

EXECUTIVE PROFILE [SUBSCRIBER CONTENT](#)

Leading Trisept Solutions to new frontiers: John Ische

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Olivia Barrow, Reporter *Milwaukee Business Journal*

The first computer system Trisept Solutions bought had a capacity of 400 megabytes, or one-fortieth the size of the smallest iPhone available today.

The Bayside-based travel company, which grew out of [The Mark Travel Corp.](#) into its own business in 2000 under CEO John Ische’s leadership, now works with one of the smartest supercomputers in the world to provide customized travel options for its customers.



John Ische...“It’s been an incredible journey.”

SCOTT PAULUS

The company is launching a product called Xcelerator, an add-on to its travel software that many independent travel agents use. In simple terms, the product works like a hybrid of Google and Netflix for travel.

It searches all available options for vacation packages, individual hotels, cruises, resorts and adventures, and then filters results according to user preferences.

Using IBM Watson, the program learns customers’ likes and dislikes over time, helping a travel agent to provide travel options that are almost guaranteed to satisfy a customer.

Under Ische’s direction, Trisept Solutions has come a long way since The Mark Travel Corp.’s software division became the first travel company to sell a complete vacation online in 1996.

“It’s been an incredible journey,” Ische said. “Now agents serve more as a consultant, rather than a place you go to buy an airline ticket.”

As president and CEO of Trisept, Ische works with airlines, resorts, theme parks and cruise ship companies to win the opportunity to run their vacation booking websites, and then he must communicate those companies’ needs to his 155 employees.

In those situations, it helps to be bilingual – fluent in English and in code. Ische draws on his background as a developer for a large part of his career.

“He has a unique ability to take complex business issues, combine understanding of that and of technology to come up with solutions,” said [Ray Snisky](#), executive vice president and chief commercial officer of La Macchia Enterprises, who has worked with Ische for 21 years.

“(His team) looks at him as someone who talks the talk and has walked the walk.”

As an early adopter – he asked his parents for a computer for his 16th birthday in 1979 – letting go of the technology side was hard for Ische.

“The most challenging decision I’ve ever made was deciding when do you make the shift from being a technology person to a management person,” he said.

In his role managing the software engineers who make Trisept tick, Ische faces a recruitment challenge as a relatively small company in the software world.

“We’re not a Facebook or a Google or a Netflix, but when we go to hire, that’s who we’re competing against,” Ische said.

The Milwaukee office isn’t known for its sleek design or crazy perks like Verona’s Epic Systems Corp., but Ische said he has found success in recruiting engineers who already have ties to the state of Wisconsin.

Trisept also competes with dozens of travel technology companies in Dallas – a hub for the industry – and recently opened a small satellite office there to leverage the local talent market.

Going forward, Snisky said Trisept is set up for success in line with the trends in the industry, especially with its use of IBM Watson to help travel agents design custom vacations.

“Teeing up relevant choices is the real game-changer going forward,” Snisky said.

JOHN ISCHE

- **Title:** President and CEO
- **Company:** Trisept Solutions
- **Age:** 53
- **Family:** Wife, Julie, of 27 years; three children
- **Education:** University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **First job:** "I was a caddy. Started at 13, and caddied all through college. That's how I went to UW, on a scholarship program for caddies."
- **Hardest career decision:** "Deciding when to make the shift from being a technology person to a management person."
- **Hobbies:** "I used to be a bigger golfer, and now I have a passion for cooking and wine."
- **Favorite vacation spot:** New Zealand