

# WINGS TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT



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*Chief executive officer Tony Sofianos explains how, with the oil and gas industry stretching across the globe more than ever before, companies like Wings Travel Management have never been more important to their customers*

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Wings has expanded  
around the world

Over the past two decades, the oil and gas industry has taken off at an incredible rate in many developing markets, helping establish nations such as Brazil, China and South Africa as modern centres of economic prosperity. The evolution has also allowed those companies that are best positioned to service these markets to grow and, more importantly, overcome many of the challenges posed in recent years by the financial crisis.

Described as a “high tech, high touch” organisation, Wings Travel Management is a global travel management company (TMC) specialising in offshore, marine and corporate travel. Founded in 1992, and employing approximately 300 people in four regional hubs, Wings possesses an advanced and unique quality management system that is an integral part of its operating procedures.

Having just celebrated its 20th anniversary, the company has witnessed first-hand how the market has adapted and changed in that time. “There is no doubt,” explains chief executive officer Tony Sofianos, “that the last few years have been incredibly tough. Notwithstanding the economic environment, we have managed to position ourselves optimally so we can maximise the opportunities that exist as well as be better positioned to expand as economic conditions improve. In fact through the acquisition of a number of businesses around the globe in recent years and strong sustainable organic growth, we have been able to achieve strong double digit growth numbers throughout this recession.”

Another way in which the company has



weathered the economic storm is by actively taking an aggressive approach toward managing its costs, while retaining its commitment to investing in new technologies and its resources. “Being able to manage our costs effectively has been of huge benefit to the business,” Sofianos continues, “but so too has our ability to identify new revenue streams and increase our overall productivity.”

Said revenue streams are increasingly coming from those aforementioned developing economies. “Two of the fastest-growing markets in the oil and gas sector are Brazil and the continent of Africa, and having a strong presence in both has undoubtedly strengthened Wings as leaders in the energy sector,” Sofianos states. “This is particularly true when it comes to Brazil, which has come along by leaps and bounds over the past several years. The oil and gas industry in that part of the world is positively booming today, and we are extremely excited to be right at the heart of that.”

In pursuit of further growth opportunities, Wings continues to scout for potential acquisitions and engage with different players in different parts of the world. Notwithstanding the fact that Wings corporate headquarters migrated to the UK a number of years back, Wings is still committed to, and

recognises the importance of continuing to invest in, South Africa and Africa as a whole, where it was originally founded 20 years ago.

This recognition is exemplified by the fact that Wings can today be found in esteemed company within the membership ranks of the

Wings is a “high tech, high touch” organisation

**“WINGS POSSESSES AN ADVANCED AND UNIQUE QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THAT IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF ITS OPERATING PROCEDURES”**

South African Oil and Gas Association (SAOGA). “We are very unique, in that while SAOGA is primarily made up of industry operators and service providers, it is rare to find a third-party service provider like us within such an association,” Sofianos says. “Being a member of SAOGA gives us a level of credibility in this region that is not easy to obtain, due to the selective nature of its membership structure, and, of course, it also provides excellent networking

**1992**  
 .....  
**The year the company was founded**

opportunities with other players in the sector.”

Toward the end of 2011, Deloitte carried out a comprehensive business travel survey to calculate what the percentage of business travellers would be in 2012. The results were

eye opening, with 85 percent of those who travelled in 2011 saying they expected to embark on as many journeys in 2012, and 27 percent of 18 to 44-year-olds surveyed intending to travel more. What these figures

highlighted was an ever-increasing need for business travel companies, and this remains the case as we head into 2013.

“I think that while the global financial climate will remain challenging in the short-to-medium term, thus meaning companies will continue to drive down costs and margins, there are still going to be plenty of opportunities for companies like ours, specifically in the energy sector. This will

particularly be the case as the Asia-Pacific region comes online for Wings in the near future,” Sofianos says.

In terms of Wings’ brand and value proposition, its business is to provide services to companies where business travel is a crucial part of their business model, like the oil and gas industry, which accounts for over 50 percent of Wings’ volumes. “As is most often the case in the oil and gas

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Travellers expect a consistent, predictable service delivery



Business travel is a crucial part of the business model in the energy industry

industry,” Sofianos enthuses, “very little of what takes place today such as operations in the field, can be replicated by video conference and other technology. While some small elements of technology are beginning to creep into the industry, the movement of people on and off oil rigs, or between key assets, is not something that is going to change anytime soon, and that is what makes a company like Wings such an important part of our customers’ business.”

While turbulent financial conditions continue to exist, Sofianos is very clear about what Wings needs to do in order to stay the course it is on. “What is important is being able to maintain a stable growth curve, by firstly retaining our customers and

also acquiring new strategic ones, and never taking your eye off what is important to our travellers—consistent predictable service delivery, irrespective of the environment. It is also vital that we continue to be leaders and experts when it comes to entering and prospering in emerging and tough markets such as Brazil, the Middle East, East and West Africa. It is in these locations that the industry will grow at its most significant rates and we will remain well positioned to capitalise on this.” **BE**

For more information about Wings Travel Management visit: [www.wings.travel](http://www.wings.travel)



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