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Frequently Asked Questions About Becoming a Home-Based Travel Agent

How is it possible to become a travel agent overnight without getting a lot of expensive training?

The secret is to become an outside sales representative for an established travel agency. You find the customer and make the booking with the airline, tour operator, or cruise line. The travel agency issues the ticket. And you and the travel agency split the commission.

But isn't the Internet going to eliminate the need for travel agents?

Absolutely not. If anything, it's already creating more opportunity for home-based agents. You see, travel agencies have traditionally made their bread and butter booking airline tickets. Now that the airlines have eliminated commissions and are forcing — or should we say encouraging — the public to book tickets directly on the Internet, traditional travel agencies are under a lot of pressure to find inexpensive ways to bring in new leisure business—cruises, tours, independent travel, and so on. The best way to reach leisure travelers inexpensively is to take on outside, home-based independent agents, who can sell to their friends, relatives, and organizations and get paid by the agency only when they actually book business. Besides, a lot of travelers simply don't want to research and book their own travel. They want to work with a travel agent, and if the agent is a friend, so much the better.

Okay, so there's a real opportunity for me to work as a home-based travel agent. But why would an agency be willing to take me on when I have no training?

A lot of agencies won't. But a growing number are realizing that taking on outside sales reps will bring in a lot of business they wouldn't otherwise get.

But don't I need special training first?

If you've ever booked a hotel room or a cruise for yourself, you know enough to get started. Now, there's a lot to learn in the travel business and I don't want to minimize that. But selling travel is not rocket science; the basics are pretty easy to grasp. The *Home-Based Travel Agent Course* provides all the basic techniques you need to start booking tours, cruises, airlines, hotels, and rental cars.

How do I find an agency willing to take me on as an outside rep?

I recommend starting with agencies in your local area. They're nearby so you can get questions answered quickly and pick up tickets on short notice. Unfortunately, these are the least likely to want to deal with a beginner. But, there are a growing number of bona-fide travel agencies that will take on outside reps, regardless of experience or location, usually for a fee, so you can get started right away. The *Home-Based Travel Agent Course* profiles nearly 70 companies that offer you that opportunity. Most will charge you a fee to sign on with them.

So it's going to cost me a bundle, right?

Not necessarily. Some outfits charge \$5,000 or more. Others charge as little as \$100. There are many agencies that charge no sign-up fee at all — and you can't get much more reasonable than that. Of course, you'll want to take a good look at what they offer you in return.

Okay, so I can get started for a few bucks. How much money can I make?

That's hard to answer because it depends on a lot of variables. For example, how much of the commission do you get? It's pretty standard to split the commission 50-50 and I certainly wouldn't accept any less than that. But I show you how to get at least 70% of the commission. It's even possible to get 80%. So you have to shop around.

Some agencies charge their outside agents a flat fee for every ticket they issue for them, while others charge nothing for the ticket but do charge for shipping it to you.

Another thing that affects your income is what you're selling. Domestic airfare doesn't make you any money. But selling cruises, tours, and resort packages can earn you \$200 or \$500 in commissions for every sale you make.

Finally, there's the question of how much time you devote to it and how good a businessperson and salesperson you are. If you make one \$200 commission each week, you've got a nice part-time income. Do that once a day and you're on your way to a nice living.

Why can't I just deal directly with the airlines and the cruise operators and avoid the travel agency entirely?

Actually you can, and it's getting easier every day, what with all the changes in the industry today. But there are still some good reasons for going through a host agency. For one thing, you can often make more money working with a travel agency than you could dealing directly with the supplier. That's because the travel agency get a much higher commission, so even after splitting the commission you put more money in your pocket.

Also, it's a lot easier and more convenient to collect commissions from one travel agency than dozens of suppliers. As you gain more experience, you'll find that you'll start dealing directly with some suppliers — cruise lines in particular. That way, of course, you won't have to split the commission with anyone.

