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**Desert-Based Cruise Provider Is Without Peers  
This ICE Actually Expands in the Desert Heat  
Exclusive to *The Business Journal***

Even long-time travel industry members are astounded to learn that one of the industry's leading cruise providers operates out of landlocked headquarters in the middle of the Arizona desert. Forget Miami, Los Angeles, Seattle and other oceanfront corporate cruise office locations. The greatest innovations in the cruise industry are happening right here in the Valley of the Sun.

Back in the late '90s, Phoenix business woman Marcia Rowley and her husband John pioneered a niche market in the cruise and timeshare industry. Nine years later, they own three Phoenix-based cruise & travel companies – International Cruise & Excursions, Inc. (ICE), OurVacationStore (OVS) and Solutions at Sea (SAS) – with approximately 900 employees and more than \$311 million in annual gross sales revenues.

As a vacation owner, Marcia had the idea of introducing a cruise option into the vacation ownership experience. Combining this concept with her marketing expertise and with her husband John's technology background, they founded ICE, an innovative new company where vacation owners could exchange their vacation ownership time toward cruise vacations.

In 1997, ICE signed an agreement with Carnival Cruise Lines, the largest cruise line in the world, to offer an innovative cruise exchange program. All of the other major cruise lines quickly followed, including Holland America, Royal Caribbean, Princess and others. Within a few months, Gold Crown and Five Star resort properties were affiliating with ICE and offering the ICE Vacation Program – a well-balanced mix of premium cruise and resort offerings – to their clients. ICE now offers approximately 150,000 world-class resort and hotel properties to its member base.

Marcia's cruise exchange concept proved to be a match made in heaven. The demographics of vacation owners and cruisers are virtually identical, so cruise lines were

quick to welcome the introduction of the vacation ownership market to the cruising experience. Vacation ownership resorts were equally excited about the opportunity to expand their owner benefits to include the options that the cruise industry had been enjoying for many years.

The key to the company's success, according to Marcia, was more than having an innovative new product. It was being able to deliver that product as a total "plug and play" solution for business partners and then to over deliver on the promise of extraordinary vacations to the member base.

"No matter how great the product is, if it's difficult to implement, it's not going to go anywhere," she explains. "So our cruise exchange program comes with all the ancillary services and support to put into production immediately by our business partners."

ICE's unique products are reliant upon the technology provided by Our Vacation Store (OVS), a technology company lead by Ted Davault, dedicated to the development and maintenance of systems and software for the large-scale delivery of cruise bookings. Through OVS, all of ICE's Web-based programs and marketing materials can be branded to the business partner. ICE provides affiliated business partners with marketing support, custom-branded collateral and a bank of trained travel professionals in the company's Phoenix call center.

"Our business partners don't have to become experts in cruise marketing, technology or fulfillment," states Marcia. "Because we are."

In the years since ICE began, the company has expanded its product offerings to include escorted tours, resort and hotel stays and experiential vacations, as well as cruises. And while still firmly rooted in the vacation ownership industry, ICE has moved into the corporate marketplace providing cruise and travel fulfillment expertise for affinity based corporations and associations. Corporate clients make ICE's loyalty based and incentive programs available to more than 55 million consumers. Even such corporate giants as American Express, AAA and Delta Air Lines have entrusted their corporate programs to ICE's proven expertise and excellence.

ICE is currently making its entry into the direct-to-the-consumer arena. The company is rolling out CruisePoints, a new cruise and travel program that allows members to earn and redeem points for savings on cruise, resort and experiential vacations. In addition, points from other travel based loyalty programs such as airline and hotel plans can be converted into CruisePoints and redeemed for valuable vacation savings. ICE's goal for the CruisePoints program is to drive membership to over three million members during the next three years.

The majority of ICE's employees work in the company's call center and administrative offices in Phoenix. On display in glass cabinets, conference rooms and shelves throughout the building are the dozens of awards the company has received for

innovation and excellence in the travel industry as well as for consistently being a top producer for the cruise lines.

"We're blessed with an incredible assortment of diverse, imaginative and talented employees with backgrounds in all aspects of the travel industry," observes Marcia. "We're not interested in being all things to all people. We want to continue to expand and refine our exclusive expertise in line with developing opportunities; to grow and transform in response to changes in the travel industry."

One of those changes came in 2003, when Marcia created a new company, Solutions at Sea (SAS), to develop, implement and manage onboard sales and marketing programs for cruise vacation clubs and programs in cooperation with the leading cruise lines in the world.

"SAS brings its unique experience in sales, marketing and automation of vacation clubs to the cruise industry" Marcia says. "The vacation ownership industry has enjoyed the benefits of membership clubs for many years and the cruise industry is just beginning this trend. The majority of the hotel brands have a very successful vacation ownership division. The cruise industry now has the opportunity to expand on its success and bring a whole new dimension into their loyalty clubs.

"This is the beginning of a very exciting time for the cruise industry and we are perfectly positioned to partner with the cruise lines to deliver new and innovative travel products."

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