



ASBTA: Small Business Travelers May Not Be Using Online Travel Sites to Their Full Advantage

Cost Savings Are Not the Only Advantage of Booking Business Trips Directly with Online Travel Sites

Updated: 11:18 a.m. ET Sept. 20, 2005

DALLAS, Sept. 20, 2005 (PRIMEZONE) -- Although more small business travelers than ever are booking travel online, they may not be aware of the many other conveniences offered by travel sites, reported the American Small Business Travelers Alliance (ASBTA). ASBTA is a national alliance that provides valuable services and functions focused specifically on the travel needs and interests of small business owners.

"It's widely accepted among the small business community that booking directly on a travel provider's web site can save time and money on business travel, but that may be where most small business travelers' expectations end," said Chuck Sharp, ASBTA President. "In reality, the best travel web sites also offer a number of other convenience features and services and provide an excellent customer service experience at the traveler's immediate beck and call."

For instance, in addition to offering a low fare guarantee when reservations are booked on American Airlines' web site, AA.com enables customers to purchase upgrades and Admirals Club day passes, book AAdvantage awards, check flight information, and check-in for a flight -- all 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Customers can also enroll in the AAdvantage program and join Admirals Club using the web site. In addition, American Airlines works in conjunction with its travel partners to allow customers to book car rentals, hotel stays and other services directly from AA.com and earn AAdvantage points by doing so. (For more information on these and other services, visit www.aa.com.)

Like American, some of the best hotel chains and car rental companies provide expanded services beyond booking on their web sites. Hyatt.com, for example, offers customers the guaranteed lowest rate available online, plus full control over reservation changes and cancellations and the ability to redeem gift certificates and reward points. Especially useful to small business travelers is the ability to plan and book meetings directly on the Hyatt web site. On a smaller, but equally useful, scale,

Hertz's web site offers instant access to customized driving directions, local weather conditions and current exchange rates. (Visit www.hyatt.com and www.hertz.com for more information.)

"Not all travel web sites have added these convenient features and services, but the ones that have raised the bar significantly on the level of customer service offered in the online travel market. The best part is, this is only the beginning and we should expect to see many more advances in the near future," said Sharp. "For the moment, however, our objective is to make small business owners and travelers aware of what they might be missing out on right now and help them make their travel experiences less expensive and more productive."

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 receive the ASBTA newsletter, visit our site and register free at www.asbta.com. You can contact ASBTA by phone at 469-648-0190.

CONTACT: ASBTA
Jim Van Orden
972-231-2575
jim.vanorden@asbta.com