

Ogg Discusses In-Home Agency Operations

By Deirdre Blake

SAN JOSE, CALIF. — Tom Ogg of Tom Ogg & Assoc. offered tips to agents considering the switch from office to home-based operations at the recent TravelAge Trade Show here.

Speaking to a packed house, Ogg told his audience that change is in the air for the travel industry.

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Among the issues facing agents wishing to work at home are automation and professionalism. Ogg addressed both during his one-hour seminar, entitled "Operating from Home: Opportunity of the '90s."

Viable Move

In regard to automation, Ogg said the advances in technology make it viable for agents to "move out of the store front and into the home."

Ogg recommends that agents planning to work from home invest in a fax machine, a modem, a PC with fairly large memory (minimum 50 megahertz) and a Windows platform, a 300-dot-per-inch laser printer and dial-up software.

Dial-up software enables an agent with a PC and a modem to "dial into all the reservations databases and work just like you're in an agency," Ogg said. Sabre, Worldspan and System One all have dial-up capability. Use of the service costs about \$7 per month.

In the way of new high tech products that can aid the outside agent, Ogg mentioned databases and bulletin boards

on networks such as CompuServe and Internet as great ways to keep up on industry events, gather information

IN BRIEF

Tom Ogg's tips for beating your competition

1) **Go online:** Take advantage of advances in automation.

2) **Offer off-hour reservations:** Answer your business phone when it rings in the evenings and on weekends.

3) **Offer in-home tour and cruise sales:** Make house calls — take your office to the client.

4) **Make personalized mailings:** Keep client profiles and follow-up on records. For example, if a new client tells you she wants to go to Mexico next spring, then remember to contact the client with suggestions on Mexico packages when it is time to sell spring travel.

5) **Fax to clients:** Use the fax machine to fax broadcast in your local area. (For example, to announce a fare war or alert clients to limited-time discounts). As long as you only broadcast in your area, it costs nothing above your normal telephone service monthly flat rate.

6) **Use client action cards:** Develop a database with information on clients interests for future travel, kinds of products he/she likes, and favorite destinations and hotels, for example. Notify the client regarding discounts or promotions based on action card information.

about destinations and communicate with potential clients.

Helpful software for home-based operations, according to Ogg, includes Microsoft Office with Access for basic operational functions, Microsoft Publisher 2.0 for designing client newsletters and fliers, and Quick Books for booking.

"You can't live in this industry without this stuff," Ogg said.

Professionalism

After discussing automation, Ogg moved on to tips on maintaining professionalism while working from home. Following are some of his suggestions.

- Isolate a workspace in your home and treat it like an office.

- Set up a separate business telephone line and a dedicated fax line, and say "no" to personal calls.

- Establish and maintain regular office hours.

- Emphasize client contact and maintain an outflow of information. For example, create a newsletter, and follow up with personalized mailings and phone calls.

- Make use of hotels, restaurants and hospitality clubs at airports for client meetings.

- Communicate quality in all correspondence. Use a professional phone voice and manners, invest in voice mail for messages, and purchase quality stationery and business cards.

"This is what is happening in the travel industry," Ogg said, "Suppliers are looking for people who know how to sell. That is what [being a successful outside agent] is all about."

Air Travel Card Sets Enrollment Discounts

WASHINGTON — Air Travel Card is offering Insider's Club enrollment discounts to ASTA members as part of its fourth annual ASTA Gold Month promotion.

Features

The Insider's Club features comprehensive air travel accident insurance coverage for travel professionals who fly on full-fare, industry-free or reduced-rate tickets.

The Gold Month promotion offer enables ASTA members to sign up for new, renewed or upgraded membership in the Insider's Club air travel accident insurance program at discounted rates throughout the month of November.

Enhanced Coverage

With the discount, the annual membership fee, which includes \$200,000 of air travel accident insurance and PassengerAid, is \$10. Supplemental, enhanced, executive, family enhanced and family executive coverage also is available.

Contact 800-854-9600 or visit the Air Travel Card trade show booth at the ASTA World Congress in Lisbon next month to enroll in the Insider's Club at ASTA Gold Month rates.



TAG — Nearly 700 travel agents recently celebrated the 25th annual Travel Agent Get Acquainted Days held in Anaheim, Calif. Pictured here are Illene Pett (left) of L.G. Travel Services in San Jose, Calif., and Ruby Stanfield, R Biz Service Tours in Ogden, Utah.

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