

TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS

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Travel Professional Interviews

Agency Membership

Agent Membership



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Senior Vice President of Global Sales, Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection Chair, CLIA Trade Relations Committee

Tell us about your career in the travel industry. How did you start out? What attracted you to travel?

I've been in the travel industry just about my entire adult life. After graduating from High School with an entire summer before college started, my mother suggested that I find a job and "be productive." In the summer of 1988, for \$4.77 an hour, I started working part time, loading bags onto airplanes on the ramp for Continental Airlines. At first, it was just a "job" but it wasn't too long before I caught the travel bug and realized that I could fly all over the world. I guess it was those early days that really instilled in me an appreciation for travel and exploration that's still with me today.

You've been at the sales helm of Uniworld since 2016. What have been some of the highlights of your first two years?

The very first thing that attracted to me Uniworld is the incredible beauty of the brand experience. Uniquely distinctive, culturally immersive with a relentless commitment to exceptional and anticipatory service that I haven't seen anywhere else. Simply stated, it really is one-of-a-kind. Since joining Uniworld in 2016, we've implemented several industry-supportive resources. From growing our field sales team to one of the largest in the river cruise industry and developing our inside sales and support team as an additional layer of support. The combined team has been designed to enhance our level of access and support for Travel Advisors. We also redesigned a new Travel Advisor page on the www.Uniworld.com (<http://www.Uniworld.com>) website under Advisor Resources that, in addition to offering collateral, sales support and other tools, also includes Uniworld University, the one source for all things related to learning about Uniworld. These efforts, and so many more have really supported the continuing partnership we have with our Travel Advisor partners and have generated record breaking success for the company.

What trends are you seeing in the business?

One trend that continues to grow stronger is the desire for experiencing a destination as opposed to simply relaxing in one. People want to explore. To borrow a phrase, they're now comfortable getting out of their comfort zone. The lure of the authentic and the unique is now more of a determining factor for their next holiday than ever before. Of course, it's hard to find a better way to do this outside of a cruise. At Uniworld, we pride ourselves on the immersive, authentic experience. Whether it's the destination inspired elegant décor of our ships and cuisine or the diversely enriching destinations we visit, the reaction from our guest is always the same... they want more!

What advice would you give a travel advisor who aspires to sell luxury products?

Qualify your client, don't be intimidated and don't make assumptions. You might be surprised how many clients book a simple vacation on a beach in Cancun not because of finances but because of a lack of any inspired alternatives. That's why the benefit of using Travel Advisor is so apparent. When it comes to moving a client toward a luxury experience, the best thing a Travel Advisor can do is to develop a relationship with their local DSM/BDM who can assist them through the entire process.

In your role as chair of the CLIA Trade Relations Committee you lead your colleagues from all CLIA Cruise Lines in empowering travel agencies and advisors to grow their cruise business. What has been your experience in steering this important group?

Working with the CLIA team and member suppliers as part of the TRC has been a really rewarding experience on so many levels. Personally, it's provided greater insight as to the incredible amount of hard work, research, planning and coordination that goes into everything CLIA does for its members and the industry. We're able to speak with one voice, enhancing the efforts being made to support and educate Travel Advisors on all things cruise. Did I mention this was with "one voice"? It's not very common to see all cruise lines come together under almost any circumstance and CLIA is maybe the only place that happens!

What gives you the greatest professional satisfaction?

Perhaps my greatest professional satisfaction, and it's not easy to have just one, is the nurturing process when a new to luxury, new to river cruising Travel Advisor embarks on the journey of becoming and selling that experience. Seeing this process happen from the initial stages of educational awareness, on to perhaps their first hand experience through a FAM trip or partnering with the BDM/DSM through marketing efforts... witnessing and being a part of the process and seeing a Travel Advisor who had never sold a luxury river cruise such as Uniworld become a significant producer of FIT or even groups is incredibly rewarding. This isn't some sort of random "PR" cliché for me.... This is something I've experienced time and again, and every time I do it reaffirms my sincere belief in the power of partnership!

Now for a little fun... what has been your most memorable personal cruise experience?

To those who know me, it won't come as a surprise that the inaugural cruise of Uniworld's Supership Joie de Vivre, which departs from Paris and sails on the Seine to Normandy, was an experience that I'll never forget. The ship itself is without question the most beautiful river ship in the industry today, but to see Paris, Normandy and the French countryside the way Uniworld is able to share it made it even more remarkable than I could've imagined.



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