

Frequently Asked Questions

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General Tas e-Connect Questions

Is the Open Booking Exchange (OBX) a website or a booking engine or an inventory management system?

The Open Booking Exchange (OBX) is not a website, nor is it an inventory management system or booking engine; it is the technology that sits between a distributor's online presence and a supplier's own e-commerce enabled point of sale. The OBX allows an online distributor to access product information and inventory from a supplier (either you or your third-party supplier) and present it to the consumer in real time, all the time.

What are the steps I need to take to get connected to the OBX?

Each tourism business will have its own needs and requirements to connect to the Open Booking Exchange. The first step is to become e-commerce enabled. There a range of ways you can get your tourism business e-commerce enabled and we encourage you to contact the Tas e-Connect Help Desk on 1300 303 259 or email taseconnect@tourismtasmania.com.au to discuss the options that are right for your business.

All Tasmanian tourism operators will get a call during late March and April from our technology partner V3 that will help you to understand how you can become e-commerce enabled and connected to the OBX.

How will I know if the OBX will work with my current property management system?

There are currently four property management systems connected to the Open Booking Exchange. They are RMS, Fidelio, Respax and Frontdesk. If your business currently operates one of these systems then you are e-commerce enabled and have the functionality to connect your products to the Open Booking Exchange. This list is constantly growing as new systems sign up to the OBX.

Call the Tas e-Connect Help Desk on 1300 303 259 to discuss other options that are under considerations.



What will a consumer see when they go to a website that distributes my product via the OBX?

If a consumer goes to a website that is a distributor of your product through the OBX, the consumer will be able to book your product in real time. How your product is presented will depend on what the online distributor wants the customer experience to be. The OBX is invisible to the consumer – it is the connecting technology that allows the customer to search for and book your product online and in real time. Each distribution channel – such as DiscoverTasmania.com, About-Australia.com, or an operator's own website – will have a unique look and way of presenting the booking process to the consumer.

Do I need to be online when the customer makes a booking through the OBX?

The OBX allows purchases to occur online and in real time. This happens instantly and automatically – there is no need for you to be personally online for this to occur, although your inventory and booking point must be available in real time for a booking to be made. Through the OBX the customer will receive immediate confirmation of the booking, you will receive payment instantly and your inventory will be automatically updated.

Is the OBX active in other Australian states?

Yes, the OBX has been used in South Australia since 2006 to support "ConnectSA", while Queensland's regional tourism organisations have used the OBX for two years. Visit Britain has used the technology for about four years, and New Zealand is also currently considering the OBX. Western Australia and Victoria are currently working towards going live with the OBX for their tourism industries.

Is there a contract to join Tas e-Connect?

No, there is no contract with Tas e-Connect. It is an initiative that Tourism Tasmania has put in place to assist industry make the most of Open Booking Exchange technology.

Will the OBX hold inventory?

The OBX does not hold inventory. Rather, it is the technology that sources your inventory from your point of booking and connects it to your appointed distributors in real time.



Commission and Cost Questions

How much will it cost to connect to the OBX?

There is a 2.8% commission charged to completed bookings that come through the Open Booking Exchange. If no booking is made, no cost is incurred. Each supplier will have separate commission agreements with their distributors, which will apply once a successful booking is made (some distributors do, however, have an annual subscription fee rather than a commission on bookings made).

You have the opportunity to view a distributor's terms and conditions (including commission rates) before you select them as a distributor of your product and you can opt in or out of these agreements at any time.

If you are using a property management system, or some other front-of-house system, there will be costs associated with this for each operator to determine.

When do you receive the funds for the booking and when is the 2.8% OBX commission charged?

This depends on your individual agreements with distributors. In some cases, you will receive money instantly upon a successfully completed booking; in other cases the agreement may be for money to be transferred on an account basis. For sales direct to your front-of-house system, you will receive the gross amount immediately when the booking is made. The 2.8% commission for the OBX is charged on the gross amount at the end of each month by direct debit to your nominated bank account.

What if the consumer does not want to pay up front but still wants to book?

You can opt into full or part payment scenarios with your distributors.

Will V3 be able to increase the 2.8% commission?

V3 has been contracted by the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (of which Tourism Tasmania is a shareholder with all other State Tourism Organisations and Tourism Australia) for a five-year period and as a condition of that contract V3 cannot increase the commission on bookings above 2.8% during that time.

Allocation vs. Real Time Questions

What is the difference between 'real time' and 'allocation'?

Allocation does not provide all rooms at all times. The Open Booking Exchange allows distributors (and their consumers) to see the availability of all rooms, all the time, in real time – as opposed to only an



allocated amount. If all rooms are allocated for online distribution through the OBX, then they are all available in real time.

