

Alfred: Your Travel Agent and Tour Guide in Your Pocket!

The Problem that Alfred is Trying to Solve

Internet, search engines, and travel related clearinghouses have changed the face of travel across the world. Not long ago, the only way to book a trip was to have a travel agent – a human in the loop, to do the searching and recommendation. The internet and modern communication mechanisms have changed that. But, that change only goes part of the way: we are still lacking a simple solution to the issue of organizing a trip.

Think about the various steps one has to go through to book a family vacation. It involves finding contiguous days on the calendars; it involves getting online, and doing research on where to go; finding the order in which the trip is to be planned. Then, they have to find a plane ticket that suites the needs – the budget, for example. The customer has to find place(s) to stay at rates that they are able to pay; the accommodations have to be available! Sometimes, the cheapest airfares aren't offered during high season, or even when the cheapest accommodations are available. It can take hours, days, even weeks to book a trip that a customer is happy with. Most of us can relate to the painful experience filled with uncertainties to book a trip of a lifetime!

How many of us spend countless hours trying to book a vacation? Imagine the dissatisfaction customers feel when they're unsure if they're getting the best deals! It's an experience relatable to most!

We wondered: wouldn't it be nice if we had a solution to this problem that's worthy of the 21st century? The world, indeed, is at our fingertips! But, how far is it from the tips of our tongues and our ears? It's closer than most think – we believe it is not far!

Travel Agent in Your Pocket is a 21st Century Solution

The recent advances in voice recognition technology have opened the doors to completely new markets and ways of human computer interactions. Voice recognition systems have been the stuff of Hollywood fantasy for several decades. It's only in the last ten years that speech recognition systems have begun delivering the promise from decades ago. We believe we now are at a stage where everyone can have a personal travel agent in their pockets – integrated voice recognition technology can help ease the pain most of us travelers experience by making the

Imagine a world where your personal travel agent is powered by the internet. Now, imagine that the travel agent is on your phone, enabled by a voice assistant!

experience painless.

Alfred is a smartphone application with an integrated voice recognition system backed by sophisticated search engines running on powerful servers that's able to meet the customer's needs through a network of partners in the travel industry.

Leveraging advances in speech recognition systems, the key to Alfred is its unmatched ability to making the user experience seamless and utterly painless. We believe this can be accomplished relatively easily – we need not devise a smartphone assistant that's proven to be elusive and difficult to build. Rather, the domain of queries that Alfred expects will come from a restricted domain. Think about what pieces of information one would need in order to just find an airplane ticket to destination: one would need the name of the place, and an approximate date range. This, alone, is not difficult, which is key to Alfred performing well with relatively less effort. We believe the case of finding hotels and resorts is not too difficult as well.

Who Benefits from Alfred?

The winners are easy: *The customer* wins by delegating the task of scouring for the best airfare to a computer by simply issuing a directive through a voice prompt. *The partners* win simply because Alfred will make it easier for people to do business and commit to a proposed trip plan. *Alfred* wins by making money, by saving the customers money and the hassle of having to spend countless hours on the computer searching for a package they're happy with.

With Alfred, everyone benefits! Alfred makes it easy for customers to find the best deals.

Alfred's Advantage

Alfred is voice activated which is unique in the travel business. Alfred will enable artificial intelligence based personalized recommendations – the more you use Alfred, the better Alfred gets to know you, hence, will be able to make better recommendations! Customers need not stay engaged – they can simply issue a directive for what they want, and Alfred will have all the constraints and preferences it needs to find them the best deals for the vacation of their lives! No more hassles – no more stress of trying to compete online for the best deals and those last few seats on that plane to their dream vacation! Alfred is a complete, end-to-end system powered by an easy to use, natural language based interface.

The key to Alfred's success is an easy to use voice driven interface!

Alfred's Target Market

While Alfred is not limited to a specific demographic, it will initially target millennials as its main customers. Our initial market research shows that millennials represent the largest generation to date who are avid travelers and who extensively

We expect the millennials to be the Alfred's biggest customers!

use technology in everyday life including travel planning. Millennials are happy to engage with voice assistant on their smartphone and are willing to exchange personal information for better deals or personalized recommendations. These characteristics makes them Alfred's ideal user group.

Alfred's Competition

There are many players in online travel planning and booking, including big companies such as *Expedia*, *bookings* and *American Express*. Though these companies account for the majority of the online travels booked, their websites provide a conventional query based interface to the user, and the recommendations are usually generic and not customized to individual users. More recently several startups are looking into using artificial intelligence for better user interface (using chatbots) and/or customization by learning customer preferences over time. However since the technology is rather new, most of these products do not provide an appealing solution to the customer as a personalized virtual travel concierge, so the majority of people end up spending lots of time or money or both planning their trip. By enabling voice assistants on smartphones, Alfred provides a natural and user friendly interface and by partnering with large online travel agencies, Alfred finds best travel deals customized to individual users.

Alfred's competition includes both large and small companies. Alfred will also compete with people who spend hours or days, planning every detail of their trip.

How Does Alfred Make Money?

Alfred plans to use Affiliate Marketing as the business model. The team expects to earn 1-2% commissions on travel bookings on an average by partnering with airlines, hotels and online travel meta-search companies (e.g., Expedia, Skyscanner, Priceline). This is based on the fact that airlines give ~3% commissions and online meta-search engines share ~50% of affiliates-generated revenue with their affiliates.

