

AirportParking.com: Building the Travelocity of Airport Parking - With Raj Beri

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I love hearing about web-based businesses that are built on top of premium category-killer domain names. That is exactly today's interview in the airport parking business. If you love the strategies, the tactics, and the inspiration of these types of stories, stay tuned, because we are going to learn all about the recently launched AirportParking.com.

Three messages before today's interview educates and motivates you.

First, if you're a domain name investor, don't you have unique legal needs that require domain name technical know-how and industry experience? That's why you need David Weslow of Wiley Rein. Go search for David Weslow on DomainSherpa, watch his interview and you can see for yourself that he can clearly explain issues, can help you with buy/sell agreements, deal with website content issues and UDRP actions, and even help you write your website terms and conditions. David Weslow is the lawyer to call for Internet legal issues. See for yourself at NewMediaIP.com.

Second, managing multiple domain name marketplace and auction site accounts is a pain. Inevitably, you forget to sign into one and lose a great domain...or worse. Now imagine using a single, simple-to-use and comprehensive control panel to manage all your accounts. That's Protrada. You can setup search filters, analyze domains, automate bidding, list domains for sale, and buy domains across all major marketplaces. Protrada also has a new semantic engine that builds Google-friendly websites with rich content and network feeds. Sign up at Protrada.com to get 20 free credits and start building and monetizing your domains today.

Finally, if you have questions about domain names, where should you go to ask them? The answer is DNForum.com. Not only is DN Forum the largest domain name forum in the world, but it's the best. You can learn about domain names and the industry, buy and sell domain names, talk about

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domain name news, and meet other domainers just like yourself. Register for a free DN Forum account and begin advancing your skills and knowledge today. And when you do signup, send me a friend request so we can connect.

Here's your program.

Michael Cyger: Hey everyone. My name is Michael Cyger, and I'm the Publisher of DomainSherpa.com - the website where you come to learn how to become a successful domain name investor and entrepreneur directly from the experts.

I love stories of technology-based businesses using killer domain names. Today's interview crossed my desk in mid-April 2013 as a press release and, after visiting the site, I knew I had to get the General Manager on the show to talk about the details, because it is a great domain name, it is a slick-looking website and technology, and it is actually generating revenue right out of the gate.

I would like to welcome to the show Raj Beri, General Manager of the Online Travel Division, including the recently launched AirportParking.com at Oversee.net. Raj, welcome to the show.

Raj Beri: Thanks for having me on, Mike. I am excited to be here.

Michael: It is great to have you. I think most people do not even think about parking being an industry, but it is big money. I remember when I used to commute into New York from Connecticut. Major cities, like New York, have people commuting in by car from the suburbs to work five days a week, and they pay their monthly parking rates, usually a few hundred dollars per month; sometimes in high hundred dollars per month. And every time I go to the airport with my family I pay at least a hundred dollars to park on the airport parking lots. Do you know how big the airport parking industry is in terms of revenue?

Raj: Yeah, I mean, again, some of the numbers are a little hard to break down, but overall, parking as an industry in the US is around between nine and ten billion a year, so it is a huge industry. And like you said, it is pretty

much an afterthought to most people. It was an afterthought to me till I started working in it. And I think the bulk of that is still what you would consider off-street parking. When you go to your city parking or do your parking garages, or your work parking garage, but I think airport parking, in general, is probably somewhere between five a ten percent of that. And again, that is broken down into two categories - off-airport and airport. And that is really where probably as far down I could probably drill right now, but I would say overall airport parking somewhere between five and ten percent of a nine billion dollar a year industry.

Michael: Wow. So, if my math is correct, that is like nine hundred million dollars.

Raj: Yeah, could be.

Michael: Could be as big.

Raj: Yeah.

Michael: And you are saying that you deal only in the off-airport parking lots, but even the people like myself, who have their three kids in tow and all the luggage, and they want to park as close to the airport terminal as possible, I could potentially be a customer if you could convince me that it is just as convenient. It is faster. It is safer. Whatever all the off-airport parking lots.

Raj: Yeah, and the reality is more and more, especially over the last two to three years, there is a larger percentage of people who are booking off-airport than on-airport. And it comes down to economics and that the convenience factor has now made a lot more sense. Whether it is for drop-off at the airport or even drop your car off at the airport, a valet comes and picks up your car, you just take out your luggage, you call them when you land, and you get dropped back off. The barriers that used to be there, whether they are technology barriers or convenience barriers, and definitely price point is the big thing. Like you said, thirty dollars a day in LA or New York for daily parking versus nine to ten dollars a day for off-airport with a valet shuttle and that. And I think that is why the industry has grown over the last few years,

as that price point gap is there and the convenience factor has kind of closed any sort of other gaps.

Michael: Yeah, definitely. So I mentioned, in the intro, that we are going to talk about AirportParking.com. I am going to ask you about the acquisition of that domain name later in the show, but it is not the only website that Overseer owns and operates in the airport parking industry. Is that correct?

Raj: Yes, that is right. So, how we got into this game was actually before my time even. I think it was 2010. We had acquired AboutAirportParking, and that was our flagship property. And that really had been a business that been around for a few years and had deep relationships with all the parking lot operators throughout the US. So, if you think of all the major airports in the US and all the different parking lot operators that are there, there is everyone from big players, like Parking Spot and Park 'N Fly, to the mom and pops. Family owned. People that just own one lot. And so, those relationships were built kind of over the years. When we acquired it in 2010, we expanded on that, but that was our first foray into airport parking. And really, the success of that and how it has kind of taken off led to us potentially doing other things like AirportParking. Having those assets and that business model to try to replicate with, like you said, a killer domain name.

Michael: Yeah, and were you at Overseer when they acquired AboutAirportParking.com?

Raj: I was not. No, that was probably, I would say, close to a year and a half to two before I joined. And when I joined was when we were thinking about what else we could potentially do in parking to leverage the fact that we have these assets. It was a profitable business, but if we really wanted to get more traffic and more visibility, was there a domain name that we could do that with?

Michael: Yeah. So, if I had access to your Google Analytics account or whatever Analytics you use on Overseer, how many visitors and page views would I see displayed per month on AboutAirportParking.com - what was originally the flagship?

