

## ASBTA: Small Business Travelers on a Budget Say Goodbye to Airline Standby

2005-10-10

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New Policies and Fee Structures Create Cheaper, More Convenient Alternatives When Booking, Changing Travel at the Last Minute

Last-minute travel has just gotten easier and less-expensive for small business travelers, thanks to recent changes in the airline industry, reported the American Small Business Travelers Alliance (ASBTA). ASBTA is a national, non-profit alliance that provides valuable services and functions focused specifically on the travel needs and interests of small business owners.

Small business travelers have long relied on airline standby services to accommodate both their hectic, often last-minute, flight needs and their limited travel budgets. In recent years, however, changes in the airline industry tightened standby rules and caused the cost of flying standby to increase. Fortunately, the recent introduction by major airlines of simpler fare structures and cheaper, more convenient alternatives to standby have reversed the trend and opened new doors for small business travelers.

"Ticket price is the top consideration for small business travelers when booking flights, so it's great that the big airlines are recognizing this important segment of their customer base by launching initiatives targeted at their specific needs," said Chuck Sharp, ASBTA President.

Most recently, American, Delta and Northwest have all implemented a new service that provides customers with an alternative to standby. Using the traditional standby method, customers with non-refundable tickets who want to get on an earlier or later flight on short notice must pay around \$100 to wait for an available seat on another flight. But the new service on American, for instance, enables customers to pay only a \$25 fee to change their plans and get a confirmed seat on another flight as late as three hours before the new flight is scheduled to depart. The changes can be made by phone, at the airport ticket counter or via a self-service ticket machine.

"This is an incredibly important change since it means that small business travelers will not only be paying less to accommodate their ever-changing plans, but will also have the certainty of a confirmed seat, rather than having to wait and hope they can get on their desired flight," said Sharp.

Further reducing travel costs and increasing the convenience factor for small business travelers are the new simplified fares introduced in early 2005 by American and Delta. These initiatives effectively reduced some of the highest domestic airfares, which were frequently those purchased at the last minute. As a result, small business travelers -- who more often than not must make their travel plans at the eleventh hour -- have been among the key beneficiaries of simplified fares.

"You could almost say that small business travelers have made an art form out of last-minute travel," said Sharp. "They've taken what is probably the most difficult form of travel and made it work. We think it's fantastic news that the airline industry is helping to make that effort unnecessary."

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, non-profit 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](http://www.asbta.com).

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