Commission per transaction is at the heart of Alfred's business model!

Alfred's Marketing Strategy

Alfred's primary marketing strategy will be Paid Social Media Campaigns. With millennials being Alfred's primary customers who actively use social media for their travel research and needs, it will be a pretty effective and low cost marketing strategy.

Later, referrals, travel articles, and PRs, would also be used as alternative go-to market channels. And once Alfred is well-established, strategic partnerships with a few of our key partners would be formed who would promote Alfred on their channels and offerings as well.

Alfred's marketing campaign will focus on millennials!

Alfred's Rollout Strategy

We have put a lot of thought behind the rollout plan for Alfred. The plan spans five years and we believe it is realistic. The first year is crucial – the design has to be laid out, and the stronger, more robust the foundation, the easier it'll be to enhance Alfred and provide more features to the delight of the customers. Our plan follows:

Year 1

Basic version of Alfred will include a front-end application for smartphones. The integrated voice assistant will be able to understand major destinations, and time related parameters.

Alfred will provide basic functionality of booking an airplane ticket and hotels that are consistent, and are the cheapest.

Year 2

We will focus on personalization. We will begin with integration with the customers' calendars on the phones to ensure that proposals that Alfred generates do not conflict with existing events and activities.

Year 3

Alfred expects to become profitable by its third year! In the third year, Alfred will also include a major feature called *City Tour*. This will be several years in the making and we believe will offer great value to the customers. It's like a virtual tour guide in your pocket. Alfred will be able to propose a tour for each day the customer's in one of the major cities. The tour will be complete with when the customer should head out of the hotel, where to catch the next train/bus, where to get off, and so on. Most importantly, for each landmark that Alfred has chosen as part of a given tour for a given day, Alfred will be able to speak to the customer as if a private tour guide would.

Year 4

Alfred will continue to improve and grow on the AI front as more and more users interact, and through repeat customer interactions. Alfred will begin partnerships with OpenTable and Yelp! to enable the next key feature.

Year 5

As part of City Tour, Alfred will be able to predict meal times and make personalized recommendations for restaurants to the delight of the customer. What's more is that Alfred will be able to make restaurant reservations and be able to incorporate them as part of the tour!

How will Alfred Grow?

Based on a study of a known proxy, *Eddy Travels*, we believe we can build an active monthly customer base quickly through our

Alfred becomes profitable by the third year!

The more a customer interacts with Alfred, the better Alfred gets to know them, enabling better recommendations! Imagine your personal tour guide in your pocket!

Alfred expects its monthly active customer base to grow exponentially over 5 years, while keeping the costs down.

marketing strategy of choice. Eddy Travels was able to build up a customer base of 1M users in its first year, thereafter doubling over the next five years. The marketing channel choice was made to keep the customer acquisition cost. Central to our growth is our focus on keeping our customers through emphasis on a high degree of customer satisfaction and a head start on our novel, user-friendly interface. Thus, while we expect our customer base to grow exponentially, our costs are expected to grow less dramatically.

Team Alfred

Imran Pirwani (CEO/CPO): Imran has a PhD in Computer Science with 10 years of industry experience at some of the most prestigious brands like Samsung, Mercedes, and Apple. Imran has prior experience in building search engines, voice assistants, and AI. Imran is an avid traveler and loves exotic lands.

Anahita Shayesteh (COO/CMO): Anahita has a PhD in Computer Science from UCLA and 14 years of diverse industry experience at Intel and Samsung. Anahita loves to travel and enjoys planning all travel details.

Kamaljeet Verma (CTO/CFO): Kamaljeet is an Engineering Leader at Verizon Media/Yahoo!, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay CSE Alumnus and avid travel enthusiast.

Alfred can count on a strong technical leadership with a passion for travel!

What Alfred Needs?

Alfred needs a funding of 1M USD to support its product development and marketing needs in the first year. We estimate the size of the total available market to be 500-700B USD. On the other hand, we estimate the serviceable available market to be about 70-100B USD. The initial seed grant will enable us to capture 7-10B USD market share (~10% of SAM) five years from now with an expected annual revenue of 150M USD.

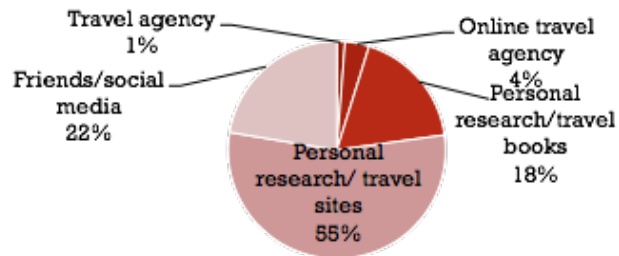
Alfred needs \$1 million as seed grant!

Appendix

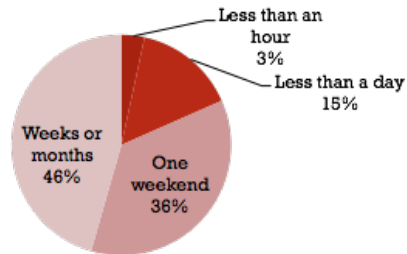
Our Market Research Results

We surveyed over 130 people across the demographic spectrum to estimate the interest in the market. We summarize a few key results here:

How do you plan your trips?



How much time do you spend on trip planning?



Would you use Alfred travel app?

