



YOUR
PARTNER
FOR **SUCCESS!**

TravelCentres^{*}
Your one stop travel shop



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TRAVEL CENTRES — YOUR PARTNER FOR SUCCESS!

In 2018, four of the five finalists vying for TTG's 'Best Travel Agent in Ireland' award were members of Travel Centres. Indeed, the agency that went on to win the top award has been a member since 2010.



These nominations and award were but the latest validation of the success that both Travel Centres and its members have enjoyed since the consortium's establishment in 2005. Back then, the Irish retail travel landscape was dominated by two multinational consortiums — The New York-headquartered Travelsavers and the Woking-headquartered Worldchoice. What possible chance could a native-born, fledgling travel agency group have against such formidable and established competition? Quite a lot, as it turns out, since Travel Centres has grown consistently over the course of those intervening 13 years to become the largest and most successful consortium that now trades in Ireland.

Such success didn't come about by accident nor was it because of fortuitous good luck. Our success has been achieved because of a combination of hard work, vision, leadership and an acute understanding of what retail travel agents need to help them manage their businesses and improve their bottom lines. Most importantly though, our success can be distilled down to one essential principle — partnership!

THE ABCs OF SUCCESS!



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A

is for... Advisory Board

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The advisory board comprises eight member agents who, between them, represent the interests of the general membership and who, in conjunction with the management team, define the policies and supplier preferences of the group. The board positions are voluntary so board members donate freely of their time and expertise throughout the year in order to help drive the collective agenda of members. The board meets periodically throughout the year.



Carolyn Davis
Liberty Travel,
Letterkenny



Declan O'Connell
Lee Travel,
Cork



Michael Geraghty
Cavan Travel,
Cavan



Tom Britton
Marble City Travel,
Kilkenny



Michael Bowe
Bowe Travel,
Thurles



Linda McNamara
Ace Travel,
Newcastle West



Maria Dilworth
Blackpool Travel,
Cork



Clare Dunne
The Travel Broker
Dublin



A is for... **Agent Intranet**

Our industry depends on our ability to access up-to-date, reliable and accurate information — whether that be about passport, vaccination or visa issues or, more commonly — about the latest special offers, promotions and incentives. The sheer volume of such communications tends to overwhelm agents and, as a result, some important notifications often get missed. Travel Centres have addressed this challenge by uploading all such relevant information from preferred suppliers onto our own agency intranet where everything is filed both by category and in chronological sequence with the latest information always on top. This simple resource provides two advantages to members:

- 1 It ensures that you and your staff always have access to the latest and most relevant information
- 2 You don't have to waste endless hours filing it away yourselves for future retrieval

A is for... Annual Conference

We think it is fair to say that the Travel Centres conference is one of the most looked-forward-to events on the annual travel industry conference...

not only here in Ireland but also in the UK and overseas. We spend up to five months each year planning and preparing for the November event so that we deliver the optimum mix of networking, educational content, business and entertainment in a magical mix that has evoked comments like these over the years:



“ I just want to thank you for what was the best conference I have attended so far, from start to finish it was superb.

“ just a note to say congratulations on such a fantastic conference, it was one of the best yet, the organization, flow, entertainment was second to none

“ The last two days were a great success. You run the best travel industry conference in Ireland. Well done.

“ Travel Centres Conference...What a fantastic success. Quite honestly the best and most enjoyable travel trade workshop and conference in Ireland.

“ The Travel Centres conference is, and has been for some time, the best trade event in the calendar in my opinion and that of several suppliers.

“ The talks on Friday were absolutely brilliant and I have come back with some great ideas.

“ We now have a conference that rivals that of the UK & USA consortia conferences

“ It was a great conference and definitely the best industry event that I have been to yet, absolutely everything was perfect.

“ For us this was by far the best event and the careful planning and organisation was evident on the day.

A is for... **Awards**



Our fantastic member agents are not the only award winners

Travel Centres has also enjoyed a number of citations over the years from the likes of Celebrity Cruises, MSC and Royal Caribbean and their respective awards occupy pride of place at Travel Centres HQ.

B is for... **Back Office Systems**

We continuously evaluate the best of breed software for your travel business

Back Office systems can be a nightmare and we have spent immeasurable hours over the years researching and evaluating numerous back office systems both here and abroad to try and find a 'best of breed' solution that represents the optimum mix of features and functionality versus price.

