

PRESS RELEASE

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Travel Counsellors targets owners and other travel staff to reflect changing industry

Travel Counsellors PLC is pleased to confirm that, along with experienced travel agents, it is now offering its travel counsellor franchise to experienced travel professionals who work in other areas of the industry and who are interested in running their own travel business as a travel counsellor.

The company is also now actively targeting the best staff in travel, including agency owners and consortia members, along with good travel staff from different backgrounds – including those working for tour operators and call centres.

It follows the successful launch of the company's franchise agreement which means that travel counsellors can build up value their business which they can sell on. They can also employ their own staff as and when their business can support such a move and enjoy the other benefits of being a travel counsellor, including the fact that they can:

- ? offer their customers complete financial protection through the Travel Counsellors Trust; and
- ? use the company's wholesale system, Phenix, (which now accounts for 22% of all bookings so far this year), and
- ? focus on looking after their customers, as all of the administration is taken care of by the company; and
- ? working from home (or other suitable premise, so long as that is not a high street retail outlet).

The move reflects the changing nature of the industry. As owners of independent agents on the high street may struggle because of rising costs and falling commissions and may be frustrated with consortia and the move to directional selling of in-house products, travel counsellors offers these owners the benefits of having their own business as a travel counsellor with the back up and administrative support of Travel Counsellors plc.

With the growth of tailor made and dynamically packaged holidays, the distinction between travel agents and operators is becoming blurred and the company is receiving more and more applications from travel professionals who do not have a traditional agency background and indeed the company already has a number of travel counsellors, including some that have achieved 'Gold' status, that have not come from a retail high street background.

The company believes it can successfully empower travel professionals, whatever their travel background to be successful Travel Counsellors. Travel Counsellors has one of the highest retention rates in the travel industry, proving that its training and development programme works. The turnover rate for the year is on course to be below 10% - down from 13% in 2005, proving that the company's methods of enabling and supporting its travel counsellors to run their own business and provide the very best levels of customer service, is working.

Travel Counsellors managing director Steve Byrne said: "The number of people we are recruiting each month is higher than at any time in the company's history – but that does not mean we should automatically prevent experienced travel professionals with the right experience, network and attitude from joining us so they too can make a success of being a travel counsellor. We want the best staff in travel, regardless of their background, but we will maintain the same high standards as before to ensure that travel counsellors has only the very best travel professionals, in the UK and overseas.

Travel Counsellors will provide a bespoke training programme for new recruits who do not have retail travel agency experience. They will also have access to a suite of training and development courses, educational and product training, as well as their own business development executive to assist them to grow their business and monitor their progress.



Owners of independent agencies are invited to call managing director Steve Byrne or Chairman David Speakman, for a private and confidential discussion to find out more about what the company can offer the successful independent agency owner.

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EDITOR'S NOTES: Travel Counsellors PLC is one of the UK's largest independent travel companies with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 312005) of £150 million, a 17% increase year on year. Founded by chairman David Speakman in 1994 it currently has over 588 travel consultants in the UK and Ireland who work from home with the support of over 110 staff at the company's head office in Bolton, Greater Manchester. During 2005 the company expanded into Southern Ireland where it now has 19 consultants and the Netherlands, where it has seven consultants to date. Travel Counsellors places all customer money in a Trust account, administered by the Barclays Bank Trust Company, which guarantees a 100% refund in the event that a supplier collapses. Travel Counsellors was the winner of the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2003 and the winner of the technology in business category of the 2005 CBI Growing Business Awards.

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