TourAdvantage™

A Turnkey Automated Marketing Solution for Tour Operators

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DIGITAL MARKETING

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Introduction

TourAdvantage™ is a unique and comprehensive email marketing solution designed exclusively for FareHarbor customers. Powered by an innovative email marketing tool called Drip, TourAdvantage puts the power of big-budget marketing campaigns in the hands of small to mid-sized tour companies with moderate budgets.

Differentiating our solution from other more generic email marketing plugins is the robust customer and prospect information captured and integrated with Drip. Combined with over forty easy to follow video tutorials tailored to the tour operator experience, and over thirty accelerator campaigns and email templates, TourAdvantage lets owner/operators be the master of big marketing efforts, maximize direct bookings, and position an advantage over other local attractions with larger marketing budgets.

Target Audience

This is not a solution built for the masses. It is specifically designed for small to mid-sized tour industry professionals that often lack the budget, time and resources necessary to effectively market and stand out in a fast-paced, data driven world.

How is this possible? Whereas large digital marketing agencies dedicate entire teams of consultants to design and execute on client-specific engagements, Sunstone took an entirely different approach. By focusing on a relatively small niche industry and scale; a single, leading booking engine (FareHarbor); and on-line training, accelerated and turnkey approach we've eliminated the need for expensive, one-on-one consulting engagements.

The end result is a solution that offers the same customized and highly effective results to which enterprise solutions are accustomed, but at a price perfectly aligned for small businesses.

Components

The TourAdvantage solution consists of three primary components: extensive data integration between FareHarbor and Drip, comprehensive on-line training courses, and a robust library of accelerator campaigns and templates.

Data Integration

The data integration layer is designed to work with a single source booking system -- FareHarbor -- and a single target email marketing system -- Drip. By extracting and loading not only simplistic customer and booking data like email address, name, and item, but also ecommerce level info like pricing, key dates, custom fields, and more, our solution equips campaigns with a 360-degree view of customer interaction. This detailed level of integration would not be possible with most email marketing solutions, nor with a generic middle-tier such as Zapier.

The following data points are captured in near-real time with TourAdvantage integration:

- Customer info (email, name and phone number)
- Item booked
- Item price
- Item quantity
- Booking date
- Tour start date
- Tour end date
- Affiliate information
- FareHarbor custom field responses for further segmentation (eg. Is the customer a local, Occasion for the event, How'd you find us, etc)

In addition to this integration, the solution natively captures other key customer and prospect interactions such as:

- Website/blog pages visited
- Campaign engagement
- Emails opened
- Subscriptions

On-Line Training

Powered by Teachable, our comprehensive training package includes over forty detailed video lessons and support materials designed to walk operators, step-by-step, through the process of creating effective campaigns right out of the gate.

Example tutorials include (but are not limited to):

- Creating Opt-In Forms
- Generating Successful Lead Magnets
- Building Welcome Campaigns
- Go Big With Email Remarketing

All training sessions are self-guided, allowing the business owner to move forward at their own pace, review advanced material repeatedly, and skip sections that are of no interest.

Tutorials are updated as new integration touch-points become available with FareHarbor and/or new applicable functionality becomes available in Drip.

New classes will be released regularly (our goal is 1-2 per quarter.) Content will be based on questions received from support and conversations in the private customer Facebook group.

Accelerators

Even the most marketing-savvy tour operator business can benefit from a jump-start set of emails and workflows.

Example accelerators include (but are not limited to):

- New Tour Promotions
- Remarketing a Tour
- If you liked tour X, you'll love tour Y
- Concierge outreach

Example Campaigns

The following are three sample use cases out of over twenty for which we deliver accelerator campaigns and workflows.

Beginner: Onboarding Welcome Series

Tour operators can expect a different conversion cadence from locals than they would from visitors, and for that reason it helps to know who is in town on vacation and who is a local. Atlanta Tours captures this with a custom field in FareHarbor: How often do you visit Atlanta? The answers include: I'm a Resident, Frequently, or Not Very Often.

➔ Trigger the workflow when someone enters their email on an opt-in form, when someone books a tour, or when the tour operator imports emails from a festival.
➔ Wait 1 day (because they will likely be getting the lead magnet or FareHarbor booking emails on day 0)
➔ Check to see if they are already a subscriber. If not, continue.
➔ Check the custom field answer.
    ◆ If it is blank or Not Very Often then send a Welcome Series email targeted at them, and showing extensive social proof. Put them on a *quarterly* newsletter rotation.
    ◆ If it is Resident or Frequently then send a Welcome Series email targeted at them as locals. Put them on a *monthly* newsletter option.

Intermediate: If you liked that, you'll love this

Many tour operators have complimentary tours. For example, Los Angeles Tours offers a "Big Movie Stars 1 Tour" and a "Big Movie Stars 2 Tour". Atlanta Tours offers a food history tour that covers places patronized by Martin Luther King Jr….and then also offers a tour specifically about MLK and his life. This workflow allows operators to cross-sell those related tours.