We also spend considerable time evaluating other vendors offering technology solutions for items such as spam filtering, email and website hosting, website building, SEO, Social Media consultancy and a host of other disciplines that sit outside the typical agents' skillset.





B

is for Bang for your buck!

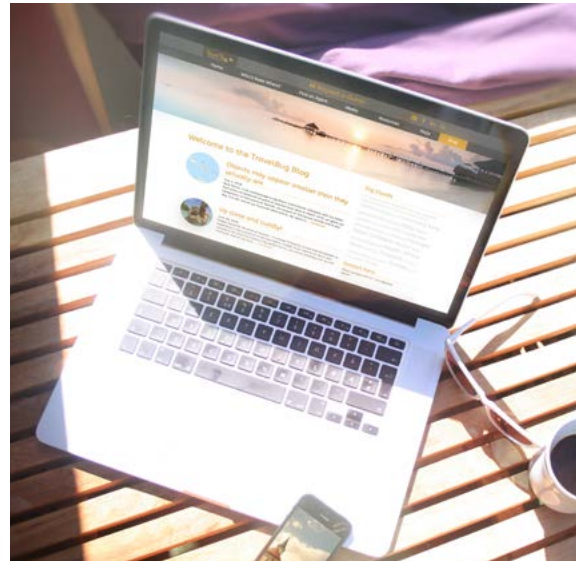
Travel Centres charges
an extremely modest
annual fee...

particularly when you see the range
of services and 'freebies' that come
with membership. There is simply
no other trade organisation that
offers the value for money or
level of service that we do.

B is for... Blog

If we are to position ourselves as 'experts', then we need to provide some evidence that we know what we're talking about.

Often the problem is literally finding the time to articulate such expertise in the form of posts on social media platforms or in other media. Recognising this time deficit, Travel Centres publishes a blog almost every week and members are free to syndicate it via their respective Facebook pages or websites, thus saving themselves the hassle of having to do it themselves.



C is for... Customised Travel Guides

Imagine being able to print out or email a branded and customised travel guide for any country, city, resort or port in the world...

to clients, containing as much or as little accurate travel and tourism information as they require.

That's what members have been doing for the past five years with our master licence for a fabulous online resource developed by a South African software innovator.



Customised,
branded travel
guides on demand

D is for... **Due Diligence**

Ensuring our agents are
working with suppliers
they can trust

When we evaluate possible supplier partners, we look beyond the monetary benefits and ask ourselves if their business model is sustainable in the long term. It's just one of the reasons why we are proud of the fact that members have never been caught by the unexpected collapse of a supplier partner.

E is for... **Educationals**

Securing places
on quality fams
for our agents

As travel has always been a knowledge-intensive industry, we see product and destination knowledge as a high priority — particularly when travel agents must compete with the sophisticated technology and booking systems now deployed by large OTA's such as Expedia, Booking.com and the like. We work hard to secure as many places for members on supplier partner educationals and regularly host our own educationals to long haul destinations in India, China, Malaysia, the USA and beyond.

E is for... **Enhanced Terms**

Working hard
to improve your
bottom line

It goes without saying that Travel Centres members enjoy the most competitive commercial terms out there in the marketplace, helping them to potentially add thousands of euros to their bottom lines each year. We use the term 'potentially' on purpose as even the highest commissions matter for naught if you don't generate the sales needed to capitalise on those terms. That's why most of our efforts focus on helping our members to maximise their sales for all preferred suppliers through a combination of training, marketing and regular target-driven communications.





E is for... **Exclusive Deals**

Our members enjoy
exclusive supplier deals
unavailable anywhere else

In addition to high average commissions (often without target), we also regularly negotiate exclusive deals with partner suppliers so that your agency can promote offers in the marketplace, confident in the knowledge that they can't be bettered by your competitors.

f is for... **Facebook**

Promoting our agents
on social media

Travel Centres posts members' offers on a daily basis to its own Facebook page and interacts with consumers via many of the major social media channels — all the time driving customers to our member agents.

