

***Cruise Lines International Association:
Master Cruise Counsellor Certification Program***

CASE STUDY 6

THE FAMILY VACATION

Your desk phone rings for what seems like the 100th time today. But you pick it up promptly, introduce yourself and your agency, and inquire in a friendly tone, “How may I help you?”

On the other end of the line, a hurried voice says, “I want to get some prices on a 1-week cruise for my family.”

“Well, you’ve got the right person,” you respond. “I’m the cruise counselor for the agency. Do you have anything particular in mind, Mr. ... Mr. ...?”

“Great, you’re the cruise person,” says your mystery caller. “I’ve heard that the Acme Cruise Line has a good deal on a cruise to the Bahamas on their ship: SS StillAfloat. I want to find out how much two connecting outside cabins on the “C” deck would cost for an April 5 departure for five people.”

‘Certainly Mr. ... Sir,” you reply. In your mind you know Acme Cruise Lines is not a CLIA member line. You say to the client, “I should tell you I’m not all that familiar with the StillAfloat, though I’ve heard of the company.” Your caller notes for your benefit that the StillAfloat also stops at St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He says that’s the port for his wife – she’s a shopping fanatic, and she’s heard that St. Thomas is a shopper’s dream. “As for me,” he goes on, “I just want to lounge in the sun and play with the kids on the beach.” He will be bringing one daughter, who is 13, and two sons, ages 10 and 8.

You begin to tell him about another cruise line that you have more faith in and which offers itineraries that appeal to families when he cuts you off: “I’m just researching prices, and looking to see if you know of any special discounts we can get – like maybe if we give your agency the business, you can cut us a break ...”

“To be honest, sir, we can’t really negotiate on price – the rates are set by the cruise line,” you explain. “But if cost is a consideration for you, our agency is very good at maximizing any special packages that may be offered by the cruise line. For example, we have plenty of lead time before your trip in April. If we book your cruise soon...”

“I’m not ready to buy a cruise today,” he says emphatically. You know your caller is just price shopping, but you wonder about his selection of Acme Cruise Line for his family’s vacation. You decide to ask some simple questions to gather more details. You discover that the family has nine days in which to travel, and they’re considering going to Orlando before the cruise. To avoid the cost of air travel, they’ll drive from Baltimore to Florida.

“Have you given any consideration to other cruise lines that sail to the Caribbean?” you ask. “A number of terrific ships have great programs for kids, as well as plenty of adult fun. What else do you and your wife enjoy doing?”

Your last question gets lost as the phone shopper tells you he’s pretty much decided on the StillAfloat. “A friend of mine took his family on it last year for their first cruise,” he tells you. “They had a good time.”

“By the way, is this your first cruise?” you ask.

He hesitates and then responds. “Well sort of. My wife and I did sail one of those weekend ‘trips to nowhere’ out of Baltimore. Now about those prices...”

In your essay answer the following questions based on the scenario described above:

- How could this cruise counselor have obtained at least the client’s name?
- How would you have made you and your agency better stand out in this shopper’s mind?
- Do you think you should fulfill this client’s request for Acme Cruises? Why or why not?
- If your decision is to recommend another ship and line, what could you say to change the client’s mind?
- What other cruise line and itinerary might you recommend? Why? What would be your second choice? Why?
- Is the client’s idea to drive to Orlando a good one? Why or why not?
- What tactics would you employ to get this client into your office where closing would be easier? Name at least three.