

ASTA Releases Its First Labor and Compensation Report

2008-05-29

As the travel industry grows increasingly concerned with its ability to attract new talent, ASTA undertook its first ever Labor and Compensation Report with the goal of assisting travel agencies in benchmarking their compensation, benefits and hiring practices.

Not surprisingly, the study found that starting salaries within the travel agency industry are low-\$20,133, on average-especially for those with a college degree. The average frontline travel agent salary was found to be \$28,785, while those with managerial and sales responsibilities have the highest average salary, earning \$38,648.

"In order to solve a problem, one needs hard facts as to the cause," said ASTA President and CEO Cheryl Hudak, CTC. "While the results of this survey in many ways confirm what we already knew, armed with this kind of information, travel agencies can now benchmark their own salary and benefits to make the industry more attractive to potential entrants."

While ASTA's survey found the average salary for a travel agent to be close to \$29,000, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) found an average salary to be \$31,460 in 2006, possibly in part because the BLS average would contain agents that have both managerial and sales responsibilities.

Among other findings of ASTA's study:

The number of agents compensated by a mix of salary and commission increased over the past four years while the number compensated by commission alone has decreased substantially.

Agencies that are corporate-oriented are unlikely to have any employees compensated by commissions only.

Travel agents are most likely to receive medical insurance and paid professional development benefits as opposed to other benefit options.

A starting employee averages seven days of vacation, three days of sick leave and two personal days.

The average length of employment for a travel agent at an ASTA agency is 9.4 years.

Respondents have had the most success in finding potential hires through word-of-mouth and advertising in the local newspaper.

Most ASTA agencies do not plan to make staffing changes in 2008, however almost a third are considering increasing their number of independent contractors.

The full report is available for purchase for \$750 to non-members. ASTA Allied members pay \$550 while Premium members receive the full report at no cost as part of their membership. Travel Agent members receive a complimentary 2-page summary of the report, those interested in receiving the full study receive a substantial discount and pay only \$350.

The study was conducted in November 2007 and polled ASTA's Research Family, a group of 491 travel agents. The survey has a 95-percent degree of confidence with an error rate of +/- 5.5.

For more information or to purchase a report, go to www.ASTA.org/publications.

The mission of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) is to facilitate the business of selling travel through effective representation, shared knowledge and the enhancement of professionalism. ASTA seeks a retail travel marketplace that is profitable and growing and a rewarding field in which to work, invest and do business.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

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