

# 10 TIPS

TO TURN YOUR PASSION FOR TRAVEL INTO

# A THRIVING BUSINESS



*Dream*  
Vacations *Start Here* <sup>SM</sup>

**Y**ou're not alone with your passion for travel. For those infected by the travel bug, from Mark Twain and John Steinbeck to artists and teachers to business travelers and journalists, adventure has beckoned and inspired them to go beyond the familiar.

Travel is transformative. Even the briefest time away from home can alter your outlook and give you new perspectives. You're able to step outside of your comfort zone and experience new cultures, people and geographies. Other times, it's the perfect opportunity to slip back into a more comfortable spot where you've created unforgettable memories.

However, the opportunities to be a professional traveler are few and far between. So, how do you create a career out of one of your strongest passions?

Did you know being able to redirect your wanderlust into a legitimate, thriving home-based travel business is very achievable and affordable? Becoming a travel agent business professional is a pathway toward entrepreneurship that has allowed countless travel fans to assist others in living out their dream vacations while satisfying their own personal desire to experience new horizons.

While passion is at the heart of any successful business venture, you need to have a clear plan to make it a long-term endeavor. Here are 10 tips that will help you turn your passion for travel into a tangible home based travel business:

*“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.”*

**– Mark Twain**

*“People don't take trips, trips take people.”*

**– John Steinbeck**

## 1. RESEARCH THE INDUSTRY & TRENDS

The travel industry is strong, with consumers in 2016 having spent more on travel than they did on goods. The cruise segment is the fastest growing segment in the travel industry – 24.3 million people cruised in 2016 and 25.3 million are expected to set sail in 2017.

To meet demand, 26 new ships were ordered for 2017. By contrast, 10 years ago in 2006 there were 12.1 million cruise passengers and in 2007 12 new ships debuted.

Yet only 20 percent of the U.S. population has ever taken a cruise. Exciting new cruise ships are perfect for attracting the important first-time cruiser market, and these new cruisers look to travel agent business professionals to guide them onto the right ship.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

What does the travel industry look like today?

How has it changed from a decade ago?

What changes are on the horizon?

### Evolving trends in the travel industry that will require the assistance of travel agents include:



Greater demand for river cruises



More cruise itineraries visiting private islands



Rise in popularity of celebrity chefs on cruises



Increased demand for expedition cruises

## 2. RESEARCH CONSUMER DEMAND

**D**emand for travel agents is on the rise because travelers are overwhelmed with information and options. While 10 years ago a traveler could book their own vacation online, that task is now cumbersome and takes hours to do.

Travel agent business professionals have the knowledge and expertise to help their clients plan and book the trip they want. Their guidance helps reduce any post-travel regrets about missed experiences because the consumer took on the monumental task of arranging their trip.

Thirty percent of millennials, the largest generation of consumers, used a travel agent in the last year and are likely to recommend using an agent to a friend.

Travel agents are being used for complex travel plans, international travel or going to places they haven't been before.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

How has consumer demand for travel agent services evolved over time?

Are there generational shifts in the use of travel agents?

What types of travel do consumers use travel agents for?



### 3. RESEARCH YOUR COMPETITION

There are approximately 70,000 travel agents in the U.S. accessible online and at brick and mortar locations. In 2016, travel agents booked 70 percent of cruises for more than 24 million cruise passengers

Because competition is increasing in the travel agency business sector, marketing is being done online through email campaigns and social media, as well as face-to-face networking in communities to land clients.

Affiliating with a travel franchise provides numerous advantages that independent business owners frequently lack. For instance, you gain access to unparalleled buying power that allows you to access exclusive sales and promotions for your clients. Additionally, a travel franchise will continuously invest in your success through ongoing support and training.

Finally, the franchise model gives you the tools to succeed with local marketing for lead generation and web-based business tools. All of this is coupled with built-in brand recognition that gives you a leg up on your competitors.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

What does the national travel agent landscape look like?

How are travel agents in your local area marketing themselves?

Which types of vacations are booked through a travel agency business?



## 4. FIGURE OUT YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS

A home-based travel business can be either a full-time job or an additional source of income because it's virtual and can be operated from anywhere with an Internet connection.

The growing demand for travel agents combined with the low overhead of doing business from home makes a home-based travel business self-sustaining.

However, short-term goals (e.g. book X number of cruises by end of month) and long-term goals (e.g. year-over-year financial growth) are necessary to keep a home-based travel agency moving forward.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Are you looking for supplementary income?

Are you looking for a self-sustaining business?

How often should you set financial goals?



## 5. FIGURE OUT YOUR FINANCIAL NEEDS

It's important to draft a budget and figure in what your existing financial needs are, such as rent/mortgage, utilities, car payment, etc.

Consult with a franchise development specialist to identify the expenses for opening a home-based travel agency and the ongoing costs.

They can offer help on where to get financing if you need it. Also, speaking with an existing franchisee in a travel agency franchise will tell you what's needed to keep operating and growing.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

What are your existing financial commitments?

How much are you able/willing to spend to get your business up and running?

How much will you need to keep your business operating and growing?