What is a practical example of how real time works?

Inadvertent double bookings can happen when not booked in real time, such as when some rooms are held back for door sales. The OBX will resolve this situation and prevent this issue from occurring. It automatically and instantly updates the inventory in your inventory management system to reflect a sale. This applies across all your distribution channels saving you time and giving you increased efficiency. The only time a double booking can occur with this new technology is if not all your inventory is available via the OBX.

Could a double booking happen on the OBX?

No. The OBX goes to the source of the inventory which is live and in real time. Every distributor can see all availability at the same time. The confirmed credit card transaction locks the room away and if someone is trying to book the same room, the booking will not go through. Even if someone comes to the front door of your business, if you are using a front-of-house reservation system then the booking will be reflected instantly.

Frontdesk (formerly Book Tasmania) Questions

Is Tas e-Connect and the OBX the same as Book Tasmania and the Frontdesk system?

No. Tas e-Connect is an initiative from Tourism Tasmania for the tourism industry to help you get your product into the online market through a range of distribution channels. It is about giving the tourism industry access to the Open Booking Exchange technology and the opportunities presented by online bookability.

V3 is the technology provider Tourism Tasmania has contracted to deliver the Open Booking Exchange technology for the tourism industry in Tasmania.

What you know as Book Tasmania no longer exists. It was a company that leased the property management system Frontdesk from V3 and on-sold to tourism operators. V3 now sells Frontdesk directly to tourism operators under this name.



I am already using Frontdesk; do I need another system to connect to the OBX?

No you do not. Frontdesk is already connected to the OBX.

Small Business Questions

I am a small business. Will the benefits of this program be worth the effort?

The Tas e-Connect program is ideal for small businesses. There are a number of benefits for your business of being connected to the OBX:

- The ability to showcase and sell your product to more consumers through a wide range of distribution channels at any one time.
- Improved business efficiency by no longer having to manage separate allotments.
- The OBX updates in real time, which means when consumer books and pays for your product through one of your online distributors, the availability of that product is updated automatically and instantly in your inventory and across all your distribution channels.
- You have more time to run your business because your back-of-house arrangements will be significantly simplified.

I want to be able to promote and sell tickets to my attraction or event from my website; will the OBX allow me to do this?

Yes. In fact one of the biggest selling products on the OBX in South Australia is an attraction. You simply need a property management system that controls ticketing for set capacity at a set price. The Port Arthur Historic Site is an example of a Tasmanian tourism attraction selling tickets through the OBX.

If you do have ticket selling functionality through your property management system there is the potential for your attraction to be promoted through DiscoverTasmania.com.

Will the OBX allow me to control dates, rates and duration of stays in peak seasons?

Yes. Through your property management system can set your business rules and the OBX will ensure these rules are applied to all distributors you have selected.

The OBX allows you to see the terms and conditions of a distributor before opting in to distribute through them, just as it allows a distributor to see your business rules and conditions of sale.



I'm worried about losing the personal contact with clients.

One of the benefits of the OBX technology is the information it provides you about your customers. You will have customer details available to you if you want to follow up with them by phone or email. Personal contact is important and we know it's what Tasmania does very well.

The benefit of the OBX is that the improved business efficiency allows you to focus more time on the other parts of your business including customer service.

Distributor Questions

Can I sell a package through the Open Booking Exchange?

Yes. The package will form a part of the inventory held in your property management system or the inventory you have accessed from your supplier. The customer does not build a dynamic package but rather they will buy a packaged solution that you have presented to them through your website or online distributor.

Will the Tasmanian Visitor Information Centres be able to connect through Tas e-Connect and the OBX?

Yes, visitor centres will be able to connect to the OBX and will have a key role to play in the Tas e-Connect initiative. As well as their traditional role, they are an important distribution channel for tourism operators that do not want to connect themselves, but want to use the centre as a third-party distributor.

How do distributors source information about my product to display on their websites?

Most distributors will source general descriptions and images from the TigerTOUR database. It is the responsibility of individual operators to maintain and update this information to ensure it is accurate and relevant.

Your individual business rules (product costs and terms) are sourced by the OBX from your own property management systems (or extranet) and presented to your distributors.

What if I want to use an online distributor that is not connected to the OBX?

Tourism Tasmania is already working to identify potential distributors but, in addition to this, the industry is encouraged to suggest appropriate distributors and Tourism Tasmania will commence discussion with them to determine their suitability for integration to the Open Booking Exchange.



How do you know which distribution channels work best?

The Tas e-Connect learning and development program will help you to assess this information and determine what works best for your business.