Raj: Yeah, so I think we are in definitely the few hundred thousands, so over two hundred thousand and under a million kind of a month that we see, and it is very like parking. I have been in travel for a while. It is a very seasonal business. So, you get the summer months, the spring break months, and then November and December as being very peak months. That is when people are actually traveling. So, you will see twice as much traffic in those months as you might see in a January, which tends to be a low month. But yeah, we are talking a few hundred thousand visitors a month. We tend to have very loyal repeat visitors, so we have got a large portion that is close to half of our traffic is repeat visitors, and then we have got traffic coming in from organic as well as paid marketing.

Michael: Got you. And when you came aboard at Overseer and you realized that you had AirportParking.com as an asset to take advantage of - and we will talk more about that -, what magnitude did you see in terms of visitors on that domain name before it was developed?

Raj: I mean when we acquired it, the person running it was not actually. It was not a full business, but it was more than a parked page. So it did have a little bit, but it was mainly, like you said, type-in traffic or typo traffic. It was not getting a lot of juice. If you went to Google and typed in 'Airport Parking', it would not appear. If you typed in AirportParking, it would obviously appear. So, it was actually much less than you would think. Not a lot of traffic in there, but again, when I came onboard, and again, I think, strategically, the name was acquired shortly after the AboutAirportParking deal went through. Both from potentially a strategic standpoint, but also just because having done our due diligence in that industry, we realized: "Hey, this is a killer domain name. Even if we do not build it out, it will have some value obviously." And when I came onboard, that is really when we looked at it and said, "Hey, you know what? Let's try and do this."

Michael: Yeah. So, before you started developing it, it was mainly a domain asset. It had a website up, but it was not authoritative in Google's eyes, so it did not rank very well. And it had maybe some organic traffic and maybe some type-ins, but there was not a lot of traffic. Maybe, if you had to guess, like a thousand visitors a month.

Raj: Yeah, if that. I would say, yeah, maybe a thousand people.

Michael: Okay. And so, most people do not own or have access to a premium category-killer domain name like AirportParking. Before you actually looked at the analytics of the domain name before you developed it and as you were thinking about developing it, what was your impression of the organic traffic? Did you think that it was higher than you anticipated? Not coming from the domain space, but coming from the online space, and we are going to talk more about your background. Were you impressed or not impressed with how much type-in traffic was coming to the domain?

Raj: You know what? Having not been in the parking space, I was probably expecting there to be probably more organic traffic than there was actually showing up just through the domain name itself. So, I was not that impressed with that kind of organic traffic, but again, like you said, I definitely saw some alarm bells going off in my head and some money signs about how we could potentially make this into a business.

Michael: Yeah. All right, so we are going to talk about how you made it into a business, but I would like to finish the introduction with what is the total revenue. So, if we were to look at AirportParking.com and AboutAirportParking.com together as one package, what is the total revenue generated per year?

Raj: Got it. Yeah, sure. And again, I probably cannot give full specifics, but I will say it is probably over a million under ten million in revenue. Again, without getting into specifics, we have been profitable since we started, so the margins are nice and it is a growing business for us. So, if you look at parking, over the last few years, as a general, it is a fairly mature business. About two to three percent growth. What you are seeing is a large portion of that is moving from on-airport parking to off-airport parking. So, it is a revenue shift in the mix, and we are capturing that fairly well with much higher than the industry growth in terms of how we are growing, both from a revenue and a profit perspective.

Michael: Yeah, great, and I appreciate you sharing that information, Raj. And it is not that I ask because I think people are going to say, "Man, that is a

great industry. A niche industry that I did not realize. I am going to go out and buy some airport parking names," because, let's be honest, you got it locked up. You got a great domain at AboutAirportParking.com and you own the number one keyword-rich domain name that defines the industry. So, anything that anybody is going to go get is going to be a second or third tier. My main point for that is I want people to understand when they think about developing out a lead generation business or they are thinking about a content business, look at the size of the industry and then try and figure out what percentage you think you can get, what percentage the niche is that you are going after, and then, in your case, knowing that you are over a million dollars, you are less than ten million dollars. We will figure out what kind of expenses you have and people can do their own math and try and figure it out, but that gives people an idea. Well, if I invest heavily in buying a category defining domain name that goes across this industry size and I go after it, I might be able to generate something similar, and we will figure out all the details involved in that.

Raj: Definitely. And like you said, I think it is a growing industry, especially on the off-airport side. I think we can get into more detail, but right now the main thing is the airport lots do not really participate a lot in third party marketing. They like to keep it a closed system. But potentially, in the next year or two years, that is going to change, and they will start pouring marketing money into third parties. So we like to think of ourselves as the Travelocity or Priceline of airport parking, where we aggregate all of these players and, as maybe some of these doors open and you are able to work with the airports too, that is obviously a very large potential for business as well.

Michael: So, when you say it is closed right now, but it may be opening over the next few years, is that the on-airport parking lots that are closed?

Raj: Yeah. So the on-airport parking lots tend not to work with aggregators, like us, or advertising outside of their own direct advertising, so they do not tend to work with third parties that way right now.

Michael: Got you. All right, and I am going to ask you why the industry is changing for that. So we are going to dig into how you developed

AirportParking.com and how you are monetizing it, but I always like to go back in time and figure out how people arrived at their current position, Raj. I see on your LinkedIn profile that you were an aerospace engineer by education. Digital media is pretty far from aerospace engineering, isn't it?

Raj: Yes, I like to say I was a wee lad growing up and was dreaming about airport parking and how to make money off of it, but that was not the case. Yeah, you are right. So, I graduated. Technically I could call myself a rocket scientist. I am sure that impressed all the ladies. Not really, but I realized fairly quickly that that really was not where my passions were. And I maybe dabbled in there for about six months, in the aerospace industry, or so, but really quickly moved to more just general product design. So I worked in product design for about five years, as a product design consulting firm, where we worked with companies, designing everything from consumer products to digital media players to things like that. While I was doing that I was also kind of working on the side in journalism actually and doing some freelance journalism for some magazines. And I realized media was kind of really interesting to me, but more the business side of it. And so, at that point, I decided: "Hey, you know what? I am going to go back to school, brush up on my business knowledge a little bit," and so I went back to Business School with the goal of coming out and working in online media. And so I have done that in various incarnations over the years, starting out in consulting, then working in online publish. But over the last four years or so, I have been in online travel. I kind of not on purpose got into it. It just was a good opportunity at a startup-type environment and I ended up really enjoying the space. And so I worked at a company that was acquired by Travelocity and it was all about online travel and building online travel communities. Did that for a few years and found my way back to Los Angeles and was working on my own travel ideas. And then I met up with Oversee and they were really trying to grow their verticals, which we can talk about a little bit more, but one of them was travel. And with the combination of some of the assets they had, whether it was domain names, traffic, users, and then what they wanted to do in terms of really building out these verticals. It was a compelling opportunity, and so I found myself here pretty much about a year or so ago, coming to run the travel properties here, which include our parking properties, but also include comparison travel sites similar to a Kayak or a TripAdvisor, where you can search for flights, cars, and hotels as well as we

