

MLT Vacations Inc. announces November 2006 IRIS Award Winner

The '2Julies' Build on Successful Radio Advertising to Create an Innovative Marketing Program

Julie Buchanan and Julie Morey, President and General Manager, respectively, of WorldClass Travel Network in Bloomington, Minnesota are co-winners of the November 2006 MLT Vacations Inc. IRIS Award. The IRIS program was established to recognize outstanding marketing ideas and best practices in the travel agent industry.

In August of 2005, Buchanan and Morey partnered with a Minneapolis/St. Paul radio station to do weekly endorsement-based advertising with local radio personalities for their host agency, WorldClass Travel Network. The partnership with the radio personalities grew and the ladies began doing live radio interviews twice a week. Through the interviews and endorsement segments, they were able to capitalize on their engaging, outgoing personalities, while building reputations as credible, travel industry experts. And so the '2 Julies' concept was born.

Buchanan and Morey have built an entire marketing program around the reputation they have earned during the weekly radio activity. To support the popularity they've gained through the interviews and endorsements, they have launched a '2 Julies' website focused on promoting leisure travel and travel agents. The website offers weekly travel specials, daily hot deals and travel advisories and tips. In addition, the '2 Julies' capitalize on their newfound celebrity status by participating in local trade shows and community events, and by organizing charitable activities and fundraisers, like Helping Students in Need, a program that collected new or gently used backpacks for students in need for the school year.

Buchanan and Morey maximize their '2Julies' marketing efforts on the back end by collecting names, contact information and travel preferences for their growing marketing database. With these names, they are able to market on an ongoing basis with e-newsletters and targeted e-mail offers.

As both a retail agency and a host agency, the '2 Julies' have been successful in increasing awareness and revenue for their retail agency, and also in generating leads for many of their independent agent partners, based on their geographical location and expertise. Their efforts truly support travel agents in general and the travel industry as a whole.

"The '2 Julies' really was kind of a snowball affect," says Buchanan. "By building on the interest generated through our radio initiatives, we have been able to develop a really effective way to reach our target audience, specifically women and families. And we've been able to pass along some of that success to our independent agents, which is great," she added.

The **MLT Vacations Inc. IRIS Award** for travel industry visionaries recognizes individuals for inspired business practices, resourceful and innovative ideas, and strategic thinking and planning. Winners are chosen monthly from nominations provided by travel industry professionals, suppliers and agents nationwide.

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