



Owner/President: Denise Canon

Company: Travel Concepts Inc.

Address: 9324 Rosner Drive, Ste. A, Lenexa, KS 66219

Phone: (913) 888-1671

Email: denise@travelconceptskc.com

Web Site: www.travelconceptskc.com

Type of Business: Full-service Travel Consulting & Management Company

Year Founded: 1996

Travel Concepts Inc. is a full-service travel consulting and management company, servicing clients worldwide. Our services, which encompass destinations that span the globe, include group travel, honeymoons, destination weddings and vacations. We also handle corporate travel—including incentives and meetings.

Our mission statement permeates every customer contact: We are passionate about our clients, their dreams and creating the optimum travel experience.

In an age when many people are handling their travel arrangements online, we have become customer service experts—using innovative global solutions, as well as experience, to help our customers create great vacations.

I worked in the travel industry for 20 years before deciding to become an independent contractor for a nearby travel company. As a contractor, I received referrals and I did not have to seek new business. After about 18 months, my customer base had grown sufficiently that I researched the options of incorporating and licensing as a home-based business in Lenexa. The launch of Travel Concepts was a result of the effort of myself, my husband and other family members. My clients were my best salespeople through their referrals.

Personal Wealth

Starting and ultimately running a successful business offers the assurance that hard work, ongoing education, tenacity, spirituality and humility combine to provide harmony in life. The material attributes in my personal and professional life exist only as a result of these.

Community Wealth

Travel Concepts has established a positive business influence in the community. The

company nurtures a working environment that supports a team effort. We provide our services with undeniable integrity.

Social Wealth

Wealth is measured in many ways—and giving back is essential to establishing balance in your life. The Kansas Women's Business Center provides me with an ongoing opportunity to be involved with their mentoring programs for other women business owners and to assist with their fund-raising efforts. Through fund-raising and volunteer opportunities, the company provides support to the Lee Ann Britain Infant Development Center, Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation, Women of Influence, Shawnee Mission West High School, Bishop Miege High School Annual Auction and Sunflower Elementary School.

Financing

The initial start up was the result of personal funds. We had no loans. Overall expenses were minimal in the beginning, as the office was a bedroom in our home. I was the only employee. Since the company's inception, I have had only one loan. Today, we celebrate 11 years in business with annual revenues of \$1.8 million and three full-time employees, one part-time employee and one independent contractor.

Accomplishments

While competing in an industry of self-service, our focus remains constant: providing quality customer service—full service! We are passionate about our clients' dreams, and we treat each client as we would like to be treated. Our simple philosophies are great customer service and providing a journey that will not just meet their expectations, but exceed them. There

is no greater compliment than for a satisfied customer to tell someone else.

Support System

My main support system has been the Kansas Women's Business Center. This association has directed me to many ongoing educational and networking opportunities. I have participated in classes and a growth roundtable group facilitated by the KWBC, which meets twice a month. Most recently, I have added an advisory board comprised of roundtable members.

My membership in the Lenexa Chamber of Commerce and the relationship experience with my bank, Premier Bank in Lenexa, have provided strong support.

The women in my KWBC growth roundtable group provide continued support, inspiration and friendship, and they have truly been an instrumental role in my overall success. My husband and family provide the foundation of my soul and spirit as an entrepreneur and business owner.

Challenges

The greatest challenge was Sept. 11. The travel industry was greatly impacted. Our main focus during that time was assisting our clients. When many of our clients were stranded as a result of the grounding of planes on Sept. 11, we worked diligently to help them get home. Sales were non-existent for many weeks and months following. Our daily efforts were directed toward customer care and service. The challenge was to ride out that terrible storm, with the hopes that our efforts would eventually welcome past and new clients, and our revenues would rebound.

WOMEN CREATING WEALTH

Women-owned businesses are a driving force in the economy, breaking through both self-imposed and external barriers that have been obstacles to success in the past. Women are estimated to own 9 million businesses in the U.S. Since 1992, women-owned businesses have increased by 16 percent and their revenues by 33 percent. By comparison, during that time, the number of U.S. firms increased by 6 percent, with a 24 percent revenue increase.

These women are actively creating wealth: for themselves personally, for the economic benefit of their communities and for the social welfare of their communities. In this column, we share the stories and experiences of Kansas City metro area women business owners who are bettering themselves and their communities through business ownership.

—SPONSORED BY: THE KANSAS WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER