started with a summer job, first as a tour guide, then as a driver in Orlando. After coming to the United States, and working for some years in Orlando and San Juan, in 2008 I opened a student travel agency, Viajes A Plus, based in San Juan, Puerto Rico. In twelve short years, Viajes A Plus has grown at an unimaginable speed. The agency is dedicated to promoting and coordinating tourist experiences for educational purposes. The company exists to address the educational interests of students --for schools, colleges, universities, and other youth groups where education, fun, culture and imagination are combined. Changing lives for good is our passion, I have a team of hardworking tour guides, operations specialists, and program consultants that work to ensure the highest standards of quality.

Q14

Please describe other professional or personal experience that would benefit you as a Board member.

I am a small business owner who has had experience with other travel organizations, but has primarily created and grown his own company from scratch. I have grown from my experience of coping with almost constant challenges in Puerto Rico including ten plus years of financial recession, two major hurricanes, on-going earthquakes, ZIKA, and political chaos. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in particular, my colleagues and I have become more creative, optimistic, flexible, and determined. We will need this resilience in the coming months and perhaps years toward recovery from the current medical and economic crisis. This current crisis reminds me that our world is fragile and that we should be more conscious about how vulnerable our work is if world citizens don't address environmental issues. With the 2020 shock to our world, SYTA will have a critical role to play for our collective membership. Traveling and work in our industry has made me think globally, not just in terms of my own existence and prosperity, but realizing that people are now connected worldwide more than ever before, and it is my mission to create awareness among my colleagues and peers.

I know SYTA is an organization created in the USA, but it belongs to the whole world and to help populations in the United States. As a Venezuelan-born American, I may be able to provide some helpful perspectives from the fast-growing Latinx population.

Q15

Please describe why you would like to serve as a Board of Director (Active) or Vice President (Active).

In SYTA association I have found a community that has not only welcomed me with open arms since the first year we became members but has helped us to better understand the student travel industry, prepare ourselves to be better in the field and on top of everything has expanded our vision and our offerings. I firmly believe that I should give back with my grain of sand with the organization.

The fact of not belonging to a state of the American union, of working in a different social and political culture has given us a different perspective, an approach that we have had to adapt, all of which I would like to share for the diversity and the good of our industry.

Q16

What do you see as the challenges facing the student travel industry? What can SYTA do to meet those challenges?

Clearly, the most obvious and the largest challenge is to navigate the on-going pandemic and its profound affect on our world, our country, our membership and SYTA, our schools and most importantly, our young people. A new re-organization of civil society is rolling out with each up and down of this adventure. As companies and as our membership organization SYTA, we will struggle with the menace. We will need to look deeply into the impact the pandemic will have on our members, and how we can best recognize their needs and listen to them. SYTA has done a remarkable job in the past couple of months with regular updates on federal relief packages, and important educational programs concerning legal, branding, marketing, and other topics. SYTA programs and activities must change to suit the times and I am convinced that we will continue to have high impact for our membership.

Overall, to address and overcome this challenge, SYTA must follow the same path its been following, that is, guiding and supporting its members, and above all, continuing to create strategies and obtaining all the information that can help mitigate risks and manage chaos and crisis.

Q17

What initiatives are you passionate about that you would like to see further implemented in our industry?

For me, being a member of SYTA has meant more than being a part of yet another community. It's a values-based culture of wonderful, caring human beings. It's such a tremendous organization, with many challenges and opportunities. And it's been an opportunity to strength ourselves and our organizational culture through these years. It's been such an honor to meet and get to know everyone, with these great ideas to share and help each other. If invited to serve as a Vice President of the SYTA Board, I will serve with commitment, energy, and determination.

Q18

Respondent skipped this question

Is there anything else you'd like to share with the Nominating Committee?
