

LUXURY TRAVEL EXCHANGE INTERNATIONAL

Sales Best Practices: Learn From Your Peers



Kimberly Wilson-Wetty (left) and Kathy Sudeikis

A PANEL of some of the biggest names in the industry shared valuable sales tips with other agents in the field at the Luxury Travel Exchange International (LTX) in Las Vegas.

The panel, "Sales Best Practices: Learn From Your Peers," included industry giants Kimberly Wilson-Wetty, co-owner of Valerie Wilson Travel Inc.; Kathy Sudeikis, vice president of corporate relations for All About Travel; Alyse Cori, owner of Travelwize; and Kate Murphy, president of Wings Travel Group. It was hosted by the very funny Lanny Zechar, senior vice president of acquisitions and agency relationships for Altour. The session focused on "wowing" your clients before, during and after their trips, and on high-impact marketing.

"The best tips you ever hear are actually from your

clients," says Murphy. "If you talk to them and actually listen to them, you will find that they will give you little hints. Find out about their lifestyle and document that information as much as you can."

Cori suggests getting to know as much about your clients' personal life as possible and then calling them during special occasions in their life. "Find out all you can about them," she says. "Maybe they like gardening, maybe they like wine tasting. Ask questions that strike notes in a person's life. Talk about their birthday, get to know their special dates and remember them. Call them during those occasions and you will usually get a booking."

Sudeikis suggests taking clients through every step of the booking process and their vacation. "Walk the clients through every step of the vacation," she says. "Listen to what they have to say. Then you just start to work with them. Walk them through everything they can expect to happen along the way from home to home. Give them two business cards, one that says thanks and one to give to their neighbor or whoever is watching the house for them. It's really just another way to get a business card in someone else's hand. It's really a great sales piece as well."

Wilson-Wetty told attendees not to be afraid to fire a client if they are being too indecisive. "Tell them that it's time to make a decision," she says. "And then you simply have to tell them, 'I don't think we are a good fit anymore. You have exhausted my energy.' Many times they will say, 'I'm sorry, let's book,' but sometimes you just have to cut them loose."

—JOE PIKE

Selling Japan to Luxury Clients

JAPAN IS on the rise once again, positioned to become one of the hottest luxury destinations in Asia.

Travel Agent sat in on a seminar on selling luxury Japan at LTX to discover all that should be on your radar about this exotic destination.

There are three reasons why you should sell Japan to your luxury clients, according to Daisuke Tonai, executive director of Japan National Tourism Organization, Los Angeles Office.

The first is the exchange rate. The dollar now is stronger than it has been in a while against the Japa-

nese Yen. \$1 is equivalent to 98 Yen, meaning one night at a luxury hotel will run your clients an average of just \$150. Secondly, there are new direct flights from US gateways including Boston, Denver and San Diego, and thirdly, there are a host of new experiences that will pull a variety of travelers to the destination. Most importantly, Japan has been chosen as the destination for the 2020 Summer Olympics.

As far as hotels are concerned, Japan has been bursting with news. New hotels include the Ritz-Carlton Okinawa, Hoshinoya Okinawa,



After the Japan seminar, agents visited the Japan NTO booth to learn more about the country's luxury offerings.

Rihga Royal Gran Okinawa, the Palace Hotel Tokyo and more.

—MEAGAN DRILLINGER