

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**March 23 2006**

### **Travel Counsellors Chairman receives Lifetime Achievement Award**

Travel Counsellors chairman David Speakman became one of the first ever recipients of a travel industry Lifetime Achievement Award at a prestigious awards ceremony last night.

The Lifetime Achievement Awards were introduced for the first time this year to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the annual Agent Achievement Awards.

Mr Speakman was one of the first five winners of the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. He was recognised for being the pioneer of the travel agents working from home concept; recognising that experienced travel consultants could earn more, give better service and have a better work life balance by working from their own home, linked by the latest technology and specialising in giving their customers the highest possible levels of personal service.

The company he founded in 1994 has gone from strength to strength. Travel Counsellors now has almost 600 Personal Travel Counsellors working from home, supported by over 120 staff at its Bolton head office. During 2005 the company expanded overseas, establishing subsidiaries in Southern Ireland and the Netherlands. In the company's last financial year (ended October 31 2005) its turnover increased by 17% to £150 million.

Commenting on his award win Mr Speakman said: "In 1994 when I started this business, many doubted my idea of having agents working from home and there were times that the bank very nearly pulled the plug. But by recruiting the best travel consultants in the business, supported by a brilliant head office team – many of whom have been with me since those early days - we managed to prove the doubters wrong. I never intended to be the biggest – I just wanted to be the best. And I have no doubt that is what we have achieved."

The awards event took place on 22 March 2006 at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, London. The five winners were selected from a shortlist of 15 nominees from a judging panel consisting of some of the most senior figures in the UK travel industry.

**ENDS**

**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 18 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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