are incubating some new and exciting things, both on websites and mobile, that we are going to be launching with this year as well. So, that is really how I kind of stumbled into parking, and I have not worked in the industry before. I have worked in travel and I have worked in eCommerce, but not this specific niche, and I think it is very fascinating. And like you said, it is not a fifty billion dollar industry, but hey, you know what? I would rather be a number one or a number two player in a eight hundred million dollar industry than a number ten player in a fifty billion dollar industry.

Michael: Yeah, definitely. And you brought up incubating and testing new ideas, and I remember from the pre-interview conversation you told me about the way you do that. And I had never heard of anybody doing it that way before, so if we have enough time, I am going to try and insert that at the end of this interview. For anybody that is watching, they are going to really be impressed with the way you do that. So, when I looked at your résumé, I saw that you worked at many companies doing digital media, such as the Monitor Group, McGraw Hill, IgoUgo, which was the division of Travelocity, and now Oversee with their Online Travel Division. What has been the most challenging digital media position that you have held over the years and why was it so challenging?

Raj: Yeah, I mean I would probably say right now the one I am in. The main reason is it is really we are trying to do a couple of things. We have some really good mature properties that get very good traffic, are well known in their industry, and we get a lot of users and subscribers, but I think the challenging piece is we want to keep those going and grow them, but at the same time, realizing: "Hey, we have got to start doing new things. We have got to find some other niches and some other areas." I think the challenging part is: "Hey, how do you weigh those priorities?" How do you keep the ones that are really churning along and going, but at the same time, dedicate enough time to incubating some of these other properties like AirportParking.com and some of the other ones. So, more from an operation standpoint, how do you allocate resources and your time to do that has been probably my most challenging, because at my other roles it was pretty clear. It was either one or the other. It was: "Hey, here is a property. It is making ten million a year. Grow it to twelve million and fifteen million a year," or, "Hey, here is a startup. Let's just build it and see what happens." But here,

having both, it is very exciting, but it is also challenging because you have those dual-type properties that are kind of on different paths.

Michael: Yeah, definitely. Managing at different levels of the maturity cycle.

Raj: Yeah.

Michael: What is the one thread that goes between all the digital media businesses that you have worked with that now, having that knowledge, makes you more successful in your current position?

Raj: Yeah. So, this is probably things I probably failed at earlier in my career. It is focus. Early on, when I started in the industry, I would want to do: "Hey, there are ten things I can do," and I would try to do them all and I would do them all really bad. I think the key here is like picking your battles and it is really like: "Hey, if the focus is on growing AirportParking and optimizing the conversion on the site, that is what we are going to focus on," or maybe two things at most as apposed to: "Yeah, we could do that as well as launch into mobile on this as well as trying to increase our reviews and increase X." So I think it has to start with me and making sure that the team and I are working together to understand: "Hey, there are ten things we could be doing, but we are only going to do these three. If it does not further these three things along, it does not fall into our priority list." And I think that is something, honestly, through failing at doing that over a couple times in my career I have realized is just you have to just prioritize and just go with it, and say, "Hey, you know what? We will get to these other things later."

Michael: Yeah, and I try and do the same thing. I find it also, if I count them on my hand and there is more than like a handful minus a finger, there is too many things and it is distracting for me as well. And the way I prioritize all those things that I could work on is by revenue. What is the potential revenue of it? Is that you prioritize your main objectives?

Raj: Yeah, I mean if I look at it, I would say there is a three-prong kind of scorecard we try to have here. One is: is it increasing revenue? The other one is: is it increasing traffic or number of users that are using our properties? And then the third thing would be engagement. And so, yes, there are times

in the cycle that we will prioritize. For example, we may prioritize in an order. It will be revenue, then traffic, and then engagement. But I think that is the three-prong lens of: "Hey, how do we attract as many visitors as we can to the site? Once they are here, how do we keep them here? So, how do we engage them?" And then the third thing is: "Hey, how do we monetize them?" So, it is always: "Hey, how do we attract them? How do we engage them? How do we convert them?" So, if something does not fall into those three categories, it is not really on our roadmap.

Michael: Yeah, and you do not necessarily define engagement as a conversion from a visitor to somebody who fills out a form that then you can monetize.

Raj: Yeah, exactly.

Michael: You are looking at engagement more broadly?

Raj: Yeah. For example, for AirportParking, we are looking at things like lifetime value of a customer and repeat visits of a user. Obviously, repeat conversions is a big metric as well, but it is almost like: "Hey, cohort analysis of this person joined or logged in, in the first six months of the year. What is their transactions looking like over the course of the year?" And making sure that: "Hey, we expect certain attrition and certain people not to come back, but making sure that our numbers are healthy enough so that we are getting enough repeat conversions from users," because you know what? I do not want to acquire users more than once. Ideally, I want to acquire them once and have them come back to the site on their own, and I think that is where it dives into the engagement piece of it. Whether it is: "Hey, do we have loyal programs? Do we have other things that make it compelling for a user to choose us," when, in essence, airport parking, like flights to an extent, is a commodity industry. When you go searching for airport parking, you are searching for price and you are searching for convenience and some other factors, and there is really not a lot of brand affinity. If you like a parking lot, you will keep going there. So, for us, the challenge is similar to what people look for flight; is: "Hey, does it get me there on the times I want and is it within my budget?" Airport parking is very similar. So, realizing that, you are going to have some other incentives for users, whether there are features on

the site that make it easier for them to find what they want or if there are certain incentives to have them to keep coming back.

