

CRUISE VACATIONER

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL

MY CLIA



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Describe your career as a travel agent. How long have you been in the business? What attracted you to it?

I've been in the business for 12 years. It was truly due to my love of cruising... I took four cruises and loved them. My family and friends started cruising, based on Nancy's and my experiences, so I figured why not get involved and make some money since people are already cruising due to my recommendations.

What is your approach to serving clients?

For me, it's all about being the best source of knowledge and advice to help my clients. Like any professional in our industry, I give great service and follow-up, but as my website says I'm my clients' "Trusted Cruise Expert." I want them to think of no-one but me when they book all of their cruises.

What is your biggest challenge when selling cruises and how do you overcome it?

Finding new clients was a big challenge... I solved it by joining Avoya Travel, which has their unique "Live Leads" program; without which I doubt I ever would have reached my level of success.

What has been a career highlight, thus far?

Achieving #2 Agency (and #1 Individual Seller) Status at a company with over 1,000 independent agencies is pretty cool. A lot of hard work and personal development went into getting there, so to see it all pay off is pretty satisfying. And, of course, receiving recognition like the American Express Pacesetter Award; Travel Agent Magazine's Top 25 All Stars; and Avoya Travel's President's Circle and Chairman's Club are all major highlights too.

How has your CLIA membership and certification helped you as a cruise travel retailer?

My CLIA membership has helped me in three ways:

1. It has given me a lot of confidence. To be able to say I'm an "Elite" and "Luxury" Cruise Counsellor gives me a lot of credibility when someone asks why they should book with me over another agent/an OTA/a cruise line directly/etc.
2. To achieve ECC certification you need to take A LOT of cruises and sell A LOT of cruises, so I got a great education while getting certified.

3. I make an extra \$1,000/year on average by using my CLIA bonus commission coupons, and I save thousands at hotels, Disney resorts, etc. by using the personal travel perks of my EMBARC ID.

What consumer trends are you seeing in cruise sales?

Clients want more luxury, smaller ships, and more inclusive fares. Well-travelled cruisers are tired of crowds, nickel and diming, being herded, etc. As clients get older and travel more, they want fewer hassles and better experiences. Once you know how to sell clients on value and not on price, as I learned years ago, this industry becomes a goldmine for you and you have a MUCH happier clientele who travels more.

What is your fondest personal cruise memory?

After having personally taken 58 cruises I have a lot of them, truly, but for sure seeing how excited Nancy was waking up every morning to enjoy our next adventure when on our Africa safari and river cruise with AmaWaterways was priceless.

Any last thoughts? (This question is entirely optional.)

If you consider yourself a professional cruise seller, you're doing yourself a disservice if you are not a CLIA member... I've heard many people over the years question the validity of the annual dues, not realizing the bonus commission coupons alone are worth a lot more. It's only June and I've already received an extra \$700 in commissions this year by paying a measly \$65.
