



PRESS RELEASE

Travel Counsellors Conference 2007

Travel Counsellors celebrate another year of success at annual conference

"You are extraordinary people," Travel Counsellors managing director Steve Byrne told over 600 of the company's agents at its annual conference. "As a company we will never forget where we have come from and we will always remember the soul of the company, and that's about the special people that make us a success."

Over 1200 delegates attended Travel Counsellors' annual conference which took place at the recently re-branded 'Manchester Central', previously known as Manchester International Convention Centre and GMEX at the weekend (November 23-25). This included over 600 of the company's Counsellors plus partners attended including agents from the company's overseas operations in Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia, South Africa and the US. It was the best attended conference in the company's history the largest travel event by a UK travel company.

The event kicked off on Friday with a 'British Pub' themed evening. Travel Counsellors were entertained by a host of performers including the Lancashire Fusilier drummers and 'Britain's Got Talent' TV programme stars 'The Bar Wizards', and the highlight of the evening was a performance from top British comedian Peter Kay.

Further highlights included an evening of glamour at the company's exclusive gala dinner on Saturday evening, with an array of entertainment including fire eaters, stilt walkers, jugglers and ribbon dancers, with a special guest performance from Heather Small of chart topping UK band M People. Over 100 suppliers were also in attendance at the event and exhibited at the impressive Pow Wow session on Sunday.

Agents heard from head office management over the course of the weekend including sessions from company chairman and founder David Speakman, managing director Steve Byrne and sales director Malcolm Hingley. They were told about the company future plans and initiatives including the replacement of Travelcat with the company's own integrated system, which will be incorporated into its own Phenix dynamic packaging system.

Travel Counsellors also announced Marbella as the venue for next year's conference, with a special appearance from Costa del Sol tourist board, one of the main sponsors, which included a flamenco dance performance to give agents a small taste of what to expect next November. The company also announced the venue for next year's Gold Conference for its top performing agents, held this year in Cape Town, the Gold Travel Counsellors will be travelling to the exclusive Coral Reef Club resort in Barbados next May as a reward for their success and hard work.

The Conference followed another successful year for the Queen's Award winning company. For its financial year ended October 31 2007 the company increased sales by an impressive 21% to £212million (2006: £175m). The company forecasts turnover of £250 million for the next financial year, and a projected turnover of £310 million for 2009.

Including its Counsellors from overseas, the company increased its number of consultants by 22% this year from 694 to 850 and 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 expects to recruit a further 300 to 400 agents over the next 12 months.



The company has also seen a significant growth in its business travel sector with over 70 consultants now operating purely in corporate business travel and over 140 specialising in both business and leisure travel. The turnover has increased from £20m to £26m over the past year, and the company plans to increase business travel turnover to £50m over the next 12 months.

The year culminated in Travel Counsellors once again being named Travel Agent of the Year in October 2007 in the annual Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited Travel Awards, as voted for by readers, for a second consecutive year.

Managing Director Steve Byrne commented: "We have had a fantastic year and would like to thank our Travel Counsellors, who are the crème de la crème of the industry, for their ongoing dedication to providing an excellent customer service to their clients. We continue to put our agents at the heart of the business and that's what makes Travel Counsellors a success. Since our last conference we have seen significant developments in all areas of the business. Our sales are increasing year on year, and the support and care available to our Travel Counsellors is constantly being developed. Our overseas operations are going from strength to strength and this is reflected in the growing sales figures for each country."

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About Travel Counsellors: Travel Counsellors PLC is one of the UK's largest independent travel companies with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2007) of £212 million, a 21% increase year on year. Founded in 1994 it currently has over 850 travel consultants who work from home with the support of over 170 staff at the company's head office in Bolton. 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. The company operates in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, South Africa, Australia and the US. 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 are the 2006 & 2007 winners of Travel Agent of the Year voted by readers of the Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited. In 2007 the company won the Accenture Innovation Award and the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Travel Weekly Globe Awards. The company also received a record breaking 94% in a recent customer satisfaction survey.

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