

Recent Survey Says: **“Home-Based Isn't the Future - It's Now”**

The National HOME-BASED/  
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR  
TRAVEL AGENT  
SURVEY

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FULL STORY  
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Each year, The Travel Agent Next Door commissions a third-party independent survey through **Rob Glennie Consulting** to capture valuable insights from travel professionals.

The 2026 edition was dedicated solely to **home-based / independent contractor agents**, reflecting the growing importance of this segment within the industry.

The findings are shared with suppliers, industry partners, and decision-makers to inform strategies, strengthen support, and improve alignment with advisor needs. The following outlines key highlights and takeaways by survey segment.

## Segment 1: New-to-industry advisors (≤3 years in the industry)

### New Advisors Are Choosing Home-Based First

*The National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey reveals how a new generation of advisors is entering the industry differently.*

For years, the traditional pathway into the travel industry followed a familiar route — retail storefronts, call centres, or office-based environments. But new data from the **National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey** suggests that model is rapidly evolving.

The results reveal a clear shift: **new-to-industry advisors are increasingly choosing the home-based, hosted model as their starting point**, not as a later career move. In other words, home-based is no longer an alternative path — it's becoming the default entry point for modern travel professionals.

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## A New Pipeline of Travel Professionals

According to the survey, **27.4% of respondents have been travel advisors for three years or less**, including **7.7% who are brand new to the industry**. Even more telling, **25.2% have been home-based and hosted for the same timeframe**, demonstrating that many are entering the industry directly into this business model.

Rather than viewing independence as something to earn later, new advisors are choosing to launch their careers with flexibility, autonomy, and entrepreneurial ownership from day one.

This shift reflects a broader change in how professionals view career success — choosing models that prioritize personal brand building, client relationships, and business control.

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## No Storefront Required

One of the strongest takeaways from the survey is that new advisors no longer see a traditional office or retail setting as a prerequisite for professionalism.

Hosted home-based models provide the infrastructure, supplier access, technology, and support systems needed to start strong — without the financial and operational barriers associated with opening or working within a storefront environment.

For many newcomers, this structure removes friction:

- Lower start-up barriers
- Access to professional tools and training
- Immediate connection to supplier networks
- Flexibility to build a niche or specialization early

The result is a faster entry ramp into the industry, where advisors can focus more on serving clients and less on overhead.

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## Confidence Built Into the Model

Perhaps most notable is the level of confidence new advisors feel inside the hosted environment. Overall host satisfaction among survey respondents scored an exceptional **9.82 out of 10**, reinforcing the idea that new entrants feel supported — not isolated — as they build their businesses.

This satisfaction level challenges outdated perceptions that home-based means working alone. Instead, the modern hosted model combines independence with community, mentorship, and scalable business support.

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## Home-Based Isn't the Future — It's Now

What emerges from the data is a clear narrative: a new generation of travel advisors is entering the industry already thinking like entrepreneurs.

They're not waiting to "graduate" into independence. They're starting there.

As the travel industry continues to evolve, the home-based and hosted advisor model is proving to be more than a trend — it's a professional pathway that aligns with today's expectations around flexibility, ownership, and career growth.

And if this year's survey results are any indication, the pipeline of future travel professionals is already flowing in that direction.

### What Agents Shared:

- *"Starting home-based gave me control from day one without the pressure of a storefront environment."*
- *"The hosted model let me focus on building relationships instead of worrying about infrastructure."*
- *"I didn't see retail as necessary — going independent felt like the smartest way to go and grow."*

## Segment 2: Experienced Advisors (8+ Years) Comments

### Experience + Hosting = Competitive Advantage

***Veteran travel advisors are proving that independence isn't a step back — it's the next step forward.***

The narrative around home-based travel advisors has changed — and the data is proving it.

Results from the **National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey** reveal that today's independent advisor landscape is being shaped not just by newcomers, but by highly experienced professionals who are choosing hosted independence as a strategic business decision.

This is not a survey of hobbyists or part-time sellers. Instead, it reflects a mature, influential segment of the industry where experience and independence are increasingly working together to drive performance.

