

American Small Business Travelers Alliance

ASBTA NEWS...

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Travel Points are Unused Leisure Travel Goldmine for Small Business Travelers

Frequent Flier, Affinity Programs Offer Savings on Pleasure Trips, Incentive Opportunities for Small Business Owners

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – DALLAS, TX – Many small business frequent travelers who take two or more pleasure trips a year have never used travel points to defray the cost of those trips, reported the American Small Business Travelers Alliance (ASBTA), which completed its first comprehensive online travel survey of current and prospective members in June. ASBTA is a national alliance that provides valuable services and functions focused specifically on the travel needs and interests of small business owners. The ASBTA survey revealed that 31 percent of small business travelers take two or more pleasure trips each year, while 23 percent take more than four. On the other hand, the survey also indicated that 47 percent of respondents have never redeemed travel points – such as airline frequent flier miles – for free or reduced price travel.

“In many cases, these individuals are taking 10 or more business trips each year, all of which have the potential to earn thousands of frequent flier miles and affinity points that can be applied toward well-deserved vacations that are either free or heavily discounted,” said Chuck Sharp, ASBTA President.

Frequent traveler programs such as those offered by airlines, hotels and car rental companies are usually free to join and can help small business travelers earn miles and points on the services they use most during business trips. These miles and points can then be redeemed for the same items during pleasure trips. For instance, National Car Rental’s Business Program (www.nationalcar.com) offers small businesses complimentary memberships for all traveling employees to National’s Emerald Club

program, which enables members to earn frequent flyer miles and coupons for use on leisure rentals.

Hotel programs like Hilton HHonors® allow members to earn both HHonors points and airline miles on 55 participating airlines, including American Airlines, Delta, British Airways and AeroMexico. The HHonors points earned can be used toward everything from free in-room movies and free nights at participating hotels to free stays at resort condominiums and free Carnival cruises. (Visit <http://hhonors.hilton.com/en/hhonors/index.jhtml> for more details.)

Complete personalized vacation packages are also within reach using travel points with services like AmericanAirlines Vacations (www.aavacations.com). Although the service enables anyone to book all-inclusive and other vacation packages from one location, members of AAdvantage – American’s frequent flier program – can apply as few as 500 miles toward a particular service on a package vacation or use miles to pay for an entire package. Booking options encompass more than 1,300 properties in 100 locations around the world and trip services can include flights, hotel stays, airport transfers, car rentals, sightseeing and theme park tickets, and more – all of which can be paid for with AAdvantage miles.

“There are definite leisure travel benefits for small business travelers with travel points, but small business owners can also use these tools as an incentive to their employees or even as gifts to clients and customers,” said Sharp.

For example, programs like American Airlines’ Business ExtrAA (www.businessextraa.com) offer advantages to both business owners and their employees. Each time an employee uses his or her Business ExtrAA account number when purchasing qualifying tickets on American Airlines, American Eagle®, and AmericanConnection®, they earn AAdvantage® miles and the company earns Business ExtrAA points, which can be redeemed for travel awards that may be given to clients, employees or friends.

Starwood Preferred Business (<http://www.starwoodpreferredbusiness.com>) also allows both small businesses and their employees to earn rewards for travel. For every eligible dollar spent at any Starwood hotel and resort – including Sheraton and Westin hotels – both the employee and the small business earn “Starpoints,” which can be redeemed for

free nights, free room upgrades and free airline flights. For the small business, these points can also be used as additional employee rewards.

“We know from our survey that small business frequent travelers are not shying away from traveling during their leisure time,” said Sharp. “This fact makes it all the more important that small business travelers know they can make all those business trips a vehicle toward saving money on leisure trips – something they definitely deserve.”

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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. We'd like to better serve you, please fill out the 2005 ASBTA Survey or email us at info@asbta.com. You can contact ASBTA by phone at 469-648-0190.