## 6. IDENTIFY YOUR AREAS OF EXPERTISE

**W**hen pursuing your passion as a career, it's important to take stock of your skills and experience. In addition to a love of travel, some technical skills are necessary to become a successful travel agent business owner.

Agents spend a lot of time on the computer researching, booking reservations, operating reservation systems and utilizing business experience skills to promote and sell their services and products. However, prior travel professional experience is not required to become a successful travel agent business owner.

For example, 95 percent of CruiseOne/Dream Vacations franchise owners do not have experience as travel agents. The company's training, ongoing educational opportunities, round-the-clock support center, access to business development managers and more sets its agents up for success.

Since being a travel agent involves selling dream vacations, being social and outgoing are key to selling travel products. Networking is essential for growing the travel agent's business.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you have any technical skills?

Do you have experience in business (sales, marketing, operations)?

Do you enjoy being social and networking?



## 7. IDENTIFY WHERE YOU NEED SUPPORT

**T**ravel companies that have strong relationships with suppliers, such as CruiseOne/Dream Vacations, give their agents a leg up in the industry. CruiseOne/Dream Vacations maintains premier status with cruise lines, hotels and resorts, car rental agencies, tour providers and more.

These associations allow CruiseOne/Dream Vacations franchise owners to offer the best selection of vacation options to travelers. To help you network and conduct business, you will need a computer, reliable internet connection for email and access to vendors, reservation systems, a smartphone and more.

The path to successful business ownership includes assessing what niche and areas of focus you want to sell so you can receive extra training in those areas.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

What connections do you have in the travel industry?

What technology do you need to run your business?

What type of training are you interested in?



## 8. CREATE A LIST OF EXISTING CONTACTS

**M**ost people enjoy traveling, but you'll have to figure out who to target first. Start with past and current colleagues. They will create a solid foundation to your database by recommending you to others in their social circles. Join clubs and organizations in your area. Use meetings as opportunities to promote yourself as a travel professional and your business as the gateway to their next best vacation.

Then expand your network from there. Add the people in other groups you belong to. Business networking events are also great opportunities to grow your list of potential clients and make connections.

Travel is a topic everyone connects with and enjoys talking about. People connect when they share stories about their trips. This makes travel a fun product to sell because the appeal is so large. Therefore, just about everybody is a customer.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you have current or past colleagues who fall within your target customer base?

Are there social network groups you belong to and are engaged with?

Are there networking groups you belong to and regularly interact with?



## 9. DEVELOP A MULTICHANNEL MARKETING APPROACH

Consider which kind of marketing works best for your targets. You may find direct marketing – direct mail, e-mail, etc. – works best for some target demographics.

But you'll also want to build your digital footprint with a website and social media platforms. Social media channels, which were set up to network, are invaluable as followers can easily engage with and share information about your business.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Are you using direct marketing tools?

Are you building your digital footprint?

Are you networking the right way?



## 10. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

**D**eveloping relationships in your local area will help you book dream vacations for your local clients. You'll be able to match the right vacation and amenities to each traveler, whether they are an individual or a family looking for a cruise, a tour, an all-inclusive resort or anywhere else in between.

By forging relationships in the business community, business travelers and even entire companies may consider you to book their travel. Building a lasting relationship with clients is key to success.

Your clients will travel again, so you will want to follow up with them with personalized messages via email, text, phone, in-person meetings and social media.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you have relationships within your local area?

Do you have relationships with company or member organizations?

How does client relationship management go beyond the transaction?



## WHAT DOES CRUISEONE/DREAM VACATIONS OFFER FOR ASPIRING TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS?

CruiseOne/Dream Vacations offers access to a fun and exciting industry that allows franchisees to give direction and meaning to their passion for travel. CruiseOne/Dream Vacations reduces the barriers to business ownership with a low initial investment, flexibility, the ability to work from home, the capacity to work part-time and scale as desired.

CruiseOne/Dream Vacations has grown to more than 1,000 franchise owners in its 25 years as a travel franchise leader. CruiseOne/Dream Vacations has unique power and strength within the industry through its connection with parent company World Travel Holdings, which has a diverse collection of more than 40 travel industry-leading brands, making it the world's largest cruise agency and award-winning travel company.

### FRANCHISE OWNERS RECEIVE:



A weeklong initial training program at company headquarters and continuous in-person and online education opportunities



Marketing and lead generation programs



Access to a dedicated business development manager



Networking through virtual or in-person meetings, regional seminars and national conference



Web-based business tools



24-hour support from headquarters



Exclusive vacation offers for customers



Personal travel perks

**C**onsider harnessing your passion for travel by making other travelers' dreams come true. As a home-based travel business owner, you will be helping them take vacations they have always wanted to go on. The earning potential is endless in the flourishing industry that needs travel agents to help an expanding group of travelers navigate their next vacation with confidence and ease.

## NEXT STEPS

For more information, visit

[WWW.DREAMVACATIONSFRANCHISE.COM](http://WWW.DREAMVACATIONSFRANCHISE.COM)

or call the Franchise Development Team at

**800-892-3928.**