➔ Trigger the workflow at the end of the day that the Big Movie Stars Tour 1 was taken.
➔ Check that the booking was not cancelled. If not cancelled, continue.
➔ Wait 3 days.
➔ See if same customer booked Big Movie Stars Tour 2 at any time. If they did not, continue.
➔ Send the customer a campaign about Big Movie Stars Tour 2.
➔ Wait 1 week.
➔ See if same customer booked Big Movie Stars Tour 2 at any time. If they did not, continue.

➔ Send a second campaign about Big Movie Stars Tour 2, with a coupon code.
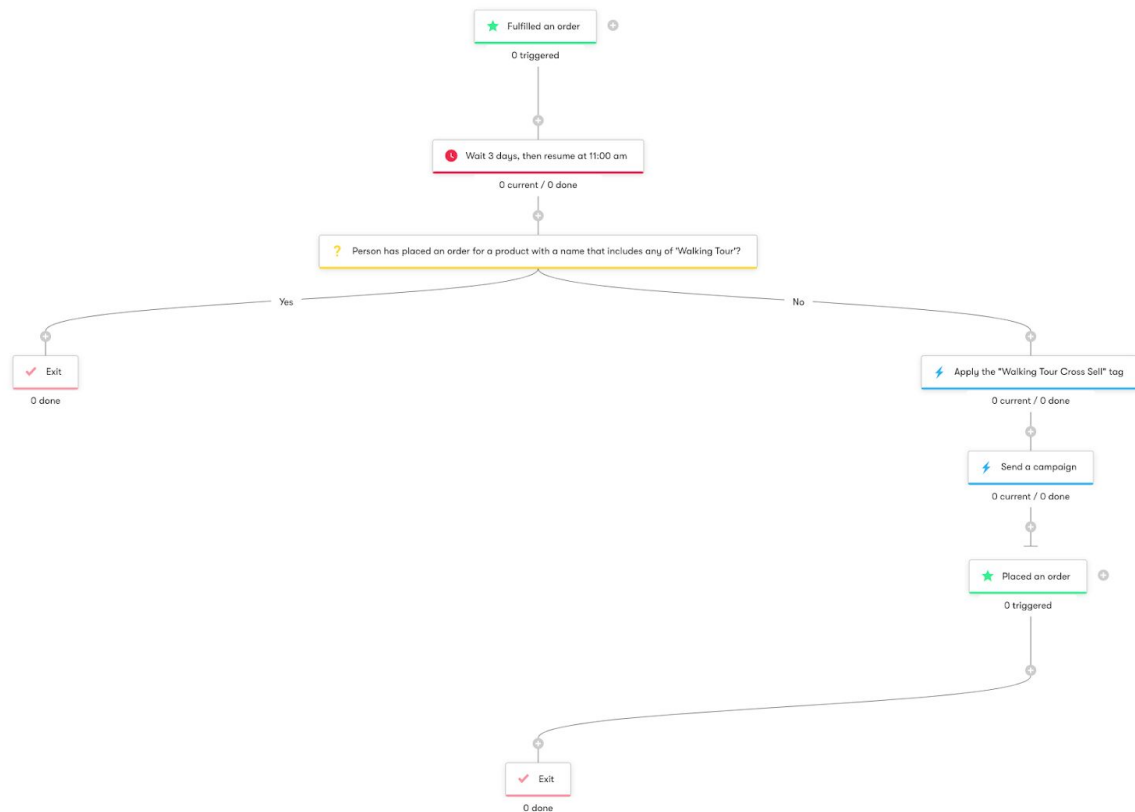
Advanced: Remarketing Tours

If someone comes to a tour operator's website, but does not make a purchase...we want to get them back! Ideally, we need to have their email address, which is why lead magnets are so important. Once we have that golden ticket...the rest is magic.

➔ Workflow is triggered when a subscriber views the Gulf Coast Tour
➔ Wait 1 day and see if that was still the last tour the subscriber viewed. If it is, continue.
  ◆ We know that people typically look through all the tours, but view the tour they are most interested in LAST...so this workflow keeps cycling until we find the LAST tour they viewed in a 24-hour period.
➔ See if the subscriber purchased Gulf Coast Tour in the last 7 days. If they did not, continue.
  ◆ We know that sometimes, after making a purchase, people come back to review the details or share with a friend. We don't want to "sell" them something they already purchased, so we check that first.

➔ Send an email encouraging them to purchase, maybe offering a coupon, showing social proof.
➔ Capture order statistics in the workflow so it can be tracked for effectiveness.

Why Email? Why Drip?

The Power of Email

McKinsey & Company. Custora. Smart Insights. Direct Marketing Association.

Repeatedly, these and other marketing research organizations tell us that the power to reach people is not in social media or banner ads or direct mailings...it's in email.

