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## Global Flight's Loyalty & Awards Conference Is Set to Fly 10-12 October in Madrid Spain

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### Event founder Ravindra Bhagwanani previews the 18th annual event.

Global Flight's [Loyalty & Awards conference](#) is scheduled 10 -12 October 2022 and will be held this year in Madrid Spain. This year's conference is the 18<sup>th</sup> in the series, punctuating the importance of this event on every marketer's calendar. We connected with Ravindra Bhagwanani, Managing Director Global Flight, to get an insider's look at current trends in the Travel Loyalty markets and to get a preview of what to expect at the upcoming event. And

don't forget that **all Wise Marketer readers benefit from discounted (10%) registration by using the code "TWM10"!**

**Wise Marketer (WM): The Loyalty & Awards conference is anticipated by the entire travel loyalty and hospitality field. Can you give us a summary of what the event will consist of and who should attend?**

**Ravindra Bhagwanani (RB):** Never change a winning team. That might summarize best our approach as the feedback from our previous delegates clearly encourages us not to reinvent the wheel each year. There will be some fine-tuning, a fully refreshed programme with forward-looking topics, but the basic ingredients will still be 100% top notch content (without any sales pitches on stage from sponsors) and the best global networking opportunities in the travel loyalty industry.

**WM: This year's conference is the 18th overall. You have established one of the "must attend" events in the global travel loyalty industry. How has Loyalty & Awards evolved over the years, and what should we expect new and different in 2022?**

**RB:** Funny fact as we did our first conference ever in Madrid as well, back in 2005. Compared to that event we have obviously evolved quite a lot, and everything is fully professionalized, although the event remains the "hobby" of some loyalty-loving persons. But this passion for the industry might exactly be what makes up for the difference? We are particularly proud that we managed to run a 100% live event in both 2020 and 2021 — so nothing new to expect here with us this year! But we are happy to see the return from several companies from APAC, notably with AirAsia, Qantas and Xiamen Airlines having come on board early.

**WM: I know the content you organize for Loyalty & Awards is top shelf. What keynote or other presentations can you highlight for us?**

**RB:** I would not necessarily highlight one or two of the big names in the industry, which we obviously have on the agenda as well, but rather stress the diversity of the topics with relevance to anybody involved in this business. We prefer hands-on case studies from the Spanish railway company Renfe or from Flycoin working in practice with crypto currencies to having yet another panel discussion how to engage infrequent travelers. We want to inspire and provoke our audience and get them out of their comfort zone.

**WM: In addition to great content, networking time is valued highly by attendees. How do you facilitate networking and differentiate to bring value to attendees?**

**RB:** We have really a family spirit at the event — everybody speaks with everybody, and new family members are easily integrated. We facilitate that notably with our social activities on the first afternoon, which are really ice-breakers for newcomers. This year, we take delegates to dance flamenco or cook tapas together. You can understand that this builds lasting ties. Delegates still speak today about the fun they had in the desert in Dubai last year! Besides that, we have the usual networking tools on the website and the conference app, allowing people to connect with each other before the event to arrange on-site meetings etc.

**WM: As Managing Director Global Flight, you have a deep understanding of the global travel and hospitality industry. What trends do you see now that should be capturing the attention of marketers and other executives?**

**RB:** While my main job is to be a consultant, I am not one of those jumping on each event and calling it a new market trend, paradigm shift or similar nonsense. Markets do evolve, there are new possibilities thanks to new technologies, but at least when we talk about loyalty, this remains a very fundamental and basic issue. It is about engaging customers in relationships at an emotional level. Full stop. And as this comes down to human nature, nothing really changes here fundamentally. Focus on this essential aspect and you'll get things right. Unfortunately, too many programs tend to forget that.

**WM: Now that air travel is surging and load factors high, the airlines should be returning to profitability. What does that mean for the frequent flyers?**

**RB:** Well, any return to normality should be good news for everybody. Unfortunately, that return is currently overshadowed by all the operational issues due to shortcoming of staff, notably in North America and Europe, meaning that traveling these days might not necessarily be a very positive experience. And for frequent flyer members it means that award travel is often not available in the short term as airlines try to avoid any additional demand as much as possible. This is obviously very problematic because airlines wanted frequent flyers to continue to play the (credit card) game during the pandemic but are now not willing or able to assume the consequences in the form of providing sufficient award capacity. In short, the current profitability is the result of the huge pent-up demand, but not of the loyalty of its best customers as it used to be the case. The industry needs to do the necessary things to get quickly back on track to ensure lasting profitability.

**WM: How has the recovery of hospitality differed in nature from the airlines? Have the major hotel chains recovered in step with air travel? Are they ahead or behind and what should we know about the future.**

**RB:** Hospitality is much more affected by the local situation. If demand to one market is weak, airlines can easily shift capacity elsewhere, but that is more difficult in hospitality. You can run an airline from a global perspective by avoiding markets causing too many difficulties. In the hospitality industry, at least the big global chains need to apply a much more complex granular approach. China is the best example: While international travel is quasi non-existent, there is strong domestic demand — but not all hotels were necessarily positioned like that. In conclusion, airlines and hospitality can't really be compared from that perspective.

**WM: Anything else you would like to share with us?**

**RB:** I understand that it's always a tough decision to take out a couple of days to attend an event and yes, most events are not worth it. But believe me that Loyalty & Awards is the one event standing out in that regard, and if you are to attend only one event in the next couple of months, make sure it will be Loyalty & Awards. You can meet the right people and you have my word that you won't regret it. Or to say it with the words of one of our delegates who made the 2021 event in Dubai her first event: "It was a great first show and I'm sure I'll be at future events." She kept her word and is already registered for Madrid as well.

**WM: Best of luck and we will see you in Madrid!**

**RB: Thanks.**