

PRESS RELEASE

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Travel Counsellors celebrates successful conference

Travel Counsellors PLC enjoyed a successful conference last weekend (Dec 2-4) with 435 travel consultants attending and over 800 delegates in total.

The agency, which increased sales by 17% last financial year (Nov 1 2004-Oct 31 2005), predicted that growth would be even higher next year as more disillusioned high street consultants sought to join a company that was expanding rapidly, was optimistic for the future and which gave them the tools and motivation to not only increase their earnings but enjoy a better work/life balance as well.

During the past financial year the company has expanded into the new markets of Southern Ireland and the Netherlands. It also increased its number of consultants in the UK by over 25%, recruiting another 130 consultants. Managing Director Steve Byrne thanked the company's existing consultants for making its new recruits feel so welcome and introducing so many of them to Travel Counsellors. He told delegates: "Recruiting more Travel Counsellors is fundamental to our growth. Recruiting more Travel Counsellors gives us money which we can reinvest in the business and which benefits everybody. Look at what we have achieved in the past 12 months – our commercial deals, our new technology, the launch of an ezine for our customers – all of this was because of reinvestment in the business."

He added: "There are still some parts of the country where we have few consultants or none at all. We have also shown that consultants can also co-exist quite happily in the same area. It is all about who you know, not where you are based. Of course we have to maintain our standards and recruit only the best people."

During the conference Travel Counsellors announced a number of new initiatives including the fact that it was implementing a 'contact centre' that would enable its consultants to manage their customer database more effectively. This would include introducing technology which meant that when a customer phoned a consultant's individual 0845 number that the customer's details including their name, address and details of their previous bookings - as well as any personal notes the individual consultant may have written about the client - will automatically appear on screen.

A highlight of the event was when everyone attending was asked to open an envelope to find out if they had won a place on the trade launch of the world's biggest cruise ship Royal Caribbean's Freedom of the Seas departing Southampton next May. The audience erupted with joy when every consultant present discovered they had a winning ticket!

Guest speakers included 'The Horse Whisperer' Monty Roberts, DG&G Travel Information publisher and general manager Simon Ferguson and Advance Performance's Mike Finnegan. Magician Derren Brown wowed delegates on Friday night; with guests dancing to Martin Fry and Tony Hadley at the Saturday night gala dinner.

Travel Counsellors announced next year's conference will take place from November 11-14 onboard Royal Caribbean's Voyager of the Seas and departing from Barcelona.

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EDITOR'S NOTES: Travel Counsellors PLC is one of the UK's largest independent travel agencies with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2005) of £150 million, a 17% increase year on year. Founded by chairman David Speakman in 1994 it currently has over 560 travel consultants nationwide who work from home with the support of over 110 staff at the company's head office in Bolton, Greater Manchester. During 2005 it also expanded into Southern Ireland, where it now has 12 consultants and the Netherlands, where it has five consultants to date. Travel Counsellors prides itself on the exceptional levels of personal service it offers its clients, a fact that was recognised in 2003 when it received the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise. 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.

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