

Target Travel Sends Clients In the Right Direction

Rita O'Brien never dreamed she'd have her own business. Totally content with her airline career, she really didn't give much thought to becoming an entrepreneur.

Nevertheless, her 18 years with United Airlines proved to be the perfect training ground for launching her own company.

"At United, I did practically everything there was to do," O'Brien said. "Ticketing, passenger services, Red Carpet Club, even Lost and Found. And during the last six years there, I worked at corporate headquarters in Chicago, where I was involved with computer hardware and software training and development. In that capacity, I did a lot of interfacing with travel agencies."

Little did she know that she was sowing the seeds for Target Travel.

In 1984, O'Brien left United and began consulting for a number of travel agencies, teaching them how to set up accounting systems, helping with hardware and software, and training personnel. Eventually, one of the larger firms she consulted for asked her to manage the agency. She accepted and managed the business for three years. It was here that she started to build her corporate following, especially within the media arena.

It was also here that the roots for her expertise in group travel were planted.

"My son Tom was on a travel hockey team, so I started coordinating their group travel arrangements to out-of-state tournaments."

Rita gradually took on teams from several organizations. And now, with daughter Colleen involved in travel soccer, the sports group travel business is really growing!

In early 1991, O'Brien's husband Tom, an Eastman Radio executive, was transferred to Detroit. Not knowing at the time that her sister Donna Dumas would



Rita O'Brien, Target Travel

soon follow (see opposite page) O'Brien packed up and moved with Tom and their three children to Birmingham.

With the travel business in her blood, and a strong corporate following, she continued to work in travel as an independent contractor.

"After a while, I got to thinking, 'Why not do this for myself?'" When her sister also moved to Birmingham and started Target Marketing, she did.

Target Travel was born in the same bedroom as Target Marketing.

"The early days were a blast," said O'Brien. "We only had one phone. So when someone called and asked for Donna, we knew it was for Target Marketing. If they asked for me, we knew it was Target Travel."

Today, O'Brien and Dumas share office space in a converted house at 759 Forest. Target Travel Services is a thriving agency that specializes in corporate,

incentive, and group sales.

Last year she added a new twist to her growing corporate business by adding event planning and marketing services.

"These services have been well received by our corporate clients," she said. "Often they don't have the time or, in some cases, the experience to handle the coordination of sales meetings. We take on the task of selecting the appropriate location for the meeting, booking hotel rooms, meeting space, banquet menu selections, even the development of a creative theme for the table center pieces."

Incentive travel, much like event planning, is very demanding, yet it's the most rewarding from a profitability standpoint.

"First of all, it's a growing industry because so many corporations are using travel incentives as a motivational tool to increase productivity. We put incentive packages together for all kinds of corporations, especially radio stations, all over the country, usually for groups under 200. An incentive program generally starts six months to one year prior to the actual trip. From conception through travel completion, we create the marketing concept, teaser mailings, even production of video tapes — anything it takes to create the excitement necessary for a successful incentive program!"

O'Brien has always stressed prompt, personal service for her clients. She certainly must be doing something right. She is one of only a handful of travel company owners in the state who has been honored with membership in the Society of Incentive Travel Executives.

For information regarding any of Target's services, just give O'Brien a call. And, by the way, you don't have to be a corporation to become a client of Target Travel. The company also serves individual travelers.

Target Travel can be reached at (810) 647-8855 or, by e-mail, at targettrvl@earthlink.net.

There's one way to be sure you're headed in the right direction.

Target

TRAVEL SERVICES, INC.

CORPORATE, INCENTIVE & GROUP SALES ARRANGEMENTS

759 FOREST

BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48009

810 647-8855

targettrvl@earthlink.net