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Tech venture Locomote plans to revolutionise corporate travel industry

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Two Australian cousins appear set to revolutionise business travel with a technology platform that simplifies booking and approval processes for travellers and saves money for companies.

Melbourne-based entrepreneurs Ross and David Fastuca have launched businesses together since they were 16-years-old and say they plan for their latest venture – [Locomote](#) – to be the market leader in business travel technology.

"We want to be the Salesforce of the travel industry," said Ross Fastuca, referring to the leading customer relationship management platform founded by Silicon Valley star Marc Benioff.

"We're not shy of big goals," said Fastuca. "A lot of the commentary about Locomote so far has been that it's not possible to do what we did in the time that we did it but we like to have a big vision."

The Fastuca cousins – Ross is 32-years-old while David is 29 – began developing their platform four years ago alongside investor Philip Weinman. Just 12 months ago, Locomote took on its first customer and has grown from a staff of three to 45 in that time.

A key to early success, explained Fastuca, has been frustration within the corporate world with how business travel is managed. The door for industry disruption swung wide open.

"You can book your leisure travel online very easily," said Fastuca. "You don't talk to anybody and you can do it without too much fuss. For corporate travel, for whatever reason, it seems to be way behind the eight ball."

"You still have manual interaction and there are all these different forms. We also found that the booking aspect of corporate travel is just one element. There's also financial savings, duty of care, corporate governance, and operational efficiency. Corporates also need their travel and expenses to be managed easily. It's not as simple as booking a trip to Hawaii – there are all sorts of things that have to be taken into consideration."



A significant secret weapon in Locomote's aspiration to reach the heights of Salesforce is an investment late last year from [Travelport](#), a global company that provides software linking airlines and hotels with travellers and travel agents.

Travelport's minority stake in Locomote – the American-owned, British-based company is listed on the New York Stock Exchange – has played a role in the Australian company acquiring an impressive local customer list.

In the past 12 months, ANZ, Medibank, the University of Tasmania, University of Southern Queensland, international law firm Allen and Overy, and World Vision Australia have signed on to the platform. A partnership with Japan Airlines is close to being secured.

"Corporate travel has long been focused around the role of the travel management company rather than the business or the traveller," said Peter McLeod, from the University of Southern Queensland, explaining why Locomote's platform held appeal.



McLeod said Locomote's platform gave control of travel processes and data to the user rather than a travel company. A game changer, according to another customer, is the no-brainer saving on travel budgets and reduced approval times.

"We significantly reduced our approval-to-booking times from 30 days to seven days and, in turn, lowered our total cost of travel," Dean Mills, from World Vision Australia, said.

Fastuca said he predicts travel agents will still play a role in helping to organise corporate travel but will have to reconsider how they do business.

"I don't think that there is a nail in the coffin for travel companies but the corporate travel industry is not going to be run in the same way as it is today," said Fastuca. "I see that it will be 90 to 95 per cent of travel can be booked online. What a travel management company would look to do in the future is VIP service, disaster recovery, and handle complexities like round the world trips."