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## The Industry's Veterans Are Leading the Shift

According to the survey, **57.6% of respondents have more than eight years of experience**, while nearly **one in four (24.6%) have spent over 20 years in the industry**. These are professionals who have seen the evolution of distribution, technology, and client expectations firsthand — and many are deliberately choosing the hosted home-based model.

This shift signals an important industry story: independence is no longer viewed as an alternative path, but rather as an evolution in how experienced advisors choose to operate and grow.

For many seasoned professionals, the decision to move into a hosted environment comes down to one thing — control.

“After years in retail, going home-based gave me back control over my time and my income.”

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## The Great Professional Shift

Historically, advisors often started in retail or office environments and remained there throughout their careers. Today, many are making a different choice — moving into hosted independence to protect their income, retain ownership of client relationships, and work more sustainably.

The hosted model allows experienced advisors to combine what they already do best — selling, consulting, and building loyalty — with modern infrastructure that removes operational barriers.

Rather than managing storefront overhead or rigid office structures, advisors can focus on what actually drives growth:

- Deeper client relationships
- Specialization and niche expertise
- Flexible business strategies
- Personal brand development

The result is a model where experience scales more efficiently.

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## **The Modern Advisor Model**

The survey reveals an important evolution: independence doesn't mean working alone. Hosted models provide experienced advisors with access to technology, supplier relationships, education, and community — all while preserving professional autonomy.

For many veterans, this structure represents the most sustainable way to work in a changing industry.

“I've been in this industry for decades, and the hosted model is the most sustainable structure I've seen.”

It's a powerful combination: decades of experience paired with modern infrastructure designed to support growth.

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## **Independent — But Stronger Than Ever**

One of the lingering myths about home-based advisors is that independence weakens client connections or professional identity. The survey suggests the opposite.

Experienced advisors report that flexibility has actually enhanced their ability to deliver exceptional service and build long-term trust.

“The flexibility of being independent has strengthened my client relationships, not weakened them.”

By controlling their schedules, client communication, and workflows, advisors are able to personalize service in ways traditional models often struggle to match.

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## Veteran Advisors Are Redefining Success

What the survey reveals most clearly is that home-based hosted advisors are not replacing experience — they are amplifying it.

Seasoned professionals are proving that the combination of expertise, independence, and the right host infrastructure creates a competitive advantage that is reshaping the industry's future.

As travel continues to evolve, the modern advisor model is emerging as one where experience thrives — supported by flexibility, powered by technology, and grounded in client ownership.

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### What Agents Shared:

- *“After years in retail, going home-based gave me back control over my time and my income.”*
- *“I’ve been in this industry for decades, and the hosted model is the most sustainable structure I’ve seen.”*
- *“The flexibility of being independent has strengthened my client relationships, not weakened them.”*

### Segment 3: High-Performing Advisors (\$500K+ / \$1M+) - Comments

## Home-Based Doesn't Mean Small

***The National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey reveals a growing tier of high-performing independent advisors driving serious sales volume.***

For years, the perception of home-based travel advisors has been tied to flexibility and lifestyle. But new data from the **National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey** tells a bigger story — one defined by scale, performance, and enterprise-level results.

The survey reveals a powerful reality: some of the industry's highest-producing travel professionals are operating as home-based, hosted independent contractors, building businesses that rival — and often outperform — traditional models.

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## A Serious Business Segment

The numbers are clear. This is not a small-business niche — it is a high-performing sales engine.

According to the survey:

- **43.2%** of respondents report **\$250K+** in annual commissionable sales
- **29.9%** operate at **\$500K+**
- A standout **15.2%** are achieving **\$1M+** in annual sales

These results demonstrate that home-based advisors are not only participating in the industry — they are driving meaningful volume and revenue.

The rise of these high performers is reshaping how success in travel is defined.

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## The \$1M Home Office Advisor

One of the most striking insights from the survey is the emergence of a new type of advisor: the high-volume independent professional who runs a major business without a storefront.