Michael: Yeah, definitely. So, I have to admit that I did not know much about Oversee.net and how Oversee is structured with respect to the revenue generating operations. How does AirportParking.com fit into the larger business and then into Oversee.net?

Raj: Definitely. So, like I mentioned, Oversee - the bigger part of the business for many years, and still is, is obviously the domain business, which we all know.

Michael: And that is DomainSponsor.com - the monetization platform primarily.

Raj: Definitely, but there has been a big push over the last couple years, especially over the last year, to really grow the vertical markets or the owned and operated consumer side of the business. And really in there, there is three verticals. Travel, which is one of them, then there is retail, which is retail comparison sites as well as coupon sites and rebate-type sites as well. That is a big part of the portfolio. And then there is the consumer finance vertical, which is sites like CreditCards.org, etc. that are also about helping people find the right credit card, etc. The area that I am responsible for is travel and, like I said, travel has, I would say, probably now three components. One is comparison travel properties, two of which are LowFares and FareSpotter, which we have had for years. And those are all about helping people find flights, hotels, and cars. And then we do not do the booking on our sites, but we help them find the best prices around on other sites. And that is a large portion of our business. And then the eCommerce piece right now is really focusing on niche eCommerce, and parking is really where we kind of hang our hat on with that. AboutAirportParking and AirportParking are the big players in there, both consumer web as well as mobile. And then the third piece, which I briefly mentioned, is we are looking at incubating a few other ideas that are much more on the consumer side as well, where they are less about lead gen and things. They are more about engagement and that model. And that one is a little bit more nascent. We are probably rolling out a new site within the next couple of months as our flagship for that part of the

business, but I would say AirportParking and AboutAirportParking are really the only two eCommerce sites that Oversee has. So, if you are looking across all their portfolio of businesses, whether it is travel, consumer finance, or retail, those are really our only eCommerce sites.

Michael: And when you say eCommerce, you mean people can actually place an order directly through you and transact, and make a reservation and you take money.

Raj: Yes, exactly. And the other ones are more sites where we are working more with content or we help people go to other sites that are our partners, and they may book on those sites.

Michael: Got you. All right. So you had mentioned AirportParking.com was acquired before you came on and after the acquisition of the website AboutAirportParking.com. Do you remember what the cost was? Do you know what the cost was for AirportParking.com and are you at liberty to say that?

Raj: Yeah, definitely. I mean, again, probably not give full specifics, but it was not necessarily cheap. It was a six figure price we paid for AirportParking.com, and it was what we thought was a good fair price for it and one that we thought: "Hey, if we build this out, it will be great." And if we do not, like you said, the value of the name itself we felt was worth it. So, there was kind of a dual approach to acquiring that name.

Michael: Okay. So I want to understand the business model. So I went to AirportParking.com. You say it right there on the website. "We show you all of the available off-airport parking options at your departure airport, including prices, distance from the terminals, shuttle bus frequency, services offered and real customer reviews. You choose the best airport parking lot for you and reserve your spot with a small, refundable deposit to lock in your discounted price. We transmit your information to the parking lot so they may be prepared for your arrival. You bring a copy of your reservation confirmation to the lot to insure credit for your pre-paid deposit." So, it sounds like you are not taking the entire fee. Like if I go to Sea-Tac and I

want to pay a hundred dollars to park off-airport for a week, you are not taking my full hundred dollars. You are taking a deposit.

Raj: Yes, that is correct. And so, how it works is we take the deposit. And then, because the nature of airport parking, as you probably know, is you go in, when you book it online, and you are putting in times and dates, and the times especially are probably a little bit approximate. Your flight may be late. Something may happen. So, really what we are doing is we are reserving that spot, we are taking a deposit, and then you settle up what the actual amount is with that credit card when you leave and check out of there. And the business model, like you said, is fairly straightforward. Between AirportParking.com and AboutAirportParking.com, we work with probably the largest collection of off-airport parking lots in the industry, in the US, with all the major airports. And we work with them in a way that we are another marketing vehicle for them, and they value us because of our user base and our reach can get to more customers than they can, and we work with them on a commission or a flat fee kind of deposit basis for each reservation taken there. And so, we work very closely with our partners, for example, if they are the larger franchise partners, to see ways that: "Hey, how can we help you get more customers through our channel? What is going to make it easier for you as you check them in through the process?" We introduced mobile at some point with half our partners just to facilitate some of the on-the-go booking that people are doing and on-the-go check in without having to print something out. And then, the way that we work the same with some of the smaller lots is that a lot of them, before working with partners like us, did not necessarily have an online booking system. So, a lot of them are, hey, we and other partners like us are their online transaction system.

Michael: That is pretty cool to be able to put them online and give them a transaction system.

Raj: Yeah, you definitely run the gamut of technology sophistication between partners, and I think having to work with everyone has definitely been something we have done over the years. And I think we basically work with the lot owners. Our customer service team is on a daily basis in working with them. And we work with things like, hey, if airports are closed, we get calls and we try to book them at another airport and transfer their reservation.

Yeah, so there is a fair bit. I would say it is fairly high touch as well because of the nature of the business as apposed to some of the other stuff that we had done before, which was more we did not necessarily need customer service and things like that.

Michael: Yeah. Well, that is good to note. I am just making a note of the customer service because I want to come back to that. So, check my assumptions, Raj. I would think that if I was a lot owner next to LAX, let's say, I am going to get a majority of my customers pulling into the lot because I have a big sign over the lot that says, "Twenty bucks a day. Immediate service to the airport." And most people that are driving to the airport are either going to look for off-airport parking or they are just going to pull into parking, and that is going to fill maybe half my lot. Do you know roughly how these smaller lots - I say smaller, not chain lots - across the United States operate and how full are they?

Raj: Yeah, I mean one thing that is surprising to the first part of your question, and this was surprising to me, is I always think of airport parking as: "Hey, this is one of the last things I think about," almost like: "Hey, I printed my boarding pass. Let me figure this out." But surprisingly, and kind of some nuggets from our data, is that, before flight departure, the average length that people are booking is about four days.

Michael: Huh.

Raj: Which is very surprising. We are seeing roughly half of our reservations coming in that three to four-day range before people depart. Obviously we get a lot of the day of departure as well, but there are people booking. Interesting, going into our system, you have got people booking now for like Thanksgiving of this year.

Michael: Wow. Do parking lots fill up? Do they need to book that early?

