

## COVER STORY

where to travel, but will still be steered toward the key markets Casto sells, such as France and Italy. As that advisor's revenue continues to grow, they can request funding for specific destinations. "They need to create a plan around it and we approve it or not," says Casto. "Then they're off and running."

PDP travel must be written up and shared with the rest of the team and it will be considered for the Casto website blog for all the world to see. Recent blog entries from luxury travel advisors include dispatches from Maureen Murphy, who traveled to Namibia; Earl Davis, who ventured to China with Abercrombie & Kent; and Donna Dyer, who spent two weeks exploring Australia.

Casto himself is an avid traveler; he grew up in the business, which was founded by his mother, Maryles Casto, who is now chairman of the board. In fact, he says his earliest memory ever is the gift of an airplane from family friends when he was just a baby lying in a crib. "It was the kind you wind up and moves on wheels. It was a Pan Am. I cherished that toy and remember it clearly," says Casto. "To this day, I still feel like a kid every time I get on a plane. The promise of a new destination, the marvel of engineering, and the thrill of a new culture still excite me."

### 'Aha' Moment

Marc Casto didn't join the family travel business right away, however; instead he worked



**CELEBRATION TIME:** Casto Travel's San Jose office had a '70s-themed party last Halloween. "It's a fun group that always makes time to play when at work," says Casto. "All of our offices are frequently active together, from charity runs to costume parties."

at an accounting firm for five years. All was going well, in fact, he was on the path to management. But in 1999, he had an "aha" moment.

"It honestly came down to one night over Christmas time," Casto recalls. "I started my night at the Casto Christmas party; because it's a family company we would always come to it no matter what. There, I was having conversations about hotels, airlines providing service to new markets and where we would go if we had an unlimited budget."

"Then I jog over to the accounting company Christmas party and we're talking about the upcoming tax regulations and what the audit provisions are that we need to know about for next year," says Casto. This was shop talk of two very different natures and Casto knew which he preferred. "Do I want to talk

about auditing or do I want to talk about Australia? I knew what I wanted," he says.

And so he signed a contract with his mother to work at Casto Travel, but since he was unmarried at the time, he took a few months off to travel.

"The plan was to start in London and see how far away I could get making the least amount of flights as I possibly could," says Casto. "When I ran out of money in Kenya, I realized it was probably time for me to head home."

Being in Kenya low on cash meant staying in places that charged \$1 per night, \$2 for access to a communal shower. But still, Casto says he had a wonderful time. "We enjoy travel because of the people we meet, those we would never come across otherwise."

Back home, he joined Casto Travel, which

## 2016 TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENTS FOR CASTO TRAVEL

- Added Slack and Trello for internal communication and project management
- Upgraded to Sabre Profiles for all offices
- A "massive" investment in network IT operations for security and further redundancy
- Converted 100 percent of Casto Vacations itineraries to Axus for mobile management
- Launched [Instagram.com/castotravel](https://www.instagram.com/castotravel)
- Launched [facebook.com/castotravel](https://www.facebook.com/castotravel)

**A PRESTIGIOUS HONOR:** Marc Casto (center), was just awarded the first-ever ASTA Paul M. Ruden Award, which honors Ruden, ASTA's former EVP of legal and industry affairs (right). Jennifer Wilson Buttigieg, co-president of Valerie Wilson Travel, is shown left.

