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AVC Having a Strong Year

The Host agency America's Vacation Center/American Express is having a strong year in sales of its cruise and tour vacation products, Co-President Van Anderson, told Travel Trade at the 27th Annual Travel Trade Conference featuring Cruise-A-Thon here. Anderson said that the agency's \$2 million Travel Agency Support Program (TASP) is successful beyond the company's original expectations. TASP included a stepped up investment in marketing to generate leads for AVC's Independent Affiliates program, as well as funds to reduce fees to attract additional professional travel agents as Independent Affiliates.

The privately held Host agency does not disclose sales numbers, but Anderson said that cruise and tour sales are strong pretty much across the board. Business, he added, is not at record levels but it is strong because of AVC's extra investment in generating leads and because its affiliates are working harder and smarter – harder to increase volume to make up for lower pricing and smarter by using technology to be more efficient and productive. The Host agency also encourages affiliates to put a "five by 12" policy into place – five phone calls to prospects by noon.

Anderson said that AVC sees a growth opportunity in recruiting experienced agents who have left the industry or are leaving it because they could not make a decent living. He said that the AVC philosophy is to provide these agency professionals with the tools, training and leads they need to earn an income that will enable them to "live as professionals."

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