Raj: Well, definitely.

Michael: For Thanksgiving.

Raj: This is my recommendation to you and other people who go through this. Any time around holidays, whether it is July 4th, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, or Spring Break, you definitely want to park. Our data shows we sell out. On holiday weeks, we sell out our big primary markets on the Monday or Tuesday of that week.

Michael: Wow.

Raj: And part of it is the inventory they release to online partners like us, but yeah, they sell out very fast, and then especially in the summer travel season.

Michael: So, if I am a lot owner, Raj, and I have one hundred spots that I want to fill, I am going to maybe keep fifty for me and then I am going to open up fifty to you to try and sell?

Raj: Yeah, it varies, and again, I probably do not know for each one, but I would say yeah, roughly the ones that have their own channels. Usually, this is all plugged in to some sort of central reservation system anyways, and they kind of say, "Yeah, for third parties, we will do X, because we are giving away some deposit or commission."

Michael: Right.

Raj: And I think, over time, they know what their own marketing efforts get them and they supplement that with third party marketing like us. And I think some of the things we are able to offer is a reach, because you may not want to go to a specific franchise or lot because you may just be looking for a specific feature, like: "Hey, I want valet parking or I want covered parking less than a mile from the airport."

Michael: Right.

Raj: And I think our system and sites like AirportParking.com can do that probably as well as most sites out there in terms of the way that you can filter and get users who may not have decided exactly where they want to park yet. If people go to a specific lot, it might be like: "Hey, I found them on Google or I have been there before." So, for our lots, it is like, hey, not only the

repeat users, but also the news users. And I think one thing they value is we handle the customer service. So, for a lot of them, they do not necessarily have a big customer service team, but if there is a problem with someone's reservation at one of our lots, they are talking to us. They are not talking to the lots, and then we will work it out with the lots. And I think the lots really value that.

Michael: Yeah, definitely. So, I went onto AirportParking.com. I requested a five-day parking lot close to LAX. It came up at sixteen bucks a day, so the total came out to ninety-five dollars, and it had sixteen dollars of that as a deposit fee that I needed to pay for.

Raj: Yes.

Michael: So, that sixteen dollars goes to Overseer.

Raj: Yeah, so we work, again, on a case-by-case basis, but we either work with something like a deposit fee, which is whatever that deposit is, or a percentage of the overall amount. And really, that is standard in kind of the aggregator in the parking industry; is you are taking, whether it is for stay of, some sort of percentage off the top. And again, it varies by a lot and varies by partner that we work with.

Michael: Sure. So, in this case, is it safe to say it was about fifteen percent commission?

Raj: Probably, yeah. That seems about right.

Michael: Okay. So, basically, for that fifteen percent that you are taking immediately as somebody books, you are reserving that spot for them, so you have built this online system that reserves the spot. You do the customer service. You communicate with the lot to make sure that they know that one of the spots that they have assigned to you is now taken. And anything else that you do for that transaction fee?

Raj: Yeah. For the lot owners what is really valuable is we have an Administrative System that we built that they can just log into. They can change pricing.

Michael: Nice.

Raj: They can put in things like that, and they can view how many reservations they have and volume they have. So, it is more of like we have created this self-serve platform, so it is pretty transparent to the lots, like: "Hey, I can check what my volume was last week versus this week." And I can go in and, "Hey, if I have a new lot or some new pricing, I can go and update that," and I think that is really how you can scale so that you provide that so that it is not just all on us to update all that all the time.

Michael: Right.

Raj: But yeah, overall, I think the lots have visibility into that, and then they also are able to work with us on other marketing. One of the things we do is a lot of email marketing. We have a pretty big, substantial, hundreds of thousands of email users that we will work with lots to say, "Hey, do you want to get in front of these users? Do you have something specific around a time of year that you want to push," and we will help them do that as well, because, again, they are not necessarily. We only make money when they make money. It is a commission-driven business, so it is a very kind of symbiotic relationship that way, that work with these lots. And I think we kind of try to meet with them and talk to them very often so that we understand what their biggest issues are and where they would like to see improvements, and kind of go from there.

Michael: How do you talk to your customers? How do you talk to the hundreds of different individual mom and pop lot owners that you have contractual relationships with and gather information such that it is usable?

Raj: Yeah, so I guess, when I think of our customers, I think of two. So, we talk to our lots, and it is mainly our great customer service team that we have customer service director who works pretty much daily with the lots and has been with the business for a long time, and then we have customer service

reps and they are assigned specific lots that they will work with. And I think that is done basically on a daily or a weekly basis. And then we meet on a weekly basis to see what the major issues or major opportunities are with the lots and we try to build that into our product pipeline. And I think the other customers we have are obviously the users and we do talk to them as well. So, after someone has booked, we contact them to see how their experience went. We get a lot of reviews from them. We get a lot of feedback from them. We probably have the largest collection of airport parking reviews in the industry, and that is something we value a lot. Real people giving input to the lots on what works and what does not, but we are also able to survey them and ask them about our user experience on our site - what we could do better, what works, and what does not work.

Michael: Yeah.

Raj: So I think, through both those mechanisms, we talk to I would say both, to our advertising and our lot partners as well as to our customers.

Michael: I want to come back and ask you about that feedback that you have because it is an enormous cache of authoritative content that relates directly to the airports, but first I want to understand. How many customer service reps do you have, let's say, working on the AirportParking.com system?

Raj: It varies, but probably between five and eight or so.

Michael: Okay. So let's say that you have eight customer service reps and you want to try and understand what all those lots are saying to the customer service reps, and then, when you get together with them on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, or whatever it is, to try and boil up the most important factors. Let's say that you are hearing from one lot in the Southwest and one lot from the Northeast that the online system just is not working. How do you gather that input and have it all feed up in such a way that it is not just the loudest squeaky wheel customer and that it is actually the things you should be focused on?

Raj: Definitely, and I think obviously customer service systems (CRMs) that we input a lot of this data into. So we get everything from call volume to

dropped calls to how long calls were, but also contextual information on each call about what the issue was and what it was, and then our customer service and us can roll that up and filter that up on a weekly basis to see like: "Hey, a lot of this was on overbooking and this was on that," and so, again, like you said, to scale it to be on the point of us just anecdotally doing this. It is in a system. We are able to filter it, to track it, to see that it is actionable data and not just anecdotal, and then use that to roll into our product and our priority meetings to see: "Hey, this is what we need to be doing. We had thirty percent of customers on this week about this," or even things like: "Hey, we need to focus on getting more lots in these areas because of these kinds of issues we are having," etc. So, yeah, we are pretty data-driven and everything is kind of in a system that we are able to kind of carve out data in any different way that we want.