L is for... **Leadership**

Providing expert
strategic guidance

We believe it is our duty as an organisation with a nationwide membership, to provide leadership when it comes to the strategic decisions that agents need to make to consolidate their businesses into the future. We encourage members to embrace new technologies that can improve both productivity and effectiveness; provide advice and guidance on changing demographic profiles and suggest what the latest emerging trends are in global travel and how agents can exploit those opportunities and meet new challenges head-on.



L is for... **Leverage**

Using our buying power to support our members' business needs

Not only do you benefit from our collective negotiating power in the delivery of enhanced commercial terms with preferred trade suppliers; we also use that same leverage to deliver extremely cost-effective solutions when it comes to your overall ICT needs. Over the past 13 years, we've built up a valuable network of suppliers in all business support disciplines including graphic design, web development, IT services, marketing and general management training and with whom we enjoy strong collaborative relationships. We regularly connect our agents with people with the right blend of skills in those areas most relevant to their business needs.

It is this 'holistic' approach to business that focuses not only on the provision of core travel solutions but also the myriad of other services that modern travel retailing demands, that separates us qualitatively from the competition.



Travelbug Magazine, our most ambitious marketing project to date!

M is for... **Manual**

An essential resource for our agents, updated every year

Or to give it its full title, 'Preferred Supplier Manual'. The PSM is an annual publication, copies of which are distributed to every member of staff in all agencies and contains a wealth of operational information on all preferred suppliers.

The publication also contains a wide selection of specially commissioned articles on all aspects of travel agency management.



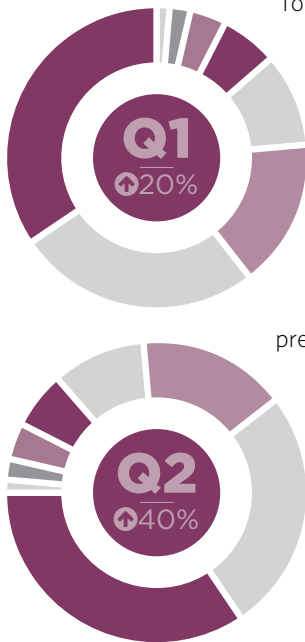
M is for... **Marketing**

A creative marketing partner, working hard for our member agents

One of the constant challenges that faces retail travel agents is trying to compete with the 'Big Boys' in terms of both cost and quality when it comes to both marketing in general and marketing collateral, in particular. Travel Centres is constantly coming up with new ideas to help members compete cost effectively and over the years we have launched many successful campaigns such as inspirational posters, full-page ads in national titles and we are currently working on our most ambitious project to date — bespoke branded magazines for all members!

M is for... **Monthly Sales Reports**

Targeted business intelligence



To maximise our members' performance, it must always be measurable and that's why we devote a lot of our resources on a day-to-day basis, generating detailed sales reports that are sent out on an individualised basis to all members so that everyone knows what their current trading position is with each preferred supplier. This, in turn, helps to ensure that members can maximise their revenues when it comes to meeting or exceeding productivity targets or once-off incentives. The frequency of such reports sometimes increases to a weekly update, when target deadlines are imminent.

N is for... **No Conflict of Interest**

100% Focus on our Member Agents

Unlike some agency groupings where certain agents are part-owners, Travel Centres doesn't hold a stake in any travel agency or supplier and so there is never a potential conflict of interest with the sensitive sales data that we have access to.

P is for... **Publications**

A library of marketing collateral at your disposal

In addition to producing our own brochures, internal manuals and promotional literature attracting school leavers to the travel industry, Travel Centres also publishes booklets extolling the benefits of using a traditional travel agent — and the pitfalls of booking directly online!

P is for... **Problem Resolution**

Expert advice, mediation and support

Members are usually expected to resolve their own problems with suppliers but there are occasions when the computer just says **no!** That's when Travel Centres uses its considerable economic muscle to influence positive outcomes for members. In addition to direct intervention, Head Office regularly provides advice to members on how to manage adversarial situations with suppliers, customers and even staff, based on its considerable experience in such matters.

**R**

**is for...
Rebates**

Every year, we disburse hundreds of thousands' of Euros in rebate payments to members in addition to the millions that are earned up front in 'on-invoice' commissions — one of the many reasons why our agents love us!