For these advisors, working from home is not about limiting growth — it's about removing barriers.

“Working from home doesn't limit volume — it allows me to scale with fewer distractions.”

Freed from traditional overhead and rigid structures, high performers are investing their time and resources where it matters most — client relationships, specialization, and smart marketing strategies.

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## Why High Earners Choose Hosted Models

The survey suggests that high production is not happening despite the hosted model — it's happening because of it.

Hosted environments provide advisors with access to:

- Advanced technology and booking tools
- Marketing support and automation
- Supplier relationships and negotiated programs
- Training and professional community
- Operational and administrative infrastructure

This combination allows advisors to focus on selling while operating with the support of enterprise-level systems.

“The hosted model gives me enterprise-level tools without enterprise overhead.”

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## Control Drives Performance

Another trend emerging from the data is the importance of ownership and strategy. High-performing advisors often cite control over marketing, client experience, and business direction as key drivers of growth.

“My production increased once I controlled my marketing and client strategy.”

Rather than relying on walk-ins or corporate lead flow, independent advisors are building personal brands, nurturing repeat business, and developing loyal client bases that support sustained growth.

The result is high volume built on high trust.

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## High Volume. High Trust. High Retention.

The rise of home-based high performers signals a deeper industry shift — one where scale no longer requires a physical office or traditional agency structure.

Instead, success is increasingly defined by:

- Expertise and specialization
- Relationship-driven sales
- Efficient technology use
- Entrepreneurial ownership

From kitchen-table startups to seven-figure businesses, independent hosted advisors are proving that flexibility and performance are no longer opposing ideas — they are complementary forces.

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## A New Benchmark for Success

What the survey reveals is simple but significant: home-based advisors are not just participating in the industry's growth — they are setting new benchmarks for what success looks like.

As the travel landscape continues to evolve, the model that combines independence with strong host infrastructure is emerging as one of the most scalable and sustainable ways to build a high-performing travel business.

### What Agents Shared:

- *“Working from home doesn’t limit volume — it allows me to scale with fewer distractions.”*
- *“My production increased once I controlled my marketing and client strategy.”*
- *“The hosted model gives me enterprise-level tools without enterprise overhead.”*

## Segment 4 - Relationship-led growth engine (Referrals + Repeats)

## The Referral Economy Is Winning Travel

***New survey data shows relationship-driven advisors are powering long-term growth in the home-based travel sector.***

In an industry increasingly shaped by technology and automation, one thing continues to drive consistent results: trust.

Results from the **National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey** reveal that the strongest revenue engine among independent travel advisors is not advertising, walk-in traffic, or call-centre leads — it's relationships. Referrals and repeat clients now dominate the growth story for home-based professionals, reinforcing the value of personal service in a changing marketplace.

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## Relationships Over Transactions

According to the survey, the top lead sources by revenue are overwhelmingly relationship-based:

- **90.8%** cite referrals as a primary revenue driver
- **89.0%** rely heavily on repeat clients

These numbers point to a powerful shift in how travel is sold. Instead of competing for one-time transactions, independent advisors are building businesses based on long-term trust and personalized service — a model that creates stronger retention and more predictable growth.

“Most of my business comes from repeat clients — trust is my biggest asset.”

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## The Retention Advantage

Retention is emerging as one of the strongest competitive advantages for home-based hosted advisors.

Survey results show that client loyalty is deep:

- **29.2%** report that **50–74%** of their bookings come from returning clients
- **28.4%** report **75–90%** repeat business

These numbers illustrate a business model built on lifetime value rather than short-term sales.

For independent advisors, owning the client relationship means owning the future revenue stream — something increasingly difficult to replicate through automated booking channels or transactional environments.

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## Why Advisors Outperform Algorithms

Online platforms and algorithms can provide options, but they can't replace human understanding, personalization, or trust.

Independent advisors are proving that their value lies not just in booking travel, but in advising, guiding, and building relationships that evolve over time.

“Referrals are stronger than ever because my clients see me as their personal advisor.”

