Wrike Facilitates Record-Breaking Growth for Inspiration Cruises & Tours

As a Christian travel management company specializing in group travel experiences, Inspiration Cruises & Tours partners with ministries and church leaders to take like-minded travelers on faith-based getaways. From bookings and payment plans to packing tips and international itineraries, Inspiration Cruises & Tours is a detail-oriented company that has been planning worry-free travel for guests since 1981.

The Challenge

In a typical year, Inspiration Cruises & Tours plans over 40 events to countries around the world. Since bookings often happen well into the future, the team works two to three years ahead, managing different stages of planning for up to 100 different travel events and over 30,000 passengers at any given time. In the past three years, the company has experienced a major increase in the number of passengers traveled.

In the past, the Inspiration Cruises & Tours team relied on Salesforce and spreadsheets to manage tasks but, as they experienced an influx of logistic complexities and record-breaking growth, they knew they needed a more robust solution to accommodate their growth. In the search for a platform to improve collaboration across all the departments, streamline the project intake process, and centralize communication along with nearly 40 years of knowledge from long-term employees and clients, Inspiration Cruises & Tours discovered Wrike.

"As the company started to grow, we needed more and more sophistication," says Executive Vice President Stephanie Smith. "When looking for a new system, I knew we needed a logistical management tool that'd help make sure details wouldn't fall through. A Wrike representative and developer showed me exactly what I wanted for our team. It was the best customer service I could have asked for. Instantly, I knew that Wrike's software was right for us because they showed me an example using our specific data."

SUCCESS STORY FACTS

13%

increase in passengers traveled from 2017 to 2019
Passengers traveled:
- 2017: 13,667
- 2018: 14,315
- 2019: 15,408

32%

increase in passengers booked from 2017 to 2019
Passengers Booked:
- 2017: 14,317
- 2018: 16,851
- 2019: 18,853

up to 150%

increase in Creative team productivity

60-90%

Creative team utilization rate

The Solution

Creative team increases efficiency

With the company's growth came an increased demand for marketing and creative collateral. Inspiration Cruises & Tours' creative team, which is now its own creative agency, Pillar Brands, is responsible for developing promotional assets for the company. Before Wrike, the creative team operated on a task-by-task basis without organizational help from project cards, folders, or separate work spaces.

"Say, for example, our team needed to create a brochure for Inspiration. That'd be one task," explains Operations Manager of Pillar Brands Susan Angustia. "Our team would look at it and not know where in the process the project was. Has it been proofed? Who approved it? Where can we communicate what's been done? What does the timeline look like?"

When the Pillar Brands team adopted Wrike along with Inspiration Cruises & Tours, they took advantage of Wrike's resource management capabilities, which laid out job roles, estimated time to complete a task, timelines, and time trackers.

"Now we can purposely create task responsibilities for each project and each team member has ownership over their own work," says Angustia. "We can log the time for each task, which is fantastic for reports, revenue conversions and monitoring our utilization rates. This tool has already improved our efficiency. I look forward to exploring and using more of its features."

Blueprints and dependencies optimize date-driven project planning and execution

Wrike continued to prove itself as a great fit for Inspiration Cruises & Tours because of its ability to expedite projects across long timelines. As a logistics company that operates in the travel industry, Inspiration Cruises & Tours completes hundreds of date-driven to-dos within one project, or one travel event. These tasks vary throughout a travel experience, and teams work to complete them months and years in advance.

That's where blueprints and dependencies play a major role in the team's productivity. The Inspiration Cruises & Tours team created a three-part blueprint system to categorize what's needed within those three key travel timelines. With dependencies, Inspiration

100+

tasks automation per project

CASE SUMMARY

Customer
Inspiration Cruises & Tours with Pillar Brands

Headquarters
Fresno, CA

Industry
Christian Travel Management

# of employees
40

Feature Highlights:
- Adobe Creative Integration
- Dependencies
- Blueprints
- Automated workflows
- Proofing and HTML proofing
- Request forms
- Time spent and team utilization report

# of licences
60

Cruises & Tours can see which to-dos relate to another so they can work forward or backward from their travel dates, ensuring critical steps aren't missed or delayed.

"We're a meticulous company with many of our detailed tasks being dependent on one another. Often we can't complete a task without getting the previous task done," says Corporate Development Executive Assistant Diana Rangel. "Wrike helps us track all the moving parts that go into organizing travel events. We can stay organized so we can move forward without forgetting any details."