Michael: Yeah. What CRM system do you use that allows you to track it and categorize it?

Raj: Yeah. I think, again, we built our own in-house admin system that we do that with, but we do work more on a call basis. We work with 8x8 or Contactual that help us pull data on our customer service calls and call time, and things like that. But then we have our own admin system where the reps go into and log in stuff, and so it appears on kind of our main dashboards.

Michael: That makes sense. All right. So we understand how you talk to the customers, how you gather that information, and how you boil it up the most important issues. So let's talk about AirportParking.com. What are the new features that make AirportParking.com interesting and useful to people who need parking and to parking lot owners that you did not have on AboutAirportParking.com?

Raj: Got it, and I think the main thing is when we were trying to figure out to launch AirportParking.com, we kind of just said, "Hey, this is our opportunity to start from scratch and build a site that we think is reflective of what kind of today's user experience expectations are." So, I think, if you look at them both, you will see that they are both very good, but they are very different. And AirportParking.com is much more of what I would say a web 2.0 or 3.0 site, both from how it is laid out, whether it has tones of like

Pinterest and things like that in terms of how each of the lot information is presented to you. The big thing is it was built with a responsive design so that, no matter if you are looking at it on your laptop, on your mobile phone, or on your table, it is going to adjust to your screen size while at AboutAirportParking.com we have a mobile app, but right now it is not fully web optimized that way. So we realized that, hey, in the future, a lot of these bookings are going to be migrating to mobile. How do we get ahead of that?

Michael: Right.

Raj: And then some of the other things are just some of the filtering and things that we were doing on AboutAirportParking and kind of bringing that over to AirportParking.com, but along for some other things as well, whether it is how close to gas stations or valet versus non-valet. Kind of tweaking the filters. So, I would say that if I was looking at it, I would say AirportParking.com is definitely much more modern and contemporary in its look and its feel, and that it is trying to address not only where we think the business is now, but we are allowing us flexibility. While mobile is not a huge percentage of AirportParking bookings right now, it is growing. It is still very small, but it is growing much faster than desktop is, and we realize that in a year, eighteen months, two years time, as (Unclear 44:33.9) owners as well as the consumers get more comfortable transacting on mobile, we need to have an experience that does that.

Michael: So, if I strip away, Raj, all of the CSS and I make just what is on the screen on AirportParking.com and AboutAirportParking.com - they are both ugly, but you dig down and you are looking at the different options -, am I actually going to see any different content or functionality on AirportParking than I will on AboutAirportParking? If you strip away all the gooey, the jazzy, the snazzy AJAX-y sort of stuff, what do I see differently?

Raj: Yeah. So, we have changed the checkout process. We have tried to make it a little bit more streamlined. The data is showing that it is. We are definitely getting more people into the checkout process than we have before.

Michael: Conversions at the new system than the old system.

Raj: Yeah, definitely seeing less of a bounce rate. Things like that. So we are very encouraged. I mean one thing is we are treating them like two different beasts to begin with because AboutAirportParking has been around a while. It has a lot of repeat users while, with AirportParking.com, we are getting a lot of first time users as we build up the site. So, obviously the conversions and things like that, as we build into repeat users, will grow. But one of the things we have been very careful and very deliberate to do is to not have the same content. And when I say content, I mean everything from overviews to everything from like the content describing each of the lots to even the review content on both sites. And from a practical standpoint, that is so we can distinguish the sites in search engines. So, when we launched AirportParking.com, we had no reviews. So what we said is: "We are going to include the reviews from AboutAirportParking, but we are going to no-index those so Google does not search those or crawl those, because we do not want to be penalized."

Michael: Right.

Raj: And then, over the last month or two, we started to build up the reviews on AirportParking.com. So, at some point, we are just building that cache up, but we needed to see the content. Same goes with we have created original content around each airport and around each lot in AirportParking.com. We want them to each have their own identity. While the backend system and the lots may be the same, it is our thinking that these need to be kind of two separate sites that potentially may appeal to different users as well. The AirportParking.com site I see as potentially appearing to more of a younger user base than the AboutAirportParking site just because of how it is designed and how it is tablet and mobile friendly. So, realizing that, hey, what a 28-year-old wants is different than what a 64-year-old wants, both in terms of user experience and how they are comfortable transacting on a site, and trying to build that into our product.

Michael: So you can actually have two different web properties and you can do the marketing for AboutAirportParking to target people on Facebook that are over forty, let's say, whereas you can target using younger channels like Facebook demographics targeting or only mobile targeting to people who are more mobile friendly and more mobile forward.

Raj: Yeah, with some of the stuff we have done. For example, on AirportParking.com, we deliberately decided to integrate with Apple Passbook when the iPhone 5 came out because we think that that caters to a certain demographic and that is going to be useful for people who have iPhones and are used to checking in, swiping, getting push alerts, and things like that. And the same thing for making it mobile optimized is, while we have a mobile app, we realize that mobile web is very big and, to take advantage of our search engine optimization, it is very important to have a mobile web presence with AirportParking.com. I think the biggest other thing would be, like you said, how and potentially where we market. To the lots, they are happy when we get a customer. It does not really matter who that customer is and what their demographics are, but if we eventually want AirportParking to be our flagship property, which down the road I think we do because of the domain name and how it resonates, capturing a different segment of users is important to us.

Michael: Right. It is interesting. When I started publishing, back in 2000, I thought: "I am going to put all of my eggs in one basket. I am going to focus on this one site. I am going to build it into the biggest site possible." And it is only over the past couple years that I realized you do not have to put all your eggs in that one basket. If you do not put your eggs in the second and third basket, somebody else is going to buy those premium domain names and they are going to use the advantage of the exact match domain or be more inspired to develop it out, and I am going to have more competition. Like yourself, if you own AirportParking.com and AboutAirportParking, now you have taken potentially two of the top ten spots on the first page of Google and you have knocked out ten percent of your competition. So, it is an interesting view to develop more than one property and I did not even think about how you could market the two properties differently to different demographics, and you may find that one of the demographics works better internationally or one of them works better with women over men, or what have you.