It is easy to opt in and out of an online distribution channel and to change your rates and conditions through the Open Booking Exchange. It is important to recognise that the selection of distribution channels is an individual business decision.

Can wholesalers access product through the Open Booking Exchange?

Yes. Wholesalers are accessing product through the OBX and distributing through their channels. Rather than relying on allotment, the OBX allows wholesalers to access product in real time.

I have inventory with Wotif.com already – will this be automatically linked to the Open Booking Exchange?

Wotif.com is not connected to the Open Booking Exchange. If it becomes connected, it will be able to source inventory from the OBX like all other distributors.

Site Minder / Channel Manager Questions

What if I manage my inventory through Site Minder/Channel Manager – will these be connected to the OBX?

Tourism Tasmania and V3 are currently reviewing how many Tasmanian operators are using Channel Manager and Site Minder to manage their inventory as part of the courtesy call objective. Once this is complete, Tourism Tasmania will determine which channel managers need priority integration.

Channel management systems are allocation-based, whereas the OBX is about real time where bookings are instantly and automatically updated in your inventory for all distributors to see. If your channel management system is connected to the OBX and you have your inventory allocated to be distributed through them, then your product will be visible and available for sale in real time.

I'm getting great service with Site Minder, why would I want to be with Tas e-Connect too?

The decision to connect to the OBX is a commercial decision each business must make on the basis of their individual needs and goals. One benefit of Tas e-Connect and the Open Booking Exchange is the ability for you to choose from a range of distribution partners and showcase your product to a significantly greater audience of potential clients. Another benefit is that with the OBX, you only pay commission to distributors on actual completed bookings.



What do I do about the established channel managers I am already working with?

V3 will be calling every tourism business to find out where each business is at. Once this is done we can assess which systems or channel managers to integrate into the OBX.

Tasmania's Temptations Holidays Questions

What is the impact of Tas e-Connect on Tasmania's Temptations Holidays wholesale program?

Tas e-Connect is about broadening the way the industry takes Tasmanian product and experiences to the world through the online marketplace. Traditional distribution channels such as wholesale (Tasmania's Temptations included) and retail remain important distribution channels for Tasmania.

Will the IMS be integrated into the OBX?

Just as you are making decisions as to how to connect your business and inventory to the OBX, similarly Tourism Tasmania is reviewing the best option for integration of the IMS.

What is the future of the Tasmania's Temptations publication?

Tourism Tasmania is currently reviewing the Tasmania's Temptations Holidays publication, the *Discover Tasmania Book*. Once this process is complete, Tourism Tasmania will be advising operators on the options available and the plans for the future.

DiscoverTasmania.com Questions

Do I need to be connected to the OBX to sell my product through DiscoverTasmania.com?

In order for a consumer to purchase your product on discovertasmania.com you will first need to be connected to the Open Booking Exchange. Secondly, you will also need to have selected discovertasmania.com as a distributor of your product.

Will a consumer be able to see my product sold through different suppliers on DiscoverTasmania.com?

Yes. A consumer will be able see your product for sale through your nominated suppliers if they have selected discovertasmania.com as a distribution channel.

Consumers are very sophisticated in their buying behaviour and will determine who to purchase your



product through based on a number of considerations including the inclusions, exclusions, terms and conditions and of course, price.

When will Discovertasmania.com be live with the OBX booking functionality?

Discovertasmania.com will be live with real time bookability in early April 2009.

Learning and Development Questions

When is Tourism Tasmania's Learning and Development program available?

The Tas e-Connect Learning and Development Program is available now and is ongoing with a range of options for you to choose from:

- Tourism Tasmania's corporate website is a valuable resource and includes the Tourism E-Kit, a national initiative that is a great place for you to start.
- Call the Tas e-Connect Help Desk on 1300 303 259 to discuss the range of learning opportunities available.
- A second series of roadshows will commence after Easter and will provide another opportunity for industry to hear about the benefits of doing business online.

I'm not on Tiger TOUR but want to make sure I get a call from V3, what can I do?

Call the Tas e-Connect Help Desk on 1300 303 259 – they will make sure you are on the list to be called by V3. Alternatively, contact V3 directly on 1300 266 582. If you are a tourism operator and not already on Tiger TOUR you are encouraged to discuss the benefits of this with the Help Desk team.

What if I know very little about computers and doing business online – can I still get involved?

Tourism Tasmania recognises that everyone is at a different stage with this. We strongly recommend the Tourism E-Kit as a first point of referral for those wanting to get the basics of doing business online. We will also be offering training and workshops over the winter period. Once you have reviewed this material, you may decide to get online yourself and connect to the OBX, or you may choose to have someone else hold your inventory and distribute on your behalf.

