

## TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS

# Drew Daly

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# Drew Daly

## General Manager of Network Engagement and Performance, World Travel Holdings Chairman, CLIA STARBoard Fort Lauderdale, FL

**Congratulations on your recent promotion with World Travel Holdings. As one of the most dynamic and successful leaders in the travel industry, how did you develop your passion for travel?**

Thank you so much and Happy New Year! You are too kind. I am truly blessed to be able to do what I do and for the amazing organization I am part of. It is a great question. As I look back on my childhood, I can attribute my passion for travel to my parents. Every year they would take us on a family vacation to a different state. They made sure we had unique experiences along the way. I always loved packing a bag and heading out on the road from that point forward. I did not realize then that it would translate into a rewarding career in the travel industry for more than two decades.

**Tell us the story of how your travel industry career began.**

After graduating from college, I really wanted to pursue a career in sales. A good friend of mine had worked briefly for a travel company in Boston and she encouraged me to go there to get my feet wet. My ultimate goal was to work in pharmaceutical sales. Once I started at National Leisure Group (now World Travel Holdings) I immediately fell in love with selling travel. I loved working with people and helping them find the best vacation option for them to break away from their routines. I took ownership of my role in the process and treated it like my own business. I never once felt like it was work and worked all the time because I got some much energy out of helping my customers. It became a challenge for me to find the best options within each family's budget. The thrill of the chase for me was making sure they were on the best product for them and keeping within their budgetary constraints. At the end of my first year I was a top sales person within the company and could make my own hours –that was

when I began traveling. I realized then that this is a pretty cool gig considering most people I graduated college with were shackled to a desk in a financial company. After a few years, I wanted to help other people succeed and increase their sales. Thus began my management

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career. Since then I have been blessed with amazing opportunities and positions.

## **What were some of the professional challenges you encountered early in your career?**

Early in my career, the biggest challenges were trying to balance all of the products I was learning with the different needs of each customer I was working with. It would become overwhelming at times to be able to research options and still find the time to be prospecting for new customers. It all boiled down to “time management” and to this day still does. Time management and prioritizing one’s time is mission critical to being successful. I am not great at it, but I have become better over the years. Repetition is the mother of skill. The more you do something the better you become at it. This mindset has helped me become better at managing my time and ultimately what I invest my time and energy on. I always made sure to invest extra time in learning new selling techniques and with experiencing different products so that I could be better prepared to educate my customers on the product benefits.

## **What advice do you have for travel advisors just getting started in their careers?**

Any time I meet someone who is just starting out I always tell them to not get overwhelmed by the product and all of the information being thrown their way. I always urge newbies to spend their time and energy familiarizing themselves with the different cruise lines products. Go onto their websites and learn the itineraries, the ships and take their trainings. It is so important to understand the different brand messages and what they offer to passengers before sending someone on their product. Thankfully we work in a “fun” industry which makes learning about the products we sell also fun. The next thing I always recommend is to make sure they are comfortable selling. A lot of people are afraid of sales and do not come to our industry with a lot of sales experience. Therefore, I suggest watching YouTube videos that focus on sales training and/or reading books that are helpful in providing them with the core soft skills to succeed.

*\*CLIA has a number of online courses that are directly targeted towards selling cruise travel. Check out our*

*online courses here (<https://www.cruising.org/travel-agent/professional-development/online-learning>).*

## **How about seasoned advisors? How can they avoid complacency and maintain a competitive edge?**

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Great question. It is so easy to fall victim to one's own routine and become complacent. I always urge veteran agents to try something new each month with their business. The most important thing that any agent can do is ensure that they are present with their customers and in their communities. If they are relying upon their existing book of business and not meeting new prospects, then eventually they will begin to lose share. The goal should always be to connect with and meet new people. They want to become known as the "go to travel expert" in their communities so that when someone is interested in booking a cruise they will remember them and contact them. Building a successful and sustainable business is reliant upon being relevant to your customer. A key to being relevant is for someone to be likeable. The more likeable and approachable you are will lend itself to people wanting to do business with you. Always make sure to keep it personal and get to know your customer. When they feel that connection with you then they will always come to you and bring you the business.

**You were recently asked to serve a second term as Chairman of CLIA's Strategic Trade Advisory and Review Board (STARBoard) which is unprecedented. In your first term, the STARBoard played a key role in helping CLIA develop more practical value in its membership. What's on the horizon for your second term?**

I am so honored to continue my role with CLIA. Going forward, it is so important that the members of CLIA engage with the content and attend the events when the opportunities present themselves. I have been a member of CLIA for a long time and have always seen tremendous benefits from my membership. I want to ensure that members continue to see those benefits unfold. I look forward to working with other agency leaders along with the CLIA member cruise lines to partner on ways to serve up qualitative training and programs that are effective in helping us all grow sales and increase awareness for cruise vacations.

**What has been your most memorable cruise experience?**

Again, I am so fortunate to have so many memorable cruise experiences. Most of the memories center around the people I am with and the places we are visiting. I went with my parents on a cruise to Alaska. They did the land portion of the trip ahead of time and I flew to Anchorage to take a Southbound Voyage of the Glaciers cruise with them. There are so many amazing tours on an Alaskan cruise. My father and I decided to go dogsledding on a glacier in Juneau. I was so

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excited for the experience since it happened to also fall on Father's Day. We were on our way to the helicopter launch when we were informed that it was canceled due to weather conditions; however, they could still fly us to the top of the glacier. There is not much you can do when it comes to weather so we still went. We got our boots and boarded the helicopter

with two other people. Once we boarded the helicopter, the pilot said “great news! The weather cleared up and you are able to do the original tour.” It was just incredible to see the dog camp upon landing on the glacier. Our guide explained what was going to happen and we boarded our own sled for a two mile trek around the glacier. About halfway through the tour it appeared to be snowing. The guide advised us that it was not snow and it was a cloud. The weather shifted gears on us and brought on a white out to the glacier. When we got back to the dog camp, the main guide said they could not fly us back down the mountain due to the white out conditions. Instead, they took us on another dog sledding adventure. When we returned we helped them move the dog camp and the dogs. They do this daily to prevent everything from sinking in the snow. We basically were stuck on the glacier for five hours and got an experience of making stew and coffee while hanging out in the tents of where the guides lived. In the end, the owner of the tour company (a former Vietnam Vet Pilot) was able to get us once the weather cleared up. The people were so nice to us that we gave the owner some money to send up pizza and beer to them for their dinner the next night. After all there is only so much beef stew one can eat. We did not miss the ship and to this day still look back fondly at that fun time.

## **Any last thoughts?**

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be interviewed. I hope that whoever reads the newsletter enjoys a rewarding career in the cruise industry and has fun along the way.



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