



GHN On My Mind: Roger Dow



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Keeping Visitors Secure While Maintaining the Customer Experience

How can the hospitality industry keep travelers safe in a fluctuating global security environment? Here's what was top of mind at the U.S. Travel Association's inaugural Secure Tourism Summit.

The security of guests is a constant consideration in the travel and tourism industry. In recent years, though, this has become a more pressing matter. In an ever-evolving landscape of threats both at home and abroad, how can our sector ensure visitors' security before, during and after an unanticipated security-related event?

At the U.S. Travel Association's inaugural [Secure Tourism Summit](#), held last week in New York, representatives from all corners of the travel industry gathered with security experts to weigh these concerns.

The conference came at an especially appropriate time. Looking at recent crises around the world, whether in Paris, Brussels, London or on our own shores, many have occurred in tourism-centric locations: sports stadiums, airports, train stations, restaurants, nightclubs, iconic tourist sites and music venues, to name a few. Now more than ever, travelers want to know they'll be safe when they are traveling and visiting attractions. Here's what was top of mind for attendees of our New York conference as



they discussed how to keep visitors secure—while at the same time maintaining the customer experience.

Knowing What’s Out There

Former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson outlined emerging security challenges facing travel and tourism both at home and abroad, highlighting which specific threats need to be on travel leaders’ radars.

Planning and Readiness Before a Crisis Hits

A comprehensive response plan makes all the difference during a crisis. That’s why it’s important to anticipate and thoroughly prepare for a variety of scenarios beforehand. Experts including Frances Townsend, National Security Analyst for CBS News and former Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Terrorism, discussed what hotels and other travel-related organizations need in an effective crisis plan.

Protecting Our Soft Targets

Playoff games, rock concerts, airport security lines—anywhere large numbers of people gather, including many tourists unfamiliar with the area, is a “soft target” for groups or individuals who intend to do harm. A panel of experts from law enforcement, government and tourist sites shared best practices for managing crowds and lines.

Crisis Communications

Every minute counts when a crisis breaks, and an effective communications response can prevent confusion, fear and reputational harm. Leading communicators including Ari Fleischer, former White House Press Secretary to George W. Bush, presented ways to craft a rapid response plan, and convey updates during and after an emergency situation.

Keeping Everyone’s Data Safe

As cyber threats exponentially increase, tourism and hospitality businesses are trying to figure out how best to safeguard their customers’ personal and financial data (not to mention corporate data) from hackers. Leading cybersecurity and privacy experts



discussed best practices for protecting computer systems and both corporate and customer information from malicious actors.

Security and Efficiency: Not Mutually Exclusive

Without security, there can be no travel—but security and travel facilitation can and must coexist. This is, I believe, the most important takeaway for anyone involved in our industry. As my colleagues and I have [frequently stated](#), our government [must pair](#) new security restrictions with measures to facilitate the entry experience for international visitors—and in the same way, tourism organizations must pair security and welcome. Experts discussed innovative techniques that have improved travelers' safety while conducting screenings in a hospitable, efficient manner.

As an added bonus, all registered Secure Tourism Summit attendees had the opportunity to sign up on-site for [TSA Pre✓®](#), the expedited screening program that enables pre-vetted, low-risk travelers to enjoy a smarter, more efficient airport security experience.

Obviously, we cannot control what happens throughout the world. However, we can control how our companies and organizations prepare to handle security incidents, and how we react in the minutes, hours and days following a crisis—all while maintaining the customer experience. Last week's Secure Tourism Summit demonstrated the myriad of ways travel and tourism leaders can find that balance.

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