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TRAVEL AGENT INTERVIEWS

Deidre Lynn Harmon

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Deidre Lynn Harmon, ECC

Elite Cruise Counsellor & Travel Specialist, IMN2Travel (Affiliated with Xstream Travel) Collingdale, PA

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

I'm fairly new to travel, having only been in the business for 5 years. I always had a passion for traveling, but not for cruising. Once I overcame my initial fear of cruising and went on my first cruise, I was bitten by the "cruise bug" and have been cruising ever since. Cruising is an excellent way of meeting people, seeing the world, and building lasting relationships with clients and vendors alike.

What is your approach to serving clients?

Each cruise I plan is an opportunity for me to help my client create memorable moments and a chance for me to always learn something new. I view it as a "Vacation Challenge" to match my clients with the perfect cruise that will meet their needs and budget. I only receive a passing grade when I secure the booking. The extra credit grade comes when I do the follow-up when they return home.

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

I would have to say finding the perfect cruise to fit my clients' needs. It requires me to be extra thorough when qualifying clients and to take notes. I then translate the feedback into one or two options to present to my clients. It's very rewarding when you hit it out of the park with a satisfied client. Each client presents a new opportunity to get better at this.

What has been a career highlight, thus far?

Attaining all three of my CLIA certifications in just over three years. I was somewhat intimidated by it all at first, but the CLIA staff always made themselves available for that extra bit of encouragement along the way. Every time I earned a new certification, I had tears of joy and a feeling of accomplishment. I love that I have been able to help other agents to do the same - I'm just as happy for them too!

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

It helps me “cut to the chase.” If my client is serious about booking, I can typically close them while on the phone in one call. When I hear land destinations, I’m always thinking in my mind “What port is that near?” or “Which cruise line goes there?” Not to mention those three letters after my name are wonderful conversation starters. “I’m so glad you asked...” is a great ice-breaker!

6. What consumer trends are you seeing in cruise sales?

I see more multi-generational groups (grandparents, parents and grandchildren) or grandparents traveling with grandchildren. I also see that I’m getting a lot of first-timers and solo cruisers that are coming to me expressly for the knowledge that I bring to the table. I assure them they are in most capable hands, and often send pictures or videos that I capture from my cruise experiences. I have been on 18 plus ships, thus far, having sailed 10 of them – I’m uniquely qualified.

What is your fondest personal cruise memory?

I would want to be the Head “Executive” Chef – I’m such a foodie and it’s all about the presentation for me. Every meal starts with the way it’s delivered to the table.



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