This personal connection translates directly into higher conversion rates, stronger referrals, and repeat bookings — creating a growth cycle that compounds year after year.

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## Built for Long-Term Loyalty

The hosted independent model amplifies this advantage. Without storefront pressure or corporate sales quotas, advisors are able to focus on nurturing relationships rather than processing transactions.

That flexibility allows advisors to:

- Deliver more personalized service
- Develop niche expertise
- Build deeper client trust
- Maintain long-term engagement across multiple trips

“Being independent allows me to build long-term loyalty, not just one-off transactions.”

The result is a business built on consistency and reputation — two of the most valuable currencies in travel today.

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## The New Power in Travel Sales

The survey data reinforces a growing truth: the most effective growth engine in travel isn't scale or automation — it's relationships.

Home-based hosted advisors are demonstrating that referrals and repeat clients create sustainable, predictable growth that extends far beyond individual bookings. As the industry continues to evolve, advisors who own trust are emerging as one of the most valuable long-term channels for suppliers and partners alike.

Because in today's market, relationship-driven selling isn't just surviving — it's winning.

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## What Agents Shared:

- *"Most of my business comes from repeat clients — trust is my biggest asset."*
- *"Referrals are stronger than ever because my clients see me as their personal advisor."*
- *"Being independent allows me to build long-term loyalty, not just one-off transactions."*

## Segment 5 - Groups and affinity sellers

# Groups Are Powering Home-Based Growth

***New survey data shows group travel is becoming a key engine for scale, volume, and long-term success among independent advisors.***

For many travel advisors, group bookings were once viewed as a niche specialty. But new results from the **National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey** suggest that mindset is changing — fast.

Across the home-based and hosted advisor community, groups are emerging as a mainstream growth driver, helping independent contractors expand beyond one-to-one bookings and build more scalable, high-impact businesses.

The data makes one thing clear: group and affinity travel is no longer an occasional opportunity — it's a strategic growth lever.

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## The Rise of the Home-Based Group Specialist

According to the survey, **62.5% of respondents booked groups in 2025**, demonstrating that group travel is already a significant part of many independent advisors' business mix.

The most common volume sits at **2–3 groups annually (27.9%)**, showing that advisors don't need to operate at massive scale to feel meaningful impact.

For many, group travel represents a turning point — shifting their business from individual transactions to larger, relationship-driven revenue opportunities.

“Groups have become a major growth driver in my home-based business.”

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## From One Leader to Dozens of Travelers

One of the most compelling findings from the survey is how groups allow home-based advisors to scale efficiently.

Instead of selling one client at a time, advisors can leverage a single relationship — such as a group organizer, community leader, or special-interest host — into multiple bookings and higher overall revenue.

This approach aligns naturally with the independent model, where advisors often build strong personal networks and niche communities.

Groups become the accelerator.

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## The Support Behind the Success

While group travel offers significant upside, the survey also reveals an interesting divide. Close rates show a polarized pattern:

- **36.5%** report close rates under 25%
- **31.2%** achieve close rates above 75%

This signals a clear “groups mastery gap” — an opportunity for hosts and suppliers to provide training, tools, and support that help advisors convert more opportunities into confirmed bookings.

For many advisors, backend infrastructure is critical.

“Hosting gives me the backend support to manage groups confidently.”

With the right systems and guidance, group travel becomes less about complexity and more about confidence.

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## Scaling Without Increasing Stress

The appeal of groups goes beyond revenue. Advisors consistently describe group bookings as a way to multiply income without multiplying effort at the same rate.

“Group travel lets me multiply revenue without multiplying stress.”

This efficiency is one reason why groups fit naturally within the home-based model, where advisors value flexibility, autonomy, and sustainable growth.

Rather than adding more hours, group travel helps advisors get more value from the relationships they already have.

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## A Growth Strategy Built for Independence

The survey results reinforce a larger trend: home-based advisors are finding new ways to scale without sacrificing service or lifestyle.