Automation extends efficiency across all teams

To further their productivity, Inspiration Cruises & Tours uses automated workflows, specifically with their request forms. "This Wrike feature removes the need to manually establish roles and assignees for over 100 tasks in a given project," says Event Development Assistant Director Jenna Gould. "When one task is completed, the next step is automatically triggered, allowing teams to formalize and control the workflow process from beginning to end." Since the teams can typically expect the same tasks within their three-part blueprint system, automated request forms save them time and resources.

Not only has the Inspiration Cruises & Tours team experienced more consistency, accountability, and transparency in everyday tasks, the automated process has also helped streamline the communication with the creative team at Pillar Brands. Since the three-part blueprint system was created with dependencies and automated request forms, both Inspiration Cruises & Tours and Pillar Brands work together throughout a project's timeline to meet contractual deadlines.

"Request forms help us check off the type of collateral a travel event needs. Once a form is filled and submitted into our Intake Folder, project cards or tasks are automatically created with dates and ownerships already applied. Because of the Inspiration Cruises & Tours process, our team has a better project intake system," explains Angustia. "At this point, productivity has increased by 125 to 150 percent because of Wrike."

Wrike's proofing features save time and headaches

Projects continue to move along quickly and easily at Inspiration Cruises & Tours, as well as Pillar Brands, thanks to Wrike's proofing features. Once projects enter the approval phase, the proofing teams can add comments or approve tasks to move them forward to completion.

# of users
53

Top Challenges
- Improve collaboration with marketing and creative teams
- Streamline date-driven project process
- Centralize communication and decades-worth of institutional knowledge

"We're a logistics company that works in the travel industry. We need systems like Wrike to help us keep the moving parts of all the travel events that we create organized and moving forward and not forgotten."

Stephanie Smith,
Executive Vice President

"We used to do printed proofs and the process was slow and inefficient because only one person could proof at a time," says Rangel. "Now we've transitioned to paperless proofing since we can review and approve collateral in Wrike. It has saved us time and headaches, not to mention trees!" Gould adds, "It's honestly been such an incredible asset to the company."

More recently, the Pillar Brands team adopted HTML proofing, Wrike's newest proofing feature for websites.

"It's actually awesome," says Angustia at Pillar Brands. "Before, we had to PDF screenshots of a website and the Inspiration Cruises & Tours team would proof them as PDF files. Now they can make comments directly to web pages, we can make quick changes, and communication is tracked in one channel."

All-in-one system for communication and connection

Before Wrike, the team was spread thin on communication platforms. From emails to Google chats and meeting logs, they often dug through six or seven channels to find answers. Now, since conversations and information are centralized, it's easy to track what's needed to move forward, even at the executive level.

"At a glance, we can quickly see at which stage every project is," says Smith. "There's a centralized location to see everything that's going on with an event. We didn't have that before."

While Wrike's unique features and essential tools have improved the team's productivity, the team has also benefited from what Wrike is at its core: an all-in-one management system. The Wrike platform is now home to nearly 40 years of the Inspiration Cruises & Tours company knowledge.

"We have teams of amazing and knowledgeable employees. Wrike gave us a space to codify that knowledge, create a process, and really dig into how every task becomes a reality," says Gould. "This has been a dream for many years; it's given us a chance to partake and share their valuable expertise across the teams."

Inspiration Cruises & Tours

"Using workflow statuses and Dashboards, we are able to manage and track all event details for all our projects. Wrike's versatile platform allows for an efficient and effective way to plan travel events.

Jenna Gould, Event Development Assistant Director
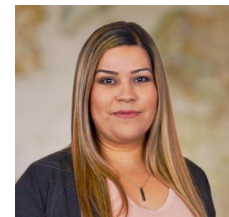
"My job consists of cross departmental collaboration. Working with various departments, I am able to assist with streamlining systems in order to bring efficiency and forward-thinking to Inspiration. Wrike helps me keep a record of ideas and allows me to turn a simple idea into

The Conclusion

Wrike has helped Inspiration Cruises & Tours and Pillar Brands increase productivity, empowering them to accomplish more in less time and ultimately setting both companies up for success. With a smoother project intake system, a streamlined collaboration process, and a more efficient way to communicate and track information, both companies know that when one team succeeds, so does the other.

a project and to see it through to completion.
Diana Rangel,
Corporate Development
Executive Assistant

"Task ownerships and status assignments in easy-to-read dashboards are features that help our projects move seamlessly through our agency's workflow. The added ability to produce time log and project status reports makes my job as an Operations Manager easier when I can do it all in one easy system."
Susan Angustia,
Operations Manager
of Pillar Brands

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