AI Travel planning since 2019, meet Speakspots

As part of our quick founder questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Andrés Martínez Artal, founder, CEO & CTO of Speakspots about simplifying trip planning, mindful tourism and building an all-in-one travel solution.

Temps de lecture : minute

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[Speakspots](#) has the classic startup origin story: I was frustrated with something, so I built a solution that would address that frustration. In my case, it happened to be trip planning. I've been to over 100 cities and regions throughout Europe, and tried seemingly every travel planning app and method along the way. None of them worked quite as well as I wanted them to, and I'd end up spending hours planning a trip just to face more unexpected issues and inconveniences at the actual destination. I realised that I could use AI and data to simultaneously save time planning and make a plan so comprehensive it would help me avoid issues at my destination. In life and in travel, knowledge is power. AI could find and compile all the information I needed without my having to look for it. Speakspots was born from this urge to simplify trip planning and make trips run smoother without having to pour more time and energy into doing so.

Tell us about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you

reach customers and so on?

Speakspots is a travel platform that uses proprietary AI and a database compiling 25,000-plus attractions in 100-plus destinations (with new ones added weekly) to generate trip itineraries based on traveller's individual preferences. Users answer ten quick questions about their trip, and Speakspots generates an itinerary in less than a minute. These itineraries factor in the predicted weather, opening hours of attractions, the distance between attractions, ticket prices, the user's stated budget, and so on. Itineraries are then sent to the user's WhatsApp, and linked to an AI assistant to help with any hiccups on the trip.

Accommodation and attraction booking can happen on-platform through our strategic partnerships. A huge part of our mission is to promote and foster more mindful tourism and fight overcrowding, so our itineraries include hidden gems and secret spots. The other part of our mission is to save people time and energy, so they can enjoy seeing the world. We work with partners like Booking.com, and we reach and retain our customers through great SEO (5,000+ pages indexed on Google and 20+ travel destinations where Speakspots ranks on Google's first page) and by providing a service that's incredibly fast and easy to use.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

I founded Speakspots in 2019 and launched the proprietary travel AI product in 2021, well before the advent of ChatGPT. Since that time, we've evolved through expansion. The platform is currently available in seven languages (English, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, French, Italian, and German). We add new destinations and attractions to our databases weekly, and we're on track to have more than 250 destinations to choose from by the end of this year. We've secured partnerships with industry

powerhouses like Booking.com. We've shrunk the amount of time it takes to generate an itinerary to one minute. We've seen an increase in conversion without abandoning our totally free-to-use model.

Tell us about the working culture at Speakspots.

We have an experiment-first approach to things. Failure is accepted and encouraged. We run technology experiments constantly, both from a web-scraping perspective and an insight generation perspective through JavaScript algorithms. The vast majority of experiments fail, but it's the only way to find truly innovative solutions such as the one we recently implemented with real-time Booking.com data. Our conversion rate on hotel reservations is 2.9% which is significantly higher than the 1.5 to 2.5% at which the _average hotel website converts_ according to HotelTechReport.

How are you funded?

We had a €200K pre-seed round this July at a pre-money valuation of €1.5M. Former CEHAT president José Guillermo Díaz Montañés and UNWTO Executive Director Manuel Butler participated in the round. We're currently courting new investors.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Speakspots has over 50,000 lines of JavaScript code logic, which is longer than the Lord of the Rings trilogy and certainly didn't get written overnight. We also launched our AI trip planner in 2021 before ChatGPT's API had gone mainstream. I don't necessarily see either of those things as challenges we overcame, but as challenging undertakings that were

entirely necessary to provide the best possible product. We've also had to get creative in order to stay committed to our free-to-use model. Simply resorting to a subscription model after a beta launch was out of the question. We have found affiliate marketing to be the key ingredient that was missing from our secret sauce in order for us to have a sustainable revenue model, while maintaining our service as completely free-to-use.

How does Speakspots answer an unmet need?

I think of Speakspots' function as less of an answer to an unmet need than a solution to an unneeded inconvenience: dumping hours upon hours into trip planning across disjointed apps and websites. That time could be better spent picking out the perfect vacation outfit or practicing phrases in the language. Itinerary generation and, more broadly, trip planning is remarkably inconvenient and non-streamlined considering how advanced the travel industry is in some other areas. We're saving people time and taking them to see secret spots in lesser-known neighbourhoods they might not otherwise find. And in contrast to other travel platforms, we have plenty of free interesting attractions.

What's in store for the future?

More is more! More destinations, more attractions, more available languages – we want our users from all over the world to go all over the world with Speakspots itineraries. We are preparing to incorporate restaurants into the platform by the end of the summer, which is in line with our ambition for Speakspots to be a true all-in-one travel solution.

What one piece of advice would you give

other founders or future founders?

Don't give up too soon. I've spoken with many younger founders who are juggling full-time jobs while bootstrapping their entrepreneurial ventures. They are often surprised to learn that I bootstrapped Speakspots for nearly five years before securing our first pre-seed round. During this period, I worked full-time and dedicated my evenings and weekends to developing Speakspots until we achieved product-market fit. I also invested all of my life's savings into it.

We've all seen the daunting statistics about startup failures. You can make your startup succeed, however, if you identify a real problem, stay focused, and work diligently. It took me five years of hard work and multiple pivots to address the right customer pain points effectively. Through perseverance and commitment, I eventually succeeded. The key is not to give up too soon.

The intense dedication required for entrepreneurial success is immense. Balancing this work with personal commitments is taxing but not impossible. To quote Steve Jobs, "You have to be burning with an idea, or a problem, or a wrong that you want to right. If you're not passionate enough from the start, you'll never stick it out." I feel the same way.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

Balancing being a solo founder and parenting my one-year-old daughter is challenging, but I've set some essential rules to ensure I never neglect one for the other. I have breakfast and dinner with my family every day of the week. No matter how busy my schedule gets, I am home in time to play with my daughter, eat dinner together, and be part of her bath time

routine. I work Sunday through Friday, so Saturdays are sacred time dedicated to family and unplugging from work. These guardrails make it possible for me to balance being fully present as a father with growing Speakspots.

Andrés Martínez Artal is the founder, CEO & CTO of _Speakspots_.

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