By combining personal relationships, niche expertise, and hosted support systems, independent advisors are transforming group travel from a niche category into a powerful growth strategy — one that benefits clients, suppliers, and advisors alike.

As the travel industry continues to evolve, group and affinity travel may be one of the strongest indicators of how home-based advisors are redefining success.

## What Agents Shared:

- *“Groups have become a major growth driver in my home-based business.”*

- *“Hosting gives me the backend support to manage groups confidently.”*
- *“Group travel lets me multiply revenue without multiplying stress.”*

## Segment 6: Tech & AI-Enabled Advisors

### AI Is Now a Core Agent Tool

***Survey results show home-based advisors are embracing AI and technology — not to replace expertise, but to scale it.***

Technology has always shaped the travel industry, but the latest findings from the **National Home-Based / Hosted Travel Agent Survey** reveal a new phase in the evolution of independent advisors: artificial intelligence is moving from curiosity to core business tool.

For home-based, hosted professionals, AI isn't replacing the advisor role — it's helping advisors work faster, serve clients more effectively, and compete at a higher level. The story emerging from the data is clear: adoption is happening rapidly, and the biggest barrier isn't interest — it's training.

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### AI Goes Mainstream

The survey shows that technology — and specifically AI — is now deeply embedded in the independent advisor workflow.

- **45.4%** say AI tools rank among their **top three most critical business tools**
- Overall AI comfort sits at **6.14 out of 10**, indicating strong mainstream adoption with room for growth

These numbers suggest that independent advisors aren't waiting for technology trends to mature. Instead, they are actively integrating tools into daily operations to improve efficiency and elevate service.

"AI helps me work smarter — it supports my expertise, it doesn't replace it."

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## Practical Use, Not Hype

One of the strongest insights from the survey is how advisors are actually using AI in real-world scenarios.

Top use cases include:

- **Research and destination planning (55.1%)**
- **Client communication (32.7%)**
- **Itinerary development (32.5%)**

Rather than relying on AI for decision-making, advisors are using it to speed up administrative and creative tasks — freeing time for what matters most: client relationships and expert guidance.

In other words, AI is becoming an efficiency engine, not a replacement for human expertise.

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## Technology as a Competitive Equalizer

For independent advisors, technology isn't just about saving time — it's about leveling the playing field.

Tools that once required enterprise budgets are now allowing home-based professionals to operate with the same capabilities as larger agencies.

"Technology gives me the ability to compete with any large agency."

This access to advanced tools is redefining what independence looks like, enabling advisors to scale their businesses without adding overhead or complexity.

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## The Real Barrier: Training, Not Adoption

Despite strong adoption levels, the survey identifies a clear challenge — and a significant opportunity for hosts and suppliers.

The biggest barriers to deeper AI use are:

- **Lack of training (53.7%)**
- **Not enough time to learn (37.0%)**

This suggests that advisors are willing and interested — but need guidance to unlock the full productivity potential of these tools.

“The biggest opportunity isn’t access to tools — it’s training to use them better.”

For industry partners, this presents a powerful support narrative: investing in education may be one of the fastest ways to increase advisor productivity and sales growth.

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## Time Saved Equals Growth Potential

The efficiency gains are already measurable:

- **30.6%** report saving **11–25%** of their time through technology
- **27.9%** save **26–50%**
- **18.3%** say technology saves them **more than half** of their time

These time savings translate directly into increased capacity — more client interaction, better service, and stronger revenue potential.

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## Upgrading the Advisor Model

The survey results reinforce an important shift: technology isn’t replacing travel advisors — it’s upgrading how they work.

Independent professionals are using AI to enhance expertise, improve productivity, and deliver higher levels of personalized service. With the right training and support, technology becomes a growth multiplier for the home-based model.

As adoption continues, advisors who blend human insight with smart automation are likely to lead the next phase of industry evolution.

## What Agents Shared:

- *“AI helps me work smarter — it supports my expertise, it doesn’t replace it.”*
- *“Technology gives me the ability to compete with any large agency.”*
- *“The biggest opportunity isn’t access to tools — it’s training to use them better.”*