Raj: Yeah, and from a paid marketing perspective too, we have experience with that at Overseer as well with having two comparison travel sites and we find that the sum of the parts is greater than just having one. And you are able to, like you said, get visibility on searches twice, and you will convert on one

of those. And like you said, when we entered the market with AirportParking.com this year, over the last few months, yeah, we have grabbed a lot of market share from a paid marketing perspective and have pushed down a lot of our competitors, so it is worth it from that standpoint for us as well.

Michael: Yeah. Well, and I like the way you took your assets - the customer feedback, the reviews that you have on AboutAirportParking - and you used them on AirportParking.com to build up a cache, but you labeled them as no index. So, you do not want to take advantage of duplicate. You do not want to show Google that you are trying to duplicate content for the sheer purpose of trying to rank higher. You are being upfront with them on that. With Google getting into reviews in every single online business, it seems they are trying to disintermediate all of the intermediaries like yourself, who are the business owners in Google. You are standing between them, saying, "Find us. We will give you some great information that will then route you to a business." How do you make sure that Google does not come on and steal your reviews and just index them like they index everything else on the web and cut you out?

Raj: Yeah, exactly. I mean obviously we get a lot of traffic from us showing up when people are typing in 'LAX (this lot) Parking Review', and we want that traffic, but obviously we are just making available a certain snippet to Google and that that is what they can see. Obviously our content is a big asset of ours and, down the road, would we be open to having our content appear in more rich form on other sites? Yes, but I think, strategically, it would have to make sense. My previous role at Travelocity - the website we had had over two million reviews, and we worked with Google to say, "Yes, we are going to allow you to have rich snippets of our reviews in exchange for linkbacks," but there were certain conditions around that. And I think, again, we are open. We want people to come to the site. We think our reviews are very valuable. I think the difference between us and not only just Google, but everyone else is, yes, that content is there. I think the defensible aspect of the business, when I am really looking at it, is yes, the amount of review content we have, but also just it is very hard to build up relationships with all these lots to do anything beyond just showing the content.

Michael: Right. That is your barrier to entry, because Google is not sending people out to go talk to every single airport lot there is.

Raj: Yeah, exactly, and they would not want to.

Michael: Yeah.

Raj: So I think our initial sales effort and the customer service efforts is pretty much there is established players in the game and, unless you want to go to somewhere in Minnesota and talk to every lot and put the sales effort into doing that, it is going to be very hard for you to go in and repeat that. Similar to Groupon's premise of: "Hey, we have got thirty-five hundred people on the ground talking to local merchants." Well, we are talking to local lots and we are able to work with them, and we have relationships with them, and we are making sure that is our most prized and valued thing in our business is those relationships.

Michael: Definitely. How much of the traffic that comes to AirportParking.com or AboutAirportParking is paid versus organic?

Raj: Yeah, it is actually a good mix. We have got about, I would say, under half of our traffic is paid. Half of it is either organic or repeat or direct users. So, I would say between thirty to fifty percent is potentially paid, and then the rest is people coming in through just organic search or people coming directly in through the site. We actually have about thirty-five to forty percent of our visitors are repeat visitors, and a lot of that is just direct traffic coming back to the site.

Michael: Wow. How much do you pay per click to get a consumer to your website?

Raj: Yeah, again, without going into full details, I am just being honest here. It depends on the market. Getting one in New York and JFK and La Guardia is much more expensive than maybe getting one in a secondary market like Charlotte or something.

Michael: Definitely.

Raj: But yeah, you can get clicks into the dollar plus range and you can have some that are below that. But it is not cheap and it is a combination of paying for it, but also having, as you know. Working with some paid marketing, do you have good traction from people who are seeing those ads? Are they coming to the site? Google values that. For us, paid is a profitable marketing channel for us, but my ideal mix would be one-third paid, one-third organic, and one-third direct. So I think we are not all the way there, but we are trying to get pretty close to there. I think if you have too much dependence on paid marketing, it is not a good thing and it is not defensible in the long run as well.

Michael: Yeah, great point. In terms of technology, is everything homegrown at Oversee?

Raj: Yeah. Yeah, we have got a full in-house team, and that is one part of AirportParking that we have not touched upon. So, we really have two types of business that we are going after here. The consumer business, which we have spent a lot of time talking about, and we built that site pretty much from scratch, both taking parts from AboutAirportParking in terms of the backend technology and putting a new kind of interface and bells and whistles on it. But what we have done over the last year as well is say, "Not only is the consumer business where we think there is an opportunity, but there is an opportunity on the B2B side to white label or to expose our technology through an API." And that is really another big focus of ours. Without going into names, we are working with airlines and large airlines and direct reservation systems to be their airport parking provider so that if you eventually, later this year, would not be surprised to go to an airline's page and you see they can book airport parking on that, but that is powered by us. So we are exposing our API, whether it is on their site or whether it is through their post-booking emails or check-in emails. It is a goal of ours. We want to serve not only the end user, but provide technology solution, and we are able to get in the door by like: "Hey, we are AirportParking.com." Like you said, okay, that really gets to the point of what we are trying to sell - AirportParking.com. And backed by a big company like Oversee is helping us make some traction with a lot of these airlines and travel reservation systems.

Michael: Yeah, that is a great added benefit. If I am going to AlaskaAir.com and I am booking my flight, I do not need a hotel because I have got that through my conference or something. But if you pop up there, "Hey, do you want to reserve a spot for your car," I am like: "Yeah, take two birds with one stone right there, in that process. I do not have to start a secondary process."

Raj: Yeah, we see it as kind of a growing opportunity. And the travel space right now what is huge is ancillary revenue. And airport parking, like luggage fees or before it, is one of the kind of untapped resources still that people are like: "Okay, how can we leverage this for our users?" And so, we just want to make sure that we have the technology in an easy to consume form that whether it is an airline or a hotel chain, or whatever, it can do that, and we are able to offer that to them and, again, we can then leverage the reach that they have to expose our product to more users.

