

American Small Business Travelers Alliance

ASBTANEWS...

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ASBTA Travel Survey Reveals Unexpected Hotel Trends Among Small Business Travelers

Booking Methods, Selection Criteria and Quantity of Stays Bucks Traditional Wisdom Regarding Hotel Preferences

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – DALLAS, TX – **Technology continues to grow in importance for** small business travelers (SBTs). Almost half of SBTs book their hotel accommodations using the hotel's web site, and 38 percent indicated that a hotel's technology and Internet capabilities were a consideration when booking, reported the American Small Business Travelers Alliance (ASBTA), which recently completed its first comprehensive online travel survey of current and prospective members. ASBTA is a national alliance that provides valuable services and functions focused specifically on the travel needs and interests of small business owners.

“Small business travelers continue to look for new and better ways to utilize technology to enhance their travel experience, though location and price still rank as top priorities when selecting a hotel room,” said Chet Gray, ASBTA vice president of Sales and Marketing.

Technology continues to grow in importance

Most middle-range hotels now offer, or are planning to offer, high-speed Internet and Wi-Fi at little or no cost. Thirty-eight percent of ASBTA members indicated that a hotel's technology and Internet capabilities were important when booking. Location and price continue to lead the way as the most important criteria at 83 percent, and comfort at 46 percent.

"The ASBTA survey's message is simple: small business travelers are on the road to interact with clients and customers, not simply work from their hotel rooms," said Gray. "They look at price and accommodations, but they also focus strongly on receiving value in terms of the best technology available."

The ASBTA survey results also indicate that despite recent studies showing a majority of online travel bookings are made using travel search engines such as Expedia, 49 percent of respondents book their hotel accommodations on the hotel's web site, compared to just 31 percent who book via a travel search engine. This may be do in part to low price guarantees offered by hotel chains like Accor, Hyatt, Choice Hotels International, and several others.

For instance, Ramada and Hyatt's Best Rate Guarantee promises not only that customers will receive the lowest published Internet rate at Hyatt hotels *only* on Hyatt's web site, but also that if a customer does find a lower rate advertised elsewhere on the Internet, Hyatt will match the rate and provide an additional 20 percent discount. (Visit www.hyatt.com for more information.) Hotel chains like Holiday Inn have also added extra convenience to direct online booking by allowing travelers to book their rooms wirelessly using almost any wireless device, including PDAs and BlackBerrys.

Over 56% of hotel reservations are made online

Of other booking methods, the survey results indicate that booking on hotel websites rates highest at 49 percent, followed by internet companies at 30 percent.

Another unexpected outcome of the survey is reflected in the high volume of annual hotel stays reported by ASBTA members. A startling 43 percent of ASBTA members reported staying 31 or more nights per year in a hotel, compared with only 14 percent of non-member small business owners. This would seem to indicate that small business travelers who are frequent travelers are reaching out for the support of a consumer-oriented travel organization like ASBTA.

“To some, these indicators may seem trivial, but to us they reflect the desire of small business travelers to carefully watch the bottom line and find ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their travel,” said Gray.

“Hotels are a hugely significant part of a small business traveler’s trip, so finding the right one can be a major factor in making a business trip viable and successful. This survey reaffirms that working closely with hotels and small business travelers to help facilitate successful business travel is one of our key objectives.”

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About ASBTA:

ASBTA is dedicated to educating the small business traveler and promoting the travel industry at large. The American Small Business Travelers Alliance (ASBTA) is a national organization serving small business travelers by providing information regarding resources and services, savings on air fares, car rentals, and accommodations, as well as technology designed to improve and enhance your travel experience. To achieve its mission, ASBTA will utilize an integrated communication program while working closely with travel-industry companies that serve small business travelers. If you’re a small business owner and want to learn more, visit our site and register free at www.asbta.com. Membership to ASBTA is free for small businesses. We’d like to better serve you, please email us at info@asbta.com. You can contact ASBTA by phone at 469-648-0190.