

1 The obvious question is simply, how will Donald Trump's presidency impact on travel? I am a little scared to answer this question as people either love him or dislike him. But in the short term, we will find out, as he is already changing his stand on some of his election commitments. I believe what will have a bigger impact is the exchange rate on the dollar and will it go down? This will have an effect more than the president, I believe. So, let's talk about this next year.

2 What does 2017 have in store for agents? I continue to believe that the travel industry and travel agents will continue to grow. Yes, consumers do book air, hotel and car online, but as consumers my age start taking vacations without kids, and as many of my friends who have grown up with all-inclusive vacations, they are going to want other experiences: adventure, voluntourism and "life experiences." So, FIT is where travel agents will continue to shine and grow. The more complicated the itinerary, the more people turn to travel agents.

3 How will your agency group's model help agents adapt to these challenges or changes? The No. 1 thing we do is listen to our agents/partners... they are the professional travel agents and we are the back end. So, we will continue to introduce programs that they are asking for. We look forward to launching our latest product – redesigned agent websites with

tourism and big bucket list vacations. The consumer will pre-purchase more excursions and transfers, as well as items like travel insurance. Good agents will need the tools to help make these products available to their consumer to stand above the rest.

5 Looking into your crystal ball, where do you see the agency business in three to five years? I believe that there will be restraints on commission, and this will lead to some of the old guard closing their storefronts and just selling travel to the customers they love, which could

FIVE QUESTIONS with...

Flemming Friisdahl
Founder
The Travel Agent Next Door



nine booking engines, allowing the consumer to explore many different options, while at the same time having the ability to deal with their own personal travel agent.

4 What kind of market trends do you see developing in Canada in 2017? Selling more unique life experience, as I mentioned, adventure, volun-

actually earn them money. I very much believe that the industry will continue to see the number of new travel agents grow. The key will be, are they well trained or just in the industry to get an IATA card and go on FAMS or take agent rates? We have to be very careful that we do not end up like the US where some host agencies are simply (selling) travel agent business cards.

ASK THE AGENT What travel trends do you see in store for the industry in 2017?

"I think that many travellers, especially older ones, are very interested in active vacations that include biking, walking etc. River cruising continues to be very popular, and I am happy to see that they are providing active options. Some people are having second thoughts about visiting countries in Europe that have had terrorist incidents."

Daiva O'Neill,
Ancaster Maritime Travel,
Ancaster, Ont.

"We are located near the US border and 90% of our clients normally depart from Detroit. We are now booking the majority of our clients with Canadian suppliers. The weak dollar has brought more destination options departing from Windsor, which is so convenient."

Denise Banks,
Southland Travel,
Essex, Ont.

"We are seeing more family travel being booked – two, three generations, as well people are really looking at the benefits of river cruising or bus travel, as compared to doing Europe on their own."

Michelle Mulder,
Arthur Travel Service,
Arthur, Ont.

"I think travel will increase a few percentages; overall, there seems to be a higher interest in cruises for 2017. A lot of our customers have expressed a decrease in desire to travel to US now that Trump in charge. I think domestic travel in Canada will benefit from this."

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