



PRESS RELEASE

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BBC's 'Last Choir standing' winners open Travel Counsellors' Conference in Marbella

Travel Counsellors' Conference 2008 got off to a roof raising start with an awe-inspiring opening performance from BBC's Last Choir Standing talent show winners 'Only Men Aloud!' The 20 piece choir lifted the crowd of nearly 1,300 delegates as they sung hits including James Bond's Goldfinger, Robbie Williams' Angels and delivered an amazing rendition of the company's conference theme tune 'Believe'.

Travel Counsellors' annual conference took place at the Marbella Exhibition and Conference Centre at the weekend (November 21-24). The 1,300 attending delegates included over 600 of the company's Counsellors plus partners, including over 100 agents from the company's overseas operations, making it the best attended conference in the company's history and the largest travel event by a UK travel company this year.

Company founder & Chairman David Speakman told the crowd; "The theme of this year's conference is 'Believe'. You are the best in the industry – we believe in you and we empower you to be the best you can be by believing in yourselves and your businesses. Despite the so called 'doom and gloom' in the industry we are going from strength to strength and this is down to your hard work and the fact that you build special relationships with your customer. We are here to support you every step of the way."

The company is celebrating phenomenal success this year with global sales at £245m, a 16% increase on last year, forecasting turnover of £280 million for the next financial year. Including its Counsellors from overseas, the company has recruited 250 new agents over the past 12 months and has also managed to maintain one of the highest staff retention rates in the industry – with 90% of people joining the company, staying with the company. The company's referral 'pioneers' were also congratulated at the conference; these are the Travel Counsellors that have referred fellow travel professionals to the company, with top referrer TC Helen Whittam having introduced four new agents to the company.

On the Friday evening delegates enjoyed a 'Taste of Spain' themed event, hosted by sponsors the Spanish Tourist Office and the tourist offices of Andalucia and Costa Del Sol. Held exclusively at the majestic Olivia Valere in Marbella, Travel Counsellors were treated to a night of entertainment including Flamenco dancing and authentic Spanish cuisine. .

Travel Counsellors also enjoyed a host of excursions on Saturday including wine tasting, golf, paella cooking, jeep excursions, flamenco dancing, rock climbing, abseiling, archery, mountain biking and a visit to Malaga and the famous Picasso Museum.

Further highlights included an evening of glamour at the company's exclusive gala dinner on Saturday evening, with entertainment from renowned ABBA tribute band, Björn Again. Over 100 suppliers were also in attendance at the event and exhibited at the impressive Pow Wow session on Saturday.

The company also announced the venue for next year's Gold Conference for its top performing agents. Held this year in Barbados, the Gold Travel Counsellors will be travelling to the exclusive Al Bustan Palace resort in Oman next June as a reward for their success and hard work.

The company's values were also focused on and reinforced at the event, with the emphasis on being a proud, innovative, caring and family orientated company supporting one another and working towards being 'the best travel company in the world'.



In his final parting speech David Speakman told the crowd of Travel Counsellors; "This is your time, you can achieve anything, you are the best."

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About Travel Counsellors: Travel Counsellors is the world's largest home-based travel company with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2008) of £245 million, a 16% increase year on year. Founded in 1994 it currently has over 1,000 travel consultants who work from home with the support of over 240 staff at the company's UK headquarters in Bolton and overseas offices. The company operates in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, South Africa, Australia, Canada and the US. In the UK Travel Counsellors places all customer money in a Trust account 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 2003-2008, the technology category of the 2005 CBI Growing Business Awards and was voted Travel Agent of the Year by readers of the Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited in 2006 & 2007.

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