You'll still have to maintain a relationship with a travel agency, however, if you want to continue selling some products, like airline tickets.

Won't the travel agency get upset if I start going directly to the suppliers?

They might, but there's nothing they can do. As an outside rep you are an independent contractor, not an employee of the travel agency. They can't tell you how to run your business. Most agencies that use this kind of arrangement understand the realities of the business and accept them.

So far, it sounds pretty straightforward. But don't I have to be careful? Aren't there some scam artists out there?

In developing the *Home-Based Travel Agent Course*, I uncovered only one outfit, which isn't even a travel agency, that takes your money and gives next to nothing in return. What you find more often are agencies that engage in overpricing and deceptive advertising. Essentially their pitch is: "Give us \$500 and we'll give you an 'official agent ID card' that will get you free hotel rooms and ultra-discounted airfares."

That's a lot of hooey. The industry has cracked down on this sort of thing, so you'll probably find their ID is about as "official" as your Captain Midnight

decoder ring. And even if you do con your way into a cheap hotel room, you're committing fraud. I have very little time for this type of operation, but it must be said that these outfits are travel agencies and you can book travel through them and collect a commission.

But aren't the benefits — big discounts and free trips — one of the reasons people want to become travel agents in the first place?

Sure, those benefits exist and it's not too hard to qualify for them legally and ethically. Bona fide travel agents are entitled to discounts and industry courtesies. For example, suppliers sponsor "fam trips" or familiarization trips to acquaint travel agents with their tours and resorts. These can cost a modest amount or even be free. Once you get active in the business, you'll learn about these opportunities. I've even had suppliers offer me great fam trips without my asking.

There's a lot of misinformation in this area, so I devote a whole section of the *Home-Based Travel Agent Course* to how the system of ID cards, discounts, and fam trips works and how you can legally qualify for all the great benefits.

What kinds of people are becoming successful home-based agents?

All sorts. There are a lot of experienced travel agents taking this route. They can make more money than they would as an employee and they avoid the high overhead of starting their own agency.

Then there are Moms looking for a way to make money doing something interesting while staying home with the kids, and people looking for a new career, one that will let them travel more. There are also an increasing number of part-timers who sell to their family, friends, and neighbors and make a few extra thousand each year.

One of the great things about working as a home-based travel agent is the flexibility. You can work as many or as few hours as you choose, make a full-time living or some extra money for a new car or an extra vacation.

What advice would you give to someone who's interested in becoming a travel agent using this strategy?

First, shop around for the best deal with an agency. The financial arrangements vary widely. But don't worry too much. The nature of the business is that if you find a better deal, it's easy to switch agencies. You can even deal with more than one agency at once.

Second, start small. Don't make a big investment in software, training or equipment until you find out that the travel agent business is for you. It's possible to get started for under \$200. Then if you decide you don't want to continue you've lost very little, if any, money. If you decide you like the travel game, you can invest in your business as it grows.

Third, make a commitment to learning. One of the great things about this business is that the suppliers make a big commitment to providing free educational seminars, low-cost training videos, and all sorts of other helpful information to travel agents. There are also professional organizations that offer educational opportunities. For instance, you can take a seven-day Caribbean cruise and learn how to sell cruises for a cost to you of \$450 — and that \$450 is a tax-deductible business expense!

But where do I get the information I need to get started?

Well I'm prejudiced, of course, but I'd recommend the *Home-Based Travel Agent Course*. Thousands of people have already used it to get their home-based agencies up and running successfully.

How can I get the *Home-Based Travel Agent Course* and get started?

Just visit our web site at: <http://www.hometravelagency.com> (where you will also find lots more information on becoming a home-based travel agent, plus a FREE newsletter to help you succeed).

Pay particular attention to the section called "How To Succeed As A Home Based Travel Agent." It reveals the number one mistake that beginners make and will help you avoid making that costly mistake yourself.