



Using the overused buzzword of the past year as an example, the pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges and turmoil to the travel industry. Travel advisors are struggling, tour operators aren't operating, airlines are cutting routes and would-be travellers are staying home amidst lockdowns and new hotel quarantine measures. So, it makes sense to avoid getting into the industry, right?

In anticipation of a brighter future, Travel Courier caught up with several businesses who have expanded or launched new travel-focused companies during these trying times, as well as an organization that's helping make sure its members stay afloat to meet future travellers.

## A new solution

Having been in the travel industry since 1987, Rick MacSwain, the managing director of newly launched Network Travel in Edmonton, Alberta says he's weathered many challenges throughout the years including the catastrophic 9/11.

"At that time, we were thinking, things can't get worse for our industry, but this pandemic has certainly created a new level of devastating challenges," MacSwain tells Travel Courier. "I believe challenge brings opportunity and when travel safely re-opens the pent-up demand is going to be something we have never experienced in our lifetime. I see this as an incredible opportunity and decided to build a new company

called Network Travel Ltd. Our focus is groups, luxury and customized experiences. When the re-opening begins our greatest challenge will be the demand and a lack of availability. We will be ready.”

During the past several months, MacSwain says he took the time to step back and analyze what travel agencies have done exceptionally well, while also identifying opportunities for improvement and ideas to set the business apart for greater success.

“Thinking that we earn or retain customers by spending hours of research to save them a few dollars is not something we want to continue,” MacSwain says, noting that he strongly believes the rebound will be worth the wait. “Our clients are willing to pay for exceptional service with the same expectations as their other professional lifestyle service providers.”

In the same way that people turn to professional fitness coaches, dentists or bankers, Network Travel’s goal is to be identified as a lifestyle service provider.

“As a lifestyle service provider, we are available to meet our customers when and where they feel comfortable. This could be at their place of business, a restaurant, a coffee shop or in their private residence,” he says. “Our team is our greatest priority and how they are treated is displayed in our customer care. Success always follows! We are not a call centre nor an Online Travel Agency. Our customers expect personalized communications and therefore we have no interest in providing an online booking solution on our website. Our valuable resources are directed to personalized service.”

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**Rick MacSwain**