

Travel Counsellor

Job Profile:

Travel counsellors advise clients on travel options and tour packages, make bookings and reservations, prepare tickets and receive payment. They are employed in travel agencies, transportation and tourism firms and hotel chains.

Essential Skills:

- Numeracy
- Oral communication
- Finding information
- Computer skills

Essential Skills Profile

A. Reading Text

- Memos sent by airline offices about new fares and schedule changes. (1)
- Information sheets providing the terms and conditions of tours. (2)
- Catalogues, brochures and guides from travel companies, government travel bureaus, hotels and resorts to learn about destinations that might be of interest to clients. (3)
- Travel insurance policies so that they may explain them to clients. (3)
- Procedure manuals used by their company or agency to guide their handling of such matters as ticketing and refunds. (3)
- Trade magazines and newsletters to learn about developments in the travel industry. (3)

B. Document Use

- Read signs and promotional posters in the office. (1)
- Read airline tickets and invoices. (2)
- Read lists for information, such as lists of tour companies and hotels. (1)
- Read forms, such as application forms for youth hostel cards and reservations forms. (2)
- Read a variety of schedules, such as schedules for ferries, airlines and trains, as well as their own work schedules. (2)
- Refer to maps in order to provide information to clients about destinations or routes. (2)

C. Writing

- Take telephone messages for office staff and jot reminder notes. (1)
- Write itineraries for clients in a standard format. (2)
- Write letters to clients and travel companies to provide information or explain problems. (2)
- Complete booking and reservation forms. (2)
- May write promotional materials, such as information sheets or flyers, to highlight special events (3)
- May write descriptions of tours for an annual catalogue of events

D. Numeracy

- Accept cheques from clients and issue receipts. (money math) (1)
- Calculate prices taking into account the exchange rate between currencies. (money math) (2)
- Calculate commissions on sales to ensure they have been properly recompensed by suppliers. (money math) (2)
- Calculate clients' bills for travel services purchased, including taxes and discounts. (money math) (3)
- Schedule itineraries for clients, taking into account time zones and the amount of time required to make transportation connections. (scheduling or budgeting and accounting math) (2)
- Compare the various price components of trip packages to ensure that the client will get the best price. These comparisons may be complex since packages do not always have similar features. (scheduling or budgeting and accounting math) (3)

E. Oral Communication

- Interact with couriers who are picking up or delivering air tickets or promotional brochures. (1)
- Communicate with service personnel who come to maintain or update computer systems in the office. (1)
- Interact with clients to discuss vacation packages, insurance coverage and costs of travelling to various locations. (2)
- Communicate with co-workers to co-ordinate activities, share knowledge gained from suppliers and discuss ways of solving problems which have come up when planning itineraries. (2)
- Talk to supervisors to receive instructions, exchange information and plan work activities. (2)
- Discuss and negotiate details of tours with tour operators, airline personnel, car rental agencies and hotel staff. (3)
- Present information on travel destinations at meetings or theme events held to attract new customers (3)

F. Thinking Skills

1. Problem Solving

Problem solving involves problems that require solutions.

- A client arrives at a destination to find the ordered rental car is not waiting or the hotel has no record of reservations. They refer to the registration card for confirmation numbers and call directly to booking agents for assistance. (1)
- An airline has changed its schedule, complicating connections between flights. They call other airlines to see if routing can be improved using another carrier. (2)
- A tour abroad has been cancelled because of too few registrants, several customers still want to go. They call other tour suppliers and investigate whether these companies can provide comparable services on a last minute basis. (2)
- A malfunction of the computerized ticketing machines which print airline tickets. They may call a customer support line if all efforts to print the tickets fail. (1)

2. Decision Making

Decision-making refers to making a choice among options.

- Which tour companies are most likely to offer services appropriate to their customers. (1)
- Which hotels to contact / recommend when seeking accommodation for clients (2)
- What routes to recommend to clients seeking information for a road trip. (2)

3. Job Task Planning and Organizing

Job task planning & organizing refers to the extent to which the counsellors plan and organize their own tasks. It does not refer to involvement in the planning function for the organization in which they work. Travel counsellors' job tasks are customer driven. They prioritize tasks taking into account the number of customers to serve, the complexity of the services to be provided and the urgency of the clients' travel needs. Travel counsellors respond to frequent interruptions from phone calls, walk-in clients and sales representatives. Their work plan must be integrated with the work plan of colleagues and managers.

4. Significant Use of Memory

Significant use of memory includes any significant or unusual use of memory for counsellors. It does not include normal memory use that is a requirement for every occupation.

- Flight numbers and times for frequently booked flights.
- Codes, such as the codes for various cities, to enter in the airline reservation system.
- Travel preferences of past clients so that they can supply them with the most suitable brochures the next time they see them.
- The features of different hotels in many cities so that they may advise clients of aspects which may appeal to them.

5. Finding Information

Finding information involves using any of a variety of sources including text, people, computerized databases or information systems.

- Refer to manuals for information on airline pricing and scheduling. (1)
- Contact hotel and tour personnel directly to find out about space availability and pricing. (1)
- Use computer to find information on specific destinations, supplementing print information on hand in the office. (2)
- Obtain, analyze and filter information about destinations and flights received from travel salespersons, wholesaler representatives and travel companies. They compare rates between companies to make the best choice for their clients. (3)

G. Working With Others

Working with others examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. Travel counsellors mainly work independently as part of a team. They co-ordinate their activities with co-workers and managers as required. At times they may collaborate with their colleagues in serving a client's needs, through sharing tasks such as conducting research on destinations or checking availability of travel arrangements.

- Participate in formal discussions about work processes or product improvement.
- Have opportunities to make suggestions on improving work processes.
- Monitor the work performance of others.
- Inform other workers or demonstrate to them how tasks are performed.

- Orient new employees.
- Make hiring recommendations / decisions.
- Select contractors and suppliers.
- Assign routine tasks to other workers.
- Identify training that is required by, or would be useful for, other workers.
- Deal with other workers' grievances or complaints.

H. Computer Use

Computer use indicates the variety and complexity of computer use. Counsellors use word processing; graphics software; databases; spreadsheets; bookkeeping, billing and accounting software; communication software, the internet and other computer applications.

- Word processing. For example, they type itineraries for customers. (2)
- Graphics software. For example, they may lay out promotional materials. (3)
- A database. For example, they enter and access information on tours and clients. (2)
- A spreadsheet. For example, they may produce tables showing services and prices of hotels and tours. (3)
- Bookkeeping, billing and accounting software. For example, they enter the amounts on invoices. (2)
- Communications software. For example, they may use the internet to find information on a particular travel destination. (3)
- Other computer applications. For example, use computerized ticketing systems. (2)

I. Continuous Learning

Continuous learning examines the requirement for counsellors to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge. Learning may be acquired: as part of regular work activity; from co-workers; through training offered in the workplace; through reading or other forms of self-study; or through off-site training.

J. Other Information

Travel counsellors exhibit these physical aspects and attitudes of their jobs.

Body Position: Travel counsellors sit to answer phones, speak to clients and use computers.

They may stand to verify records and walk to travel displays or to other employees' work stations.

Limb Co-ordination: Travel counsellors use upper limb co-ordination to use computer keyboards.

Strength: Travel counsellors use light strength to perform their tasks - lifting boxes of brochures or files.

Attitudes: Travel counsellors should be outgoing, friendly and organized. They should have a positive attitude and enjoy helping people. They should have curiosity about new or unusual travel requests and should be enthusiastic in serving customer needs.

