

## PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE MEDIA ATTENTION



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### **VACATION.COM MEMBER SURVEY REVEALS COMMON FACTORS FOR EARLY 2009 SALES SUCCESS**

*Targeted direct marketing, well-trained staff lead the way for most agencies.*

ALEXANDRIA, VA (April 13, 2009) – The results of a comprehensive member sales survey by Vacation.com®, North America’s leading travel services marketing organization, revealed that recent cruise supplier promotions are positively impacting sales.

According to the survey, how agents disseminate those promotions to travelers is crucial. More than 46% of members reported that targeted direct mail and email marketing attributed to their cruise-selling success, while advertising and marketing in traditional media garnered a favorable response by only 17% of agencies.

“A reduced cabin price is important, but getting that price into the right hands at the right time is more important, and that’s what targeted marketing is all about,” said Stephen McGillivray, Vacation.com’s vice president of Marketing. “Our Engagement program gets the appropriate supplier offer into the right hands better than any other marketing program in the industry.”

While the importance of direct marketing is rising, the survey revealed that 52% of members are spending less on advertising and marketing than a year ago, while still taking full advantage of free marketing opportunities available through Vacation.com.

“Because of our sophistication in direct mail, our Preferred Suppliers are fueling the Engagement program at unprecedented levels, which translates into incredible marketing support for our member agencies. This is why belonging to Vacation.com is paramount to an agency’s success,” added McGillivray. “Our members can send out millions of direct mail and email pieces for free by taking advantage of generous supplier co-op funding.”

Other highlights from the Vacation.com member survey include:

- Mid-priced travel is selling substantially better (82% of respondents report it is their top seller for 2009) than budget (17%) and luxury (7%).
- Top-selling destinations have not changed, as the Caribbean (68%), Mexico (48%) and Europe (31%) are still the most popular among travelers.
- Forty percent of agents have turned to new markets to grow their business. Some opportunities that the members are exploring include clubs and church groups, adventure travel, multi-generational trips and promoting leisure travel to corporate accounts.
- The economy is affecting choices, as luxury travelers are down-grading to mid-level travel.
- Consumers are generally spending less per trip than last year and destinations closer to the contiguous U.S.—such as Mexico and Alaska—are outselling Europe, even with a favorable exchange rate.

Another reason most agents attribute to a productive start to 2009 is their well-trained staff. More than 63% claimed the expertise of their staff is the number one reason their agency is succeeding in certain sales areas.

“We always stress the importance of training your sales staff to our members, and now that message is sinking in,” said Geoff Stewart, Vacation.com’s manager of Training & Member Development. “I’ve noticed a sharp rise in both Webinar attendance and members using our online training resources through the Agent Advancement Center (AAC).”

Vacation.com members can visit AgentNet to opt-in to the Engagement program, to view the training resources offered on the AAC and to register for Conference. All other agents can visit [www.JoinVacation.com](http://www.JoinVacation.com) for more information on all the benefits Vacation.com offers.

### **Vacation.com**

Vacation.com is the largest travel services marketing organization in North America, serving independent retail travel agencies across the U.S. and Canada. Vacation.com facilitates “*The Power of the Partnership*” between a network of quality preferred suppliers and member agencies that increase profits through disciplined marketing, comprehensive training and robust booking tools, including the proprietary EZguider sales platform.

Interested in maximizing your agency’s profit potential? Visit [www.JoinVacation.com](http://www.JoinVacation.com) to learn why Vacation.com, an organization “Powered by Real Travel Agents,” is the right choice.

Vacation.com is a subsidiary of Amadeus IT Group, SA, and maintains its headquarters in Alexandria, VA.

For further information, contact Vacation.com at 1650 King Street, Suite 450, Alexandria, VA 22314; tel: 800-843-0733.

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