

# BEST MANAGED

A JOINT VENTURE WITH CANADA'S 50 BEST MANAGED COMPANIES PROGRAM

## Soaring on a customer-first approach

Maritime Travel Inc.'s business partners and customers have a lot of good things to say about the Halifax-based travel agency. In 2002, the company went from being Atlantic Canada's largest to a national contender when it bought The Bay Travel locations across Canada. The kind words are not surprising because building and maintaining long-term relationships is the foundation on which this 50 Best Managed Platinum Club member's business and leisure travel strategy is built.

"They have a very personalized approach and it is certainly one of their strong attributes that they are very customer service-centric," says Marc Rosenberg, vice-president of sales and product distribution for Air Canada. "Besides being very friendly people they are very forward-thinking, and it's really a pleasure sitting with them and dealing with the opportunities or challenges typical of our business. I have found them to certainly be a cut above in how they go about doing business and how they deal with the challenges that we've all had to deal with in the travel industry."

Since going national, Maritime's sales have gone up by almost 40% — one client at a time. Maritime, which now has 81 locations across the country, has earned a strong customer service reputation since it was founded in 1949. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Maritime operates under the LeGrow's Travel brand and the formula for success is the same.

"The movement of marine personnel to and from international destinations is the part of our business that we trust to LeGrow's Travel. We have relied on LeGrow's Travel to provide the best travel schedules at the lowest cost by utilizing their Discount Air division. They continue to give us the personal 24/7 service that is required to minimize our travel expenditures even with tight scheduling and quick turnaround times," says Bruce Penney, Seabase/Maersk in St. John's.

In 2002, however, the company did not have a brand in the rest of the country. Maritime approached this hurdle by utilizing its very successful Atlantic Canada business model in the rest of Canada.

Instead of the standard call centre model one would get with the larger travel agencies, it offers a high-touch, personalized service model.

"We assign an individual agent to each corporate account," says Gary Gaudry, Maritime's president.

"So it's a real high-service model. You're not going to get one of eight agents in a call centre with us; you're going to get the same person 90% of the time."

For the other 10% of the

time, when the main agent could be in training or on vacation, Maritime assigns a regular back-up who stays up to date on everything there is to know about the client's account.

"Our success in selling business travel goes back to 1979 with our single storefront. We are now seeing this success moving across the country," Mr. Gaudry says.

"Having been recognized as one of the 50 Best for the last 10 years has been a huge help for national recognition. It is a stamp of approval that shows potential customers we're very proactive," Mr. Gaudry says.

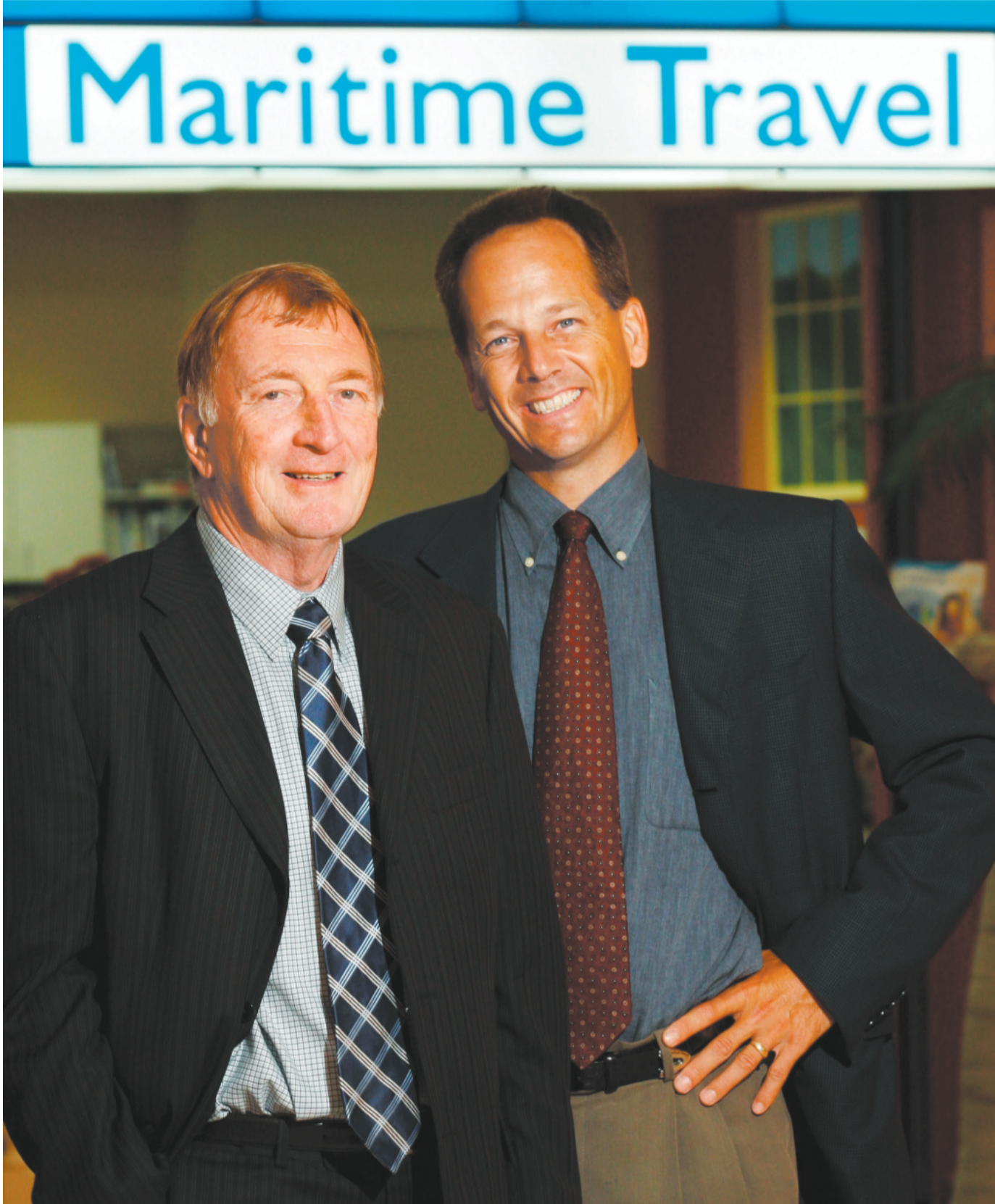
Jocelyne Gauvin, travel co-ordinator for Iron Ore Co. of Canada, says, "Maritime Travel, through its Canadian wide network, is able to facilitate corporate travel for IOC (a subsidiary of Rio Tinto) in areas as diverse as Montreal, Sept-Iles and Labrador City. This relationship has not only enabled IOC to receive consolidated data on the amount spent on travelling within Canada, it has also enabled our various divisions to leverage IOC's preferred global suppliers on a consistent basis and adhere to company policies and procedures."

The 50 Best helps Maritime get in the door with corporate clients but once it gets in, it typically lands — and keeps — the accounts by living up to everything the award stands for. "Maritime Travel has provided Bell Aliant with travel management services for over 10 years," says Perry Jarvis, director procurement, Bell Aliant. "Maritime Travel has consistently demonstrated flexibility in delivering systems to meet our changing needs and to help us manage our travel. They have created programs that fit our specific requirements and provided local personal service in over 20 locations."

Maritime has done far more than develop a business model to differentiate itself: It has enthusiastically and extensively invested in the leading-edge technology and the people to make it work.

"We've been very proactive in making sure on the technology side that we can compete with anyone in the world. We're constantly searching for new and better ways to do business," says Mike Donovan, president of LeGrow's Travel.

"Our partnership with Maritime Travel goes beyond the traditional relationship between a global distribution system and a travel management company. Because Maritime Travel is an industry leader in technological innovation and an early adopter of new technologies, Travelport incorporates Maritime Travel's insight and expertise to help us develop and implement new products. One such product is Agencia, the first API-based GDS tool that en-



LeGrow's Travel president Mike Donovan, left, and Maritime Travel president Gary Gaudry helped guide the company from a regional interest to a national force in the travel industry in six years.

ables Apollo-connected travel agencies in Canada to automatically aggregate special GDS and non-GDS content into an integrated display, and offers Air Canada's full product suite including a la carte pricing, merchandising and flight passes," says Maurita Baker, country manager-Canada for Travelport.

"Travelport GDS Relationships are absolutely the key to our business," Mr. Gaudry says.

One of the reasons its people are so important to Maritime is because it is the company's frontline workers who develop the one-on-one relationships with all its customers. Just as important is that they have the leading-edge tools and knowledge to focus on providing that high-touch service — anywhere in the country.

"You can work in rural New

Brunswick or rural Newfoundland, rural anywhere, you still have access to all the information, every branch has the same technology."

"Having Maritime Travel manage and integrate our Air Canada flight passes has been a huge benefit to Jacques Whitford. Maritime Travel's branch network in Central and Eastern Canada mirrors our own regional presence, allowing our offices in those regions local access to our flight pass program. This structure gives us a uniform tracking system and ensures that all of our travel spend is accurately reported on. We get the data we need to reconcile our credit card statements and our travellers still get the personal, local and 24/7 support they need when they need it — by counsellors who know every

detail of our travel portfolio," says Anne Marie Gill, treasury and national vendor contracts manager, Jacques Whitford.

Maritime's philosophy is that a company based in Atlantic Canada can compete with anyone in the world, if it has the right technology and people.

"WestJet congratulates Maritime Travel on this great achievement," says Duncan Bureau, WestJet vice-president, sales, Airline Partnerships. "WestJet and WestJet Vacations aim to provide the perfect travel and vacation experience based on the needs of our guests and outstanding partners like Maritime Travel are critical in helping us realize our vision."

"They have a winning formula and their client base recognizes it," Air Canada's Mr. Rosenberg says.

"A common theme among

50 Best companies is a mindset that your reputation and ability to meet client needs are more important than the size of your firm," says Rick Lunny, executive vice-president, CIBC retail markets.

"Successful mid-sized companies rely on their flexibility in adapting to client needs to earn business from large-scale clients and then leverage that relationship to strengthen their brand and demonstrate their value proposition to the market."

To find out how the Best Managed program can help your private company, visit [www.canadas50best.com](http://www.canadas50best.com).

And to get up close and personal with Best Managed companies, stay tuned to this page for upcoming profiles of past winners, their best practices and lessons learned.



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Congratulations Maritime Travel on being recognized as a 50 Best Managed Company for 10 consecutive years and achieving Platinum Club status for three years.



## Maritime Travel

We Know Travel Best.

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