



INTERNATIONAL NETWORK of TRAVEL DIRECTORS

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333 w north ave #264 chicago, il 60610

800.353.5651

info@intdonline.com

www.intdonline.com

Weathering the Economy as a Freelance Contractor

Teresa Fish

Independent Planner/Freelance Travel Director

It's time to say goodbye to 2008 and I would like to be one of the first to say good riddance. Wow, what a year. As an Independent Meeting & Event Planner, 2008 was my hardest year yet. Two of my clients pulled their business internal in order to save money and one cancelled an event all together after AIG's bad publicity in order to save face. So how did I stay afloat?

Joining groups such as International Network of Travel Directors is a something I invested in this past year. Finding INTD was very exciting. When I get an email that a new job has been posted it is almost as if I have won the lottery. Even if the job is in a location that is not close to me or if they want someone that speaks a language that I don't, I still get excited. I know there are people out there who are hiring others to help. That's a good sign that things are still moving along and that although business is slow, it is still progressing. Over this past year, I have been fortunate enough to be first-runner-up for one job listed on the INTD site and have been hired to manage another that is coming up in February. It is such an invaluable resource.

I have learned through all of this is to be resourceful. Volunteer. I spent many hours volunteering for different organizations this past year. Some of them have turned into small paying jobs. Chances are they could grow into larger paying jobs. I moved to a new city at the end of 2007 so this was also a way for me to meet new people and keep from getting bored and depressed that my career was really slow. Being around others is so important. Working from home has many advantages but when times are slow it can be a huge detriment. By volunteering, I have created a path for myself where I know so many people now that can refer me for paying jobs. They have seen my work; they know my skills and can feel confident giving a recommendation.

One last thing that I have been working on is getting involved with more non-profits. They host many events. They don't pay much but they always need people and will usually pay a little. When times are slow, it is better to have a little pay than no pay. It is also a way to use your skills to do better things for your community, meet people, and walk away feeling great about your work. Most often people involved with non-profits know people of influence in the community. You never know what it could lead to.

So basically through the experiences of this year I have learned to explore. I would recommend this to all Independent Planners and Freelance Travel Directors. There are many small doors we can open that lead to bigger things in our future.