



How to Transition from Travel Agent Employee to Independent Contractor

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How to Transition from Travel Agent Employee to Independent Contractor (IC):

A Complete Guide for Western Canadian Agents

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The travel industry has changed dramatically over the last few years, and so has the way travel professionals work. More and more travel employees are trading in their fixed schedules and limited commissions for the freedom, flexibility, and higher earning potential that comes with becoming an Independent Contractor (IC).

If you're a travel agent working for an agency in **British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba & Yukon**, and you've been wondering what life could look like on the IC side this guide is for you.

Why Should a Travel Agent Employee Become an Independent Contractor?

Many travel employees are drawn to the IC model because it allows them to:

- **Keep more of their commissions:** Instead of a small percentage, ICs typically earn 70-90% or more of what they sell.
- **Work from anywhere:** No office hours or commute—you choose your schedule and location.
- **Build your own brand:** Market yourself, grow your personal clientele, and establish a business you truly own.
- **Choose your niche:** Honeymoons, luxury, adventure, corporate, family travel—you decide who you want to serve.
- **Gain access to host agency support:** With the right host agency, you'll still get marketing, training, and supplier connections without the restrictions of being an employee.

How Do I Know If I'm Ready to Become an Independent Travel Agent?

Ask yourself:

- Do I want more independence and flexibility?
- Am I comfortable building my own client base?
- Do I have the drive to manage my own business?
- Do I feel limited by my current agency's policies, systems, or lack of growth opportunities?

If you said "yes" to most of these, the IC path could be a natural next step.

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What Do I Need to Set Up My Business as a Travel IC?

When you become an Independent Contractor in travel, youâ??re technically running your own business. But there are two different paths you can take:

1. **Going completely on your own** (no host agency).
2. **Partnering with a host agency** (the most common option)

Hereâ??s how they compare:

What Youâ??ll Need

On Your Own

With a Host Agency

Business License & Registration

You must register and set up everything yourself, including provincial licensing requirements. Still required, but your host will guide you through the process and make sure you meet local regulations.

IATA & Insurance

Youâ??ll need to apply for an IATA if you want to issue tickets, and purchase Errors & Omissions insurance on your own.

Provided through your hostâ??youâ??re covered with IATA and E&O insurance.

Supplier Relationships

You need to apply individually to each supplier (airlines, tour operators, cruise lines). Often harder without existing volume.

Hosts already have strong relationships and preferred supplier agreements, so you benefit immediately.

Commissions

You may keep 45%â??100%, but often with fees, exclusions, or lower rates without group buying power.

You keep 70%â??90%+, but enjoy much higher commission rates because of the hostâ??s volume.

Technology & Website

Youâ??ll need to purchase or subscribe to booking systems, CRM tools, and build your own website. Hosts often provide booking platforms, CRM access, and your own customizable website at little or no cost.

Consortia Access

You must pay to join a consortia if you want access to programs, amenities, and preferred rates.

Youâ??re automatically part of the hostâ??s consortia, so you gain instant access to benefits and amenities.

Marketing

Youâ??ll have to create all of your own content, campaigns, and ads.

Many hosts offer ready-to-use marketing materials, email campaigns, and social media resources.

Support

Youâ??re fully on your own. If you run into an issue with a booking, you have to solve it.

Host agencies provide support teams, training, and mentorship to help with problems.

Community

You work independently without peers.
Hosts connect you with other ICs, offering networking and community.

How Do I Choose the Right Host Agency?

A host agency essentially acts as your **back office**, giving you access to preferred suppliers, higher commissions, training, marketing tools, and dedicated support. But not all hosts are the same, and choosing the right one can make all the difference in your success as an Independent Contractor.

Here are the key things to look for:

- **Training & Certification Opportunities:** The best host agencies invest in your growth. Look for one that offers training on booking platforms, client management, and the latest travel technology. Even better if they provide access to certifications or courses from respected industry organizations.
- **Commission Structure:** Compare commission splits carefully. Some agencies start around 70%, while others go up to 90% or more. A higher percentage means more money stays in your pocket.
- **Support & Mentorship:** You don't want to feel stranded. Make sure your host agency has knowledgeable support staff and mentors available to guide you through challenges, training, and industry best practices.
- **Technology & Tools:** A good host agency equips you with modern booking systems, marketing resources, and even customizable websites to help you run your business efficiently.

- **Supplier Partnerships:** Established relationships with airlines, hotels, cruise lines, and tour operators give you access to better deals, higher commission rates, and a wider range of options for your clients.
- **Exclusive Perks & Benefits:** Many hosts offer access to special promotions, discounts, or added-value offers you can pass along to clients—helping you boost sales and deliver memorable experiences.

FAQ: Becoming an Independent Contractor (IC) with Travel Masters

[Do I need to have my own clients to become an IC?](#)

Not necessarily. Many employees transition with a small client base, then grow it with referrals, supplier partnerships, and our marketing support.

[How much commission will I actually keep?](#)

With Travel Masters, you can earn up to **95% commission**—far higher than most traditional agencies pay employees.

[Will I still have support if I go independent?](#)

Yes! You'll have access to a dedicated support team, training resources, and a community of other agents. You're independent, but never alone.

[Does your support come with any fees?](#)

No, our support services are completely free.

[Do you provide E&O insurance?](#)

Yes, we provide Errors & Omissions (E&O) insurance with a \$1,000 deductible.

[Do you have any start-up fees?](#)

Yes, the start-up fees to join Travel Masters is \$250 (waived with proven sales)

[What is the monthly fee?](#)

The monthly fee is \$99.

[How long is the contract term?](#)

Our contract term is one year.

[What about the back end? • like accounting or supplier issues?](#)

That's what we're here for. We take care of back-office tasks so you can focus on what you do best: selling travel and serving clients..

[Do I keep my clients if I ever leave?](#)

Yes, your clients remain yours if you decide to leave Travel Masters.

Ready to Start Your Journey as an Independent Contractor?

If you've been dreaming of building your own travel business, working with more freedom, and earning higher commissions, **now is the perfect time**. With Travel Masters as your host, you'll have all the tools, training, and support to make your transition smooth and your career more rewarding than ever.

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