R is for... **Representation**

Using group influence to fight your corner

We go to great lengths to represent the best interests of members — not only with suppliers and consumers — but also with the various regulatory bodies such as IATA and the Commission for Aviation Regulation and have made a number of submissions in recent years in respect of Licensing, Bonding and the new European Package Travel Directive.

S is for... **South American Programme**

An exclusive, expertly curated resource

Of all the continents that regularly feature within long haul brochures, South America is probably the one that is least known or travelled to by Irish travel agents. That's why we have created our own South American programme in conjunction with one of South America's largest and most highly-regarded DMCs.

S is for... **Surveys**

Regular, actionable intel

Because of the number of agencies we have spread throughout the country and the huge variation in their size, profile and business mix, we regularly conduct polls on a wide variety of subjects relevant to members. Sometimes these polls are instigated at the request of members themselves and all results are collated and shared with those agents that contribute.



Our exclusive South America Programme

T is for... Training

Improving skills and driving talent



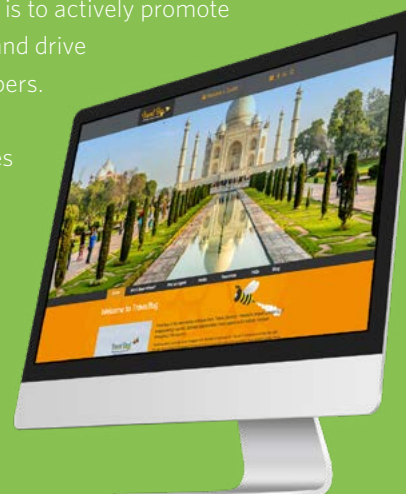
Travel Centres is very focused on training — whether it be onsite, off-site or online and over the past two years we have been working closely with

Travelpart to put together a programme that will help fast-track the induction of new entrants to the travel industry. We have reached out to transition year students across the country and created marketing materials that actively promote our industry.

T is for... TravelBug

Driving customers to our member agents

Travelbug is the consumer-facing website of Travel Centres whose primary aim is to actively promote the role of the travel agent and drive discretionary sales to members. Our unique quote facility is used to direct sales enquiries to members based on a combination of location and area of expertise.



V is for... Video

A professional animated promotional resource

Travel Centres is constantly promoting the role of travel agents to consumers. Check out the animated video that we commissioned which can be found on the home page of our consumer website: www.travelbug.ie

The TravelBug animated explainer video



W is for... **Webinars**

Regular, effective and easy-access training

With travel agents constantly challenged by tight staffing levels, it became quite apparent to Travel Centres some years ago that if agents couldn't come to us for product training then we would have to come to them and that's how our webinar programme was established. Since then, we've delivered literally hundreds of 'live' broadcasts from as far away as Argentina and the former Russian republic of Georgia. All webinar sessions are recorded, and the recordings uploaded to Dropbox from where links are distributed to all members.



W is for... **Website of the Week**

Trawling the web for the best resources

With over 1.5 Billion active websites on the net, it can often be challenging to find what you're looking for. That's why Travel Centres instigated a weekly feature some years ago called simply 'Website of the Week', in which we showcase a website that agents may never have come across and which we believe can help them in their day-to-day deliberations by either providing them with access to certain kinds of information or functionality or which can enhance their productivity in some way. Each year, a summary of these websites is collated and published in our annual supplier manual.

X is for... **eXit Strategy**

Creative Succession Planning

With so many agency owners reaching retirement age in the next couple of years and with no obvious successors within their respective families or staff ready to take over the reins, Travel Centres is now actively engaged in looking at creative ways in which agency owners can extract value from their enterprises without necessarily being dependent on traditional business models.



TravelCentres

Your one stop travel shop

So, there you have it! The real question you must ask yourself though is whether you feel that such initiatives and services are relevant to your business? Peter Drucker, the renowned Austrian-American management consultant, once famously exhorted businesses to '*Innovate or Die*'.

We like to think that innovation is hard-wired into the cultural DNA of Travel Centres and it is a mindset that we encourage with all our members.

*Join us and be a part of
our success story!*



TravelCentres^{*}

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Dunmore East | Ireland X91 A21H.

T +353 51 383 622 | **M** +353 86 8288 465

E dominic@travelcentres.ie **W** travelcentres.ie