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TRAVEL AGENT INTERVIEWS

Carol Dyck

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Carol Dyck, ECC
Cruise and Vacation Consultant, Expedia

CruiseShipCenters

West Vancouver, British Columbia

Describe your career as a travel agent. How long have you been in the business? What attracted you to it?

I was concerned about finding time to answer these questions to be honest! At 11pm tonight, I was busy quoting, answering questions, and holding cabins for clients. It is now almost 12:30am, and I am now answering the questions. This is my life as a travel agent! It is 7 days a week with never a day off, from morning until very late.

I have been in the business almost 10 years. I started in February 2009. I never thought in a million years that I would be in sales. I ran a research lab in soil chemistry – about as far removed from sales as you could be! Then I went on a cruise with a friend whose roommate had to cancel. That cruise changed my life. After many more cruises, people were asking me for advice. I got laid off from the lab, and was looking for something else. I saw an ad in the local newspaper about opportunities with Expedia CruiseShipCenters, and here I am, 10 years later.

What is your approach to serving clients?

Customer service is the key. I am always there, even while I am on holidays myself. I listen to them, talk to them, laugh with them – and they know that I will take care of them. Last night at 12:30 am I was helping a client who was in Jordan having problems with her flights that she didn't even book with me. If I am away and can't respond, I always have colleagues in the office helping me. You need to be there, but yes, you do need to set limits. It used to be I would drop everything for every question, but I have learned to prioritize more. If I am heading out on my bike, and someone wants a hotel 6 months from now, I will let them know that I have received their request and I'll get back to them. If it is an emergency, I drop everything.

What has been a career highlight, thus far?

That would be a tossup between winning top sales in Western Canada with Celebrity and becoming Double Diamond with Expedia CruiseShipCenters.

How has your CLIA membership and certification helped you as a cruise travel professional?

CLIA really got me started in the industry. I decided right at the start in 2009 to get accredited and do all that I could to gain knowledge in the business. Having to do all the courses, ship tours, personal cruises, and achieve sales goals, really gave me a drive to get things accomplished. I do not believe that I would be where I am today without all that I had to do to complete each level. I really wish more would follow that path. When one gets accredited with CLIA, one shows that they have education, knowledge, and want to succeed.

What cruising trends are you seeing?

I am seeing an upturn in cruising and the price point. When I first started, there was a recession, and prices were honestly in the toilet. No more. I am also seeing younger people turning to cruises. I am booking more family groups. Solo cruisers are becoming more prevalent, and cruise lines are starting to respond to that huge market.

What is your fondest personal cruise memory?

I have many, many, fond memories, so it is hard to pick one. I lead groups on cruises. On one cruise, we were all up on the nightclub, and were dancing up a storm. Clients, who didn't know each other 2 days earlier, were now having a ball together. I looked around and saw all of these happy people, and I thought, "I did this." There is a picture of me jumping up in the air in the dance floor, and that pretty much says it all. As one client said, "Carol creates memories."

Any last thoughts?

This job isn't for sissies! I have never had a more demanding job. The responsibilities are enormous. I have had people say to me that it must be fun and I must travel for free... They really have no idea what is involved. It is 24/7 and can be stressful. To be successful in this business, you have to throw yourself into it, take all the courses that you can, and be there for your clients.