Myth: Travel agents are just glorified sellers of airline tickets and their time has come and gone.

REALITY: Travel agents are professionals who provide value by helping consumers cut through the clutter and save time and money. They act as travel counselors, offering personal service for their clients.

Today’s successful travel agent recognizes that consumers do their homework and are more knowledgeable about what they want. Clients who turn to an ASTA travel agent want the advice and expertise of a professional who:

• Extracts product information;
• Investigates and supplies competitive information;
• Stays abreast of the most current and timely promotions;
• Analyzes the current promotions;
• Clarifies the fine print, such as cancellation penalties and restrictions;
• Makes recommendations on travel-related options;
• Simplifies the research and subsequent transaction;
• Enhances the trip with value-added benefits and amenities;
• Uses their clout to obtain the best possible arrangements in seemingly impossible situations; and
• Gets problems resolved.

Myth: The Internet will replace the need for travel agents.

REALITY: When it comes to booking travel, travel agents are experienced professionals. Travel agents sell:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>of all cruises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>of all tours and packages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>of all airline tickets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>of all hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>of all car rentals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2008 PhoCusWright Travel Agency Distribution Landscape Report

schedules, travel agents have all of the information at their fingertips, saving valuable hours of surfing the Web. Agents also can offer insider tips generally based on personal experience.

Myth: Travel agents do not support use of the Internet.

REALITY: Both consumers and travel professionals benefit from the Internet.

The Internet has helped transform the travel industry. The Internet gives travelers the ability to do comparative shopping for attractive deals or packages. It has also helped
many travel agencies, hotels, resorts and other travel-related suppliers flourish by bringing in business through Web sites.

The Internet has become an integral part of the travel agency business. Today’s successful travel agent uses the Internet in a variety of ways to help them better serve their clients, from conducting research and completing bookings to sharing videos and photos and other information. Many of today’s travel agents are active on Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets.

**Myth:** Young people do not understand or value the services of a travel agent.

**REALITY:** Yes they do. Of the people who use travel agents:

A study by ASTA and D.K. Shifflet & Associates, Ltd, (2008 Travel Agent Usage and Fee Sensitivity Study) found that younger travelers are more likely to use the services of a travel agent than those who are 55 years of age or older. In fact, they are twice as likely to use a travel agent every time they book a leisure trip and again are twice as likely to keep using an agent to book airline tickets even if their travel agent is charging a service fee.

**Myth:** All travel agencies and agents are the same.

**REALITY:** Every travel agency is different and accordingly, some are better suited to a given consumer than others. Here are some tips on choosing a travel agent who is right for you.

- **Go with the pros:** Look for the ASTA logo. Through its continuing education and training programs, ASTA prepares its members to operate high-caliber, competitive businesses.
- **Ask around:** Tap friends, neighbors and relatives who use an agent they trust. You may want to visit or call several agencies to find the one that best suits your needs. Consider everything from the appearance of the office to the agent’s willingness to listen and answer questions. The best agents want to establish a long-term relationship with a client, not just make one sale.
- **Ask about fees:** Good agents will notify their clients of any additional fees, including service fees, up front. Doing otherwise is pointless, as the fee will appear as a separate charge on the client’s credit card bill.
- **Search the Web:** Go to TravelSense (www.TravelSense.org) and use the “Find an Agent” tool. Search for agents with expertise in destinations or specific subjects that interest you.
- **Check credentials:** Many agents have been trained in business management, travel and tourism or geography. Others have supplemented their agency experience with extensive education and training courses. Some travel agents are Certified Travel Counselors (CTC), having completed an educational program with the Travel Institute, or Master Cruise Counselors (MCC), having completed a program with the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).
- **Find out an agency’s track record:** Call ASTA to see whether a member agency has had a complaint against it in the prior six months. Check with the local Better Business Bureau, while keeping in mind they will only have records of agencies that have had reports filed against them.