

CAREER IN FOCUS

NICOLA STRUDWICK

General Manager Sales
Travellers Choice



1. What does your role involve and how long have you been in your current position?

As General Manager Sales at Travellers Choice for the past four years I steer and support an exceptional team of people, who support the needs of our independent travel agent members – both current and future. I also work closely with our preferred supplier partners to execute initiatives on behalf of our members. There is one central customer at the core of everything we do at Travellers Choice and that's our members!

2. How did you start out in your career? Were you always destined to work in the travel industry?

I am the daughter of an intrepid traveller and when I was young my family moved halfway across the world to Perth. These experiences really opened my eyes to the opportunities travel provided and I knew early on that I wanted to work in travel. My first role was as a receptionist at Thomas Cook Travel, where I spent 13 years in a variety of positions. At one point I was the Foreign Exchange consultant and used to board the navy ships arriving in Fremantle to change money for the sailors.

3. Did you complete formal qualifications, and do you think they are important?

I completed my Travel & Tourism Diploma and I was also fortunate to work for a company that provided ongoing training and development opportunities, which I took full advantage of. I see formal qualifications as necessary to give you the framework you need to advance in your chosen career. They also become a foundation that you can fall

back on as you work through the trials and tribulations of your professional career.

4. What do you love about your job?

Being part of the Senior Management Group at Travellers Choice means I can help meet and exceed our members' expectations without excessive red tape and bureaucracy. Our clear focus on the customer is something that I'm passionate about and I enjoy seeing our members benefit from this culture.

5. What were some of the greatest challenges you've had in your career?

Having worked in the travel industry my entire working career, I've had a number of challenges that I've had to work through and find ways to adapt and achieve a favourable outcome both for myself and others including: being a working mum, overcoming difficult customers, merging competing sales teams and working away from home which in itself is always a challenge to get the right balance.

6. What factors were central to your success?

A passion for excellence, compassion, the desire to achieve goals and provide exceptional customer service.

7. Did you have a mentor, and if so, how did you find them?

Whilst I didn't have a mentor early on in my career, I have worked with a number of exceptional people over the years and I continue to enjoy strong and supportive relationships with them.

Understanding the value this can add to your career, it's something I would encourage others to source as early as possible. I've been involved in implementing a Member Mentoring Program within Travellers Choice over the last few years and I also offer guidance and support to Young Skalleagues as the President of Skal International Perth.

8. What are the keys to good business?

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." Having a clearly articulated plan (your road map) is essential to get everyone on the same page and once you have a plan in place make sure you provide training and development opportunities to those you are expecting to deliver the results.

9. What advice would you give to others in the industry who would like to follow in your footsteps?

I'm mindful that we are in a new era where there is a heavy presence across social platforms and I always encourage others to ensure their personal brand is reflected in their online presence.

Networking is always key to forging the path to your future and something that needs your time and commitment, and something that has been essential is to respect and give time to those that can enrich you with wisdom and support you through your career.