



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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### **Ex Budget and Thomas Cook agents talk about their move to Travel Counsellors on TV3**

Ex Budget Travel employees Gemma Duffy and Sylvia Shannon and ex Thomas Cook agent Raymond Lee made their star debuts on TV3's 'Morning Show with Sybil and Martin' today talking about the move they made to join Travel Counsellors after they lost their jobs with the companies.

The trio were on the couch discussing how they turned such negative events into positives and are now happily running their own business from home as Travel Counsellors, and reaping the rewards of their hard work. Presenter Martin even visited ex Cook Assistant Manager Raymond, who was made redundant 9 months ago after the Dublin shop closures and was also involved in the renowned 'sit-ins', in his Drumcondra home to see first-hand how he is able to run such a successful travel business whilst enjoying the flexibility of working from home and being available to his clients at a time to suit them, something he was never able to do before.

"Now I am my own boss and can be available to my clients when they need me," he told the show. "I have greater flexibility in my working hours and although I am working harder, I am reaping the benefits, as are my customers."

Co Meath based Travel Counsellor Gemma, who was Manager of Budget Travel Navan Branch for nine years, and Co Wexford based Travel Counsellor Sylvia, who was Assistant manager of the company's Wexford branch, were both made redundant after the company ceased trading in November 2009. The pair were asked about how this affected them and what made them take the step to join Travel Counsellors, after setting up with the company just this month.

"Of course it was hard when we were told the sad news but I knew I had to stay positive, for myself and my family, and see this as an opportunity," said Gemma. "I had heard about Travel Counsellors within the industry and also have a friend who is a TC who actually rang me after I lost my job and told me joining Travel Counsellors would be the best move I would ever make. She was right."

"Even though we only officially started this week we have already made bookings," continued Sylvia. "It is great to know we have such a fantastic support team behind us which gives us more time to focus on our customers and give them a great service. Plus although we work from home we never feel alone as there is such a great community of agents – in fact I have already had a host of e-mails from fellow Travel Counsellors across the world offering me support and welcoming me to the company."

The agents also predicted more agency closures over the coming months, and talked about the difficulties and cost implications of overheads and bonding for those running shops on the high street. They noted this is not an issue at Travel Counsellors, as they are able to run their own businesses and enjoy the rewards without the worry of overheads, but with the back up and support of over 200 staff at its Cork office and UK headquarters. This concept has certainly proved successful and the company, which now has 45 Travel Counsellors across the Republic of Ireland, continues to go from strength to strength reporting January sales were a phenomenal 41% up on last year, with sales of €2.18 million.

Travel Counsellors Ireland General Manager Cathy Burke comments; "The agents were certainly well received on the show and the presenters commented what a great idea the whole Travel Counsellors concept is, which is great to hear and really reaffirms that there is a future for



experienced agents to continue working in an industry they love. When you lose your job it is easy to become disillusioned. However through our offering we empower our agents to take control of their destinies, whilst being free to sell what is best for the customer with the time to deliver an exceptional level of customer service because of the support we offer. We have already had calls and e-mails flooding in from customers wanting to book and agents interested in joining the company!”

**ENDS**

**EDITOR’S NOTES:** Travel Counsellors Ireland is licensed and bonded with the Commission for Aviation Regulation in Ireland – Travel Agents License No 621. Travel Counsellors Ltd is one of Europe’s largest independent travel companies with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 312009) of £255million (€290million). Founded by chairman David Speakman in 1994 it currently has over 1,100 travel consultants who work from home with the support of over 200 staff at the company’s UK headquarters and overseas offices. The company operates in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Australia, the US and Canada. Travel Counsellors Ireland was established in June 2005 and currently has 40 Personal Travel Counsellors in the Republic.

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