Michael: Yeah. Hey Raj, I have worked at large corporations in the past and one of the problems in working in technology or digital media at large corporations like GE or Citi Group, where I have worked, is that you are always wrestling for resources. The IT Group is its own form onto itself with its own leader, and you are prioritizing your work above other groups that are trying to get access to this small group of IT professionals. Do you face that at Oversee, where you have to wrestle for resources, or do you have your own dedicated team?

Raj: Yeah, thankfully not. Oversee has been very good, both our CEO and our CTO, in terms of making sure that each of the businesses are run kind of independently and have their own dedicated resources. So, yeah, here, in travel, we have a dedicated product team, a dedicated sales team, a dedicated team, and we are prioritizing travel projects. And so, we are not really running into that. Of course, like everyone else, I want to do things faster and get more stuff done, but it is not a prioritizing issue in terms of fighting for resources. We have got people who have been here who have worked in travel for a while and have worked in the eCommerce space, and they are dedicated. For example, there is dedicated engineers who are working on AirportParking and there is dedicated engineers working on other sites as well.

Michael: Nice. So you have got multiple engineers that are working on the information technology parts of AirportParking and online travel?

Raj: Yes, definitely.

Michael: And then you have got another five to eight customer service?

Raj: Yeah.

Michael: You probably have somebody doing marketing - one or two people doing marketing?

Raj: Yeah. Overall, in the travel group, across all our five properties or so, we have got between twenty and thirty people, and they are spread between, like you said, tech - and sorry, that is not including customer service rep, so probably even more -, product, sales, marketing, and we have also got content or editorial staff as well that supplements some of the freelancers that we use. So, it is pretty much all in-house. We really do not go out. We go outside very rarely, but we try to build up the expertise in-house and try not to really outsource any of that. Especially now, we are trying to build a lot more with mobile, and especially with parking. We think we are probably one of the only parking players that are integrated with Apple's iPhone 5, and we want to make a big push to get ahead of the curve there, and I think part of that goes with building up that talent in-house as apposed to kind of outsourcing it.

Michael: Yeah, nice. All right. Okay, so we talked about Google and how they make sure that they are not seeing duplicate content. We talked about your customer service. I did not realize that you had so many customer service people. Do you know what your capacity is on your customer service team? Are they on the phone constantly throughout the day because you have so many people calling in with reservation inquiries or customer service issues? I did not realize that you had so many reps.

Raj: Yeah, like you said, we vary depending on the seasonality, but between five and eight. But yeah, we are pretty busy. We work every day pretty much

of the week, except half-days, we are not working, but yeah, we are pretty much always between eighty percent to one hundred percent of capacity in terms of taking calls. Thousands of calls a week or so.

Michael: Wow.

Raj: And so, we have got a fair bit of volume in terms of visits and people calling in. One of the things is, with AirportParking, especially as people are doing more on their mobile, they may not be booking on their mobile, but click to call is very huge. Click to call has been very effective for us as well. So, you are on the go, you are searching, and you are like: "I do not want to go and book anything on mobile, but I just want to make a reservation." So we get a fair bit of phone calls of people on the go or trying to lookup stuff on their mobile. And I think, like we talked about, it is not just parking, but in general, there is becoming more familiarity and more pervasiveness of people booking on their mobile phones, but it is still not for everybody and there is still a fairly high look to book ratio compared to desktop, where you may be in travel. If you get fifty percent of your visits on desktop, you get fifty percent of your bookings on desktop while, on mobile, it is like, hey, you might get twenty percent of your visits, but only five percent of your bookings.

Michael: Right.

Raj: And so, how can we right channel that from, hey, we do not want to lose those customers, so let's, if we can convert them, let's convert them on the phone. And once we get someone on the phone, our conversion rates are very high.

Michael: Yeah. All right, Raj, here is the last question. If I go to Travelocity or any of those sites, they splash up these banners. "Save up to 70%. 80%. 100%." It is crazy how they promote these things. So, I went to AirportParking.com and I do not have the text in my notes here, but it said something like save up to 70% or save 70%, or something. So, here is my question. If I am a lot owner and I am hiring you and you paying you based on commission to sell a certain number of my spots, why would I want to

give you a lower price point to sell my spots? Isn't that why I am paying you the commission?

Raj: Yeah. So I think what we do is we do work with lots. Again, I think for them there is a combination of getting a higher conversion rate and realizing that when they are on our site, they are competing against other lots as apposed to when they are potentially on their own site or on their own property it is people are just looking at their site. So, understanding that similarly to how airlines on Travelocity or wherever might have a different price than sometimes on the airline site, there may need to be some sort of discounting in order to stand out on there. But one thing we take pride in as well is that when were saying that seventy percent and sixty percent off, it is also based on the fact that, if you go to some other sites and we do benchmarking, we do in some cases, but in most cases we do not charge like a booking fee or something like that, but if go to some of our competitors, we do. So we are able to then pass that savings on to the customer, but not take the margin out of the lot's hands. And so, we make that decision on our end to say, "Hey, we are not going to charge this fee, or whatever, because we think that when you go and check a price for this lot, it is sixteen dollars here, but by the time you go to another site, you might get it for nineteen dollars a day." And that is really just something that we made a conscious decision on not to try to go everywhere with booking fees. There are some cases where there are fees that are passed on to us that will have those, but overall, we are being very careful on how we do that. And if we do that, it is much less than what other sites have, and so our price point can be a little bit lower.

Michael: Yeah, that makes sense. Raj, this has been a great overview of everything that is going on at Oversee and in the AirportParking business. If somebody wants to reach out to you and say thank you for coming on the show and sharing so openly a lot of your strategies and tactics for AirportParking, what is the best way that they can contact you?

Raj: I think it is probably email. I am always on email, less so on phones, so you could shoot me an email at RBerl@Oversee.net. And I check that thing every waking hour, before I go to bed to my wife's chagrin, and when I wake up first thing in the morning, so that is definitely the best way to reach out. And I would love to hear from your audience and others, whether it is just

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asking about the industry or if they think of cool ways that we could partner together or I could help them. This has been great.

Michael: Excellent.

Raj Beri, General Manager of the Online Travel Division at Overseer. Thanks for coming on the show and thanks for being a Domain Sherpa.

Raj: Thanks for having me on. Talk to you soon.

Michael: Thank you all for watching. We'll see you next time.

Watch the full video at:

<http://www.domainsherpa.com/raj-beri-airportparking-interview/>