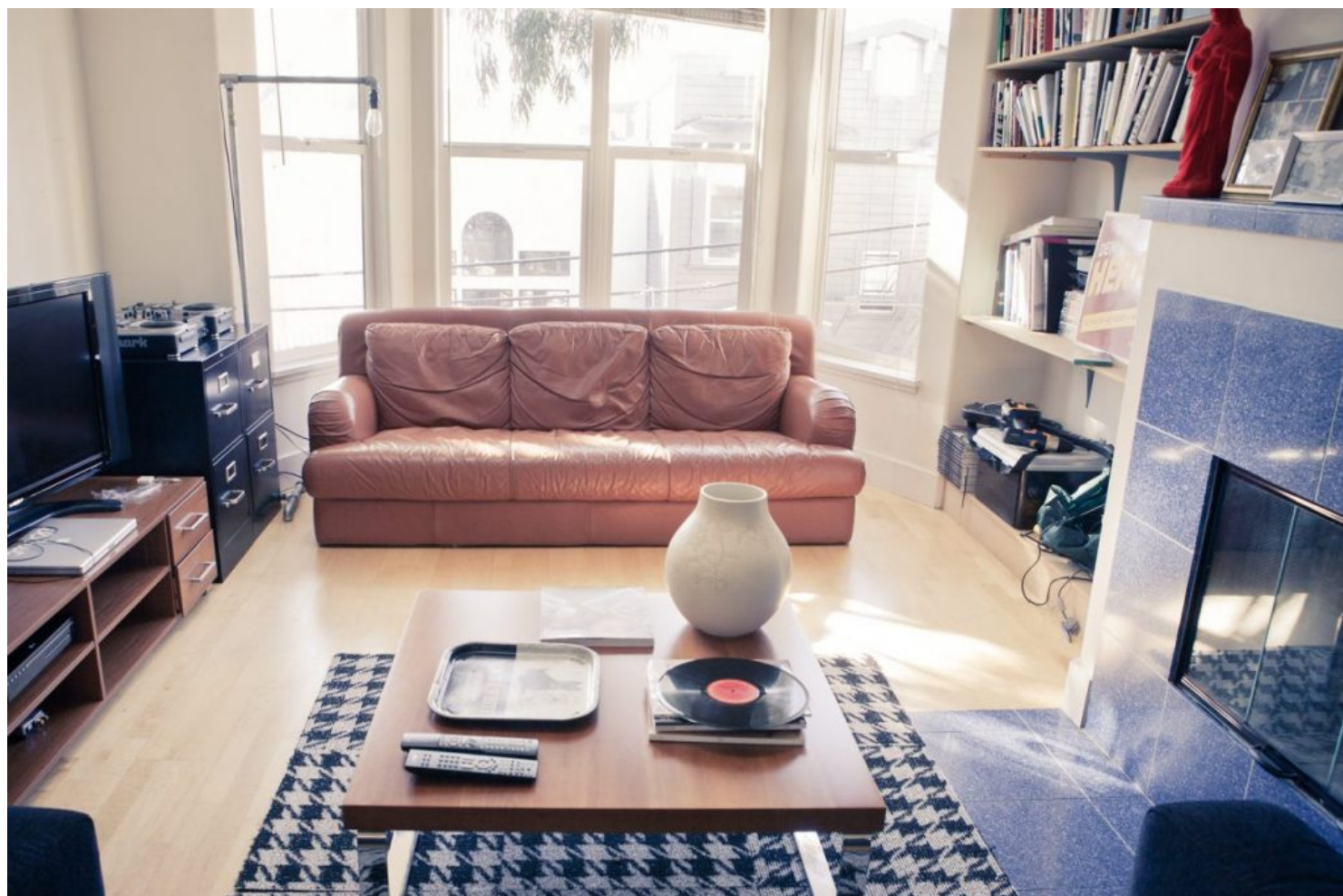


Skift.

Rooms, Rentals & Shares

Airbnb to Introduce Host Improvements and Flexible Search Tools for Guests

Dennis Schaal, Skift- May 24, 2021 1:20 pm



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airbnb is pledging to make

improvements to hosts' tools

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A some of which the company merely announced because implementation will take several months. Hosts will be looking to see if there is substance beyond public relations exercises.

— *Dennis Schaal*

Acknowledging that customer support for superhosts was lacking last year, Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky announced a series of steps to improve support, and to make it easier for new hosts to sign up to the service.

Airbnb added what it bills as a series of improvements to streamline the host sign-up process, and to provide hosts more support. Among them, Airbnb said it reduced the number of steps to sign up for hosting from “dozens of steps to just 10;” integrated publicly available real estate data to help hosts auto-fill-in property layouts, and offers artificial intelligence-driven suggestions for the best photos, and listings’ titles and descriptions.

Support for the host community “wasn’t where it was supposed to be,” Chesky said Monday during an online presentation, so Airbnb is doubling the number of support agents for super hosts, and increasing support languages from 42, from 11.

But many of these support upgrades and features won’t be available for several months.

While hosts have long complained about a lack of support from Airbnb customer service agents, especially after the pandemic-driven layoffs, the company said superhosts will get “a dedicated support team.”

Chesky promised this would lead to fewer transfers to different customer support representatives, and fewer escalations.

THE CONTEXTS

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There are several contexts for these announcements. One is that Airbnb is facing a host and inventory shortage, like competitors such as Vrbo, as a travel recovery takes place in parts of the world, and the company needs to sign up more hosts to kickstart growth.

Chesky assured hosts that the travel recovery will be the biggest in 100 years, and that consumers will travel more often and stay longer than they did in the past. Essentially some will not be traveling through Airbnb but will be living on Airbnb, he said.

For example, in Seattle some 40 percent of stays booked for the summer are for longer-term reservations.

Given the way travel patterns are changing, Chesky assured hosts — acknowledging that he's heard from many around the world — that business will get better.

Another piece of the proverbial puzzle is that hosts have wide-ranging complaints about an Airbnb back-end technology system that is rife with malfunctions.

While it is virtually impossible to confirm every complaint, just perusing the Airbnb host community forum recently found myriad complaints from hosts who alleged a cancellation policy changed without notice, that instant booking didn't work when a calendar was unblocked, that there was hundreds or thousands of dollars in overdue or missed payments from the company, and a calendar showed a listing was available when actually it was already booked.

Over the weekend, Skift spoke with a couple of superhosts who've used Airbnb as their primary income sources over the last 8-10 years. Both were former Airbnb evangelists.

One in the Boston area said she felt like when it comes to Airbnb, "I feel like I'm in an abusive relationship. Made possible by hosts? [The theme of Airbnb's ad campaign.] Behind the scenes Airbnb makes hosts' life impossible."

Informed of this perspective, another superhost in Europe said, "I agree with this completely."

Other hosts Skift has spoken within the past few weeks, particularly those in the U.S., had few complaints, citing a travel surge that produced a banner year in their Airbnb businesses.



On the traveler side, Airbnb expanded on a process begun earlier this year, and announced several upcoming ways to help prospective guests search for alternative destinations, inventory types, and dates of stay.

Among them, these features enable potential guests to find properties that might be just beyond – or below – those that they are searching for. Some of the queries may have taken multiple searches in the past, but have been streamlined to show more wide-ranging results, Chesky said.

Tags: airbnb, brian chesky, flexible search, guests, hosts, travel recovery

Photo Credit: Airbnb's original listing on Rausch Street in San Francisco. The company announced enhanced support for hosts, and more flexible search for guests. Airbnb