While SEO gives the best conversion rate possible, it is often difficult for non-technical people to learn, and can often be over 12 months before results are seen. Email, however, gives you the *best* and *most immediate* return - and it's easy to understand.

In fact, McKinsey's study suggests that email marketing provides a return 4300% more than social media...with cart totals 17% greater. WOW!

While we are in no way suggesting that people should stop their social media efforts, we do believe that tour operators with limited time and limited budget should focus their time and money on marketing with email. And we're here to help.

The Power of Drip

In preparation for building Tour Advantage, we evaluated dozens of email tools. We started with MailChimp (they are an Atlanta company, like us...and they are the de facto selection for many small businesses) but it was just not powerful enough for the email campaigns tour operators need to maximize direct bookings.

We also evaluated AWeber, Constant Contact, Active Campaign, HubSpot, Ontraport, and many others. We ran into either a) the same issue as MailChimp - limited functionality, or b) great functionality, but an outrageous price tag.

Finally, we discovered Drip. Drip's price point is comparable to MailChimp, but the features are far superior.

Expedia tells us there is a 45-day buying cycle for travel. We know that the cycle for tours is even shorter, and for that reason, email remarketing functionality is imperative. Unlike the aforementioned tools, Drip offers this ability. (Note: Ontraport offers this also, but at about 3x-5x the cost of Drip.)

Additionally, unlike MailChimp, Drip is an eCRM tool. It allows for the capture of data beyond basic subscriber information. It allows connection of the order management side of FareHarbor at the *customer* level in order to build better, more profitable, and real relationships with customers.

Finally, it's no small effort that the interface of Drip is user-friendly. Drag and drop email creators, and visual depictions of workflows, make the learning curve (and long-term management) great for beginners and advanced users alike.

Scalability and Support

The TourAdvantage data integration engine resides in a secure, Google Cloud environment. Utilizing Google's best practice load balancing architecture, the solution is able to scale from hundreds of FareHarbor customers, to thousands within minutes.

Custom error handling in Google cloud allows us to ensure that integration errors are trapped and handled by Sunstone, and not passed to FareHarbor technical support.

Sunstone Digital Marketing warranties and supports the integration layer, i.e., movement of information between FareHarbor and Drip. All Drip-related support issues and questions are handled either through Drip's on-line support channel.

Pricing

TourAdvantage is competitively priced on a month to month, or annual subscription basis.

	TourAdvantage Basic	TourAdvantage Premium
Features	9+ Hours of on-demand, online training - Data integration including customers, tours and booking date from Fare Harbor 20+ accelerator marketing workflows and email templates - Historical booking data - Access to TourAdvantage private Facebook community - Data integration support - First month free	TourAdvantage Basic and…. - Additional data integration including: - Tour completion date - Custom fields responses from FareHarbor - Additional training and accelerator workflows leveraging integration above - Priority data integration support - First month free
Price	$150/month or $1,200 annually	$250 monthly or $2,400 annually

TourAdvantage pricing does not include a subscription to Drip, which is priced comparable to other email marketing packages. Drip pricing varies, and is dependent entirely on the size of an individual clients email list. Drip always includes unlimited email distribution.   At the time of this publication a 2,500 person list in Drip is priced at $49/month. While Drip offers a standard 2-week free trial, our customers are guaranteed 30-days free to match our TourAdvantage committment.

See https://drip.com/pricing for more detailed information.

Conclusion

We've worked closely with enough tour operators to know that most find themselves in a constant battle with time and budget. The time necessary to do those things required to reach their maximum marketing potential, and the budget necessary to pay others to do so. We get it.

While this solution will take a small amount of dedicated time to implement, we challenge anyone to find a more cost effective, turnkey solution that offers the same precision-focused marketing features and functionality devoted to increasing direct bookings.

Campaigns based on a 360-degree view of customers and prospects with line item detail, easy-to-use on-line training and support materials, marketing accelerators to give tour operators a jump start and get campaigns up in running in a matter of days. Once the initial workflows and campaigns are in place, they will continue to drive revenue and profitability 24 hours a day. That's true automation. That's TourAdvantage.

About Sunstone Digital Marketing

Like much of our TourAdvantage target audience, Sunstone Digital Marketing is a small, family-run business doing big things.

Lesli Peterson started her 23+ year career as a software product manager, and has over ten years of experience in the travel and tourism industry with specialization in email marketing, re-marketing and SEO.

Daniel Peterson recently left the corporate world with over 25 years of data analytics, data integration, eCommerce/Order Management, and campaign management expertise.

Lesli and Daniel also own and operate two leading travel media sites, 365AtlantaTraveler and TheVacationGals. Their combined experience uniquely qualify them to assist tour professionals with their own digital marketing efforts - an opportunity that keeps them wholly on the edge of their seats with excitement, and a strong desire to help those trying to bring a little more "experience" travel to the world.