

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Travel Counsellors revolutionises homeworking model with new franchise agreement**

Travel Counsellors is set to revolutionise the homeworking sector by introducing a groundbreaking new franchise agreement that clarifies its consultants' self employed status; allows its successful agents to take on their own staff; and crucially allows them to build up actual monetary value in their business that they can then sell on should they wish to do so.

The new franchise agreement provides a strong framework for Travel Counsellors' future growth both in the UK and overseas. It puts further distance between Travel Counsellors and other homeworking models; and the company believes will prove an extremely compelling reason for the best travel agents to join Travel Counsellors in preference to any other home-based agency and will also help Travel Counsellors in its commitment to reduce its turnover level from its current level of 13% to less than 10%.

One of the most important aspects of the new agreement is that it clarifies its consultants' self employed status. Other homeworking companies will not be able to offer this status because they are ABTA members and the association's rules state that its members are not allowed to have self-employed home based agents.

The franchise also allows its highest earning Gold Travel Counsellors to take on their own staff to help them to run their business and become even more successful. These employees – who will not themselves be Travel Counsellors - will first have to be vetted and approved by Travel Counsellors PLC, to ensure that the company's high standards are maintained. Again this is something no other homeworking agency, under current ABTA rules, can offer.

The agreement also gives its Counsellors the opportunity to build up monetary value in their business. At the moment that value is lost if they cease to be involved with Travel Counsellors but now the value which has been built up can be released on the sale of the Travel Counsellor's business.

Managing director Steve Byrne said: "As far as we are aware no other home working company will be able to offer the benefits this agreement provides and we are delighted to introduce it for the benefit of our existing and new Counsellors. Travel Counsellors was the first company to have professional travel agents working from home, and we are once again leading the field with this new agreement. Combined with all the other support and training we offer, it gives experienced travel consultants the best possible chance to make a success of working from home."

Adds Mr Byrne: "We have no intention of standing still. The Travel Counsellors model, with its emphasis on personal service and the way it empowers our self employed, experienced Travel Counsellors to realise their potential in terms of earnings and a better work/ life balance is absolutely of its time. We believe there is still huge opportunity for Travel Counsellors to grow - both in the UK and overseas. And that growth benefits each and every one of our Travel Counsellors by giving us the means to reinvest in the business."

Commenting on the agreement, Heather Rigby, one of the company's Gold Travel Counsellors said: "From my point of view the new agreement is absolutely brilliant. I have built my business up to the level it is now over the last 10 years. I am 44 and I have now got a great incentive to keep working and building up my business to think that when I choose to retire I can sell it on. It

is the closest thing to having your own business that you could possibly have without spending a fortune and I think it is fantastic.”

The franchise agreement has been awarded the Plain English Campaign Crystal Mark and Travel Counsellors will be seeking to become a member of the British Franchise Association (BFA), which groups together the country’s leading franchisors.

Commenting on the agreement John Pratt, partner of BFA lawyers Hamilton Pratt said: “Travel Counsellors is to be commended for its franchise agreement which reflects best practice in the franchise industry, not only in terms of its content and ethos, but because the company has gone the extra mile by making it so clear and easy to understand. It is the first agreement of its kind to have been awarded the Plain English Crystal Mark and I think it is an example many other companies will seek to follow in the future.”

## **ENDS**

### **EDITOR’S NOTES:**

In summary key benefits of the franchise comprise:

- ? Clarifies tax status as self employed, ring-fencing against possible future Inland Revenue changes
- ? Allows Travel Counsellors for the first time to build up monetary value in their business which can be sold on
- ? Allows Gold Travel Counsellors to employ staff (Administrators or Ambassadors) to help them run their business
- ? A five year agreement (current contract is two years)
- ? Plain English Crystal Mark
- ? British Franchise Approval (pending)
- ? Sound framework for future expansion of the company both in the UK and overseas

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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