

## TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS

# Skip Fortier

Travel Professional Interviews

Agency Membership

Agent Membership



# **Skip Fortier, TAE**

## **Vice President of Network Expansion, Avoya Travel Alexandria, VA ( Agency headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, FL)**

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

After serving in the US Navy and having the opportunity to travel the globe I was hooked on travel. I started in the industry as a reservation and gate agent for United Airlines in the mid 1980's. Back then it was easy to hop on a free flight to Europe on my days off and the world was my oyster. I loved seeing new destinations and learning about other cultures. Once the internet was launched and OTA's began to appear I moved into that world as a sales manager for one of the first OTA's to sell cruises.

### **In your role at Avoya Travel, what has been some of your career highlights, thus far?**

Working for a company that is innovative and always striving to improve the travel experience for the consumers as well as providing world class technology and support for the Avoya Travel Network of Independent Affiliates. After being an Independent Affiliate with Avoya Travel for 4 years my career highlight was being given the opportunity to sell my agency and come on board with Avoya to be responsible for our Network Growth.

### **You just recently achieved your Travel Agency Executive certification. How has that certification helped you in your career?**

After years in the industry you tend to get stale and taking the courses for this certification reminded me of why I love this industry so much. No matter what role we play in our agency we should never forget what got us where we are today. The courses offered for the TAE brought back many skills and techniques that I took for granted. You're never too old to learn and to refresh your skills and knowledge.

## **What advice would you give anyone embarking on a career as a travel advisor?**

Remember that you are not an order taker. You are a Sales Professional. Consumers put their trust and their hard-earned money into your hands to provide them with the best possible vacation possible. That is a big responsibility. Take the time to learn the business from the ground up. Understand what your selling and always keep learning. Use CLIA's resources to hone your skills and take advantage of their certification programs. The consumers you speak with will recognize the time and effort you put into that achievement.

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

ABL. Always be learning. Our vendors are changing and upgrading their products and itineraries constantly. Take advantage of all the vendor agent opportunities which include their online training and fam trips. Remember that the consumer your speaking with has already spent countless hours on the internet researching their vacation. Be sure they don't know more than you do!

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

This year I had the great opportunity of sailing on Scenic River Cruises in Myanmar. The people and the culture were something that I will never forget. It was definitely one of my bucket lists trips that I would recommend to everyone.

## **Any last thoughts?**

This is an amazing industry that provides all of us the opportunity to travel the world. Keep learning, keep selling and never stop traveling.

