



ABOVE: One of the emails sent to a customer moments after a flight had been booked for them by their business travel agent. RIGHT: When asked, Tiffany Hall said she would investigate the matter.



Carrier stops sending emails directing agents' clients to use BA's website

# BA backs down on email policy

BRITISH AIRWAYS has suspended its practice of sending emails to passengers who book through corporate travel agencies, after TTG alerted the carrier to agents' complaints.

The policy U-turn comes after a number of agents complained to TTG that clients had received emails from the airline moments after the booking had been confirmed.

The emails contained information such as terminal changes and how to manage bookings, and were not marketing messages.

However, agents claim the practice is a back-door way of stealing their customers by directing them to BA's website.



One agent, who did not wish to be named, said: "Any agent worth their salt would tell their client all this information anyway. We inform our customers about terminal changes, advanced passenger information (API) and anything else they should know about; we do not need BA to do it our behalf."

"It is funny that all the information directs the customer to ba.com," he added.

BA's systems generate emails after the agent has input a customer's Executive Club details. The emails either inform

customers of the need to input details about themselves before they fly to the US – currently only possible at ba.com – or tell them how to make alterations online, also currently possible only through the website.

Norman Gage, Advantage Travel Centres' business travel director, confirmed a number of his members had received unsolicited emails from BA.

He said he would speak to his BA account director to try to resolve the issue.

A BA spokeswoman said: "We have temporarily decided to stop sending emails for trade bookings in the UK."

"We are working on making communications to agents and

customers clear. It was a trial and we are assessing the feedback from customers and agents."

The spokeswoman denied BA was trying to poach customers from travel agents.

## Dispute over Amex card charges settled

BRITISH AIRWAYS and American Express have reached an undisclosed out-of-court settlement in their dispute over card charges.

The airline will continue to accept Amex cards, but will maintain its policy of non-acceptance of any credit cards for corporate

net fares in the UK – the point of dispute.

After nearly two years of wrangling, both parties have agreed to withdraw their legal claims against each other and so avoid a costly court battle.

BA's UK and Ireland head of sales, Tiffany Hall, said: "We started not to accept

card payments on corporate net fares in June 2002.

"The idea behind this was to allow for complete transparency for the corporate who does not want any hidden charges."

"It also allows corporates to choose how they pay for a fare and through whom they buy fares."

## MyTravel appoints chief

MYTRAVEL has appointed Phil Aird-Mash as managing director of Airtours Holidays, with sales and commercial director Steve Barrass stepping up to deputy managing director.

Mr Aird-Mash moves within the group from Direct Holidays. He will report to UK chief operating officer Kevin McCarten, alongside Rick Green, managing director of Direct Holidays, and Martin Young, managing director of Panorama and Manos.



Airtours Holidays has been without a managing director or deputy since the departure of Seamus Conlon in August 2002.

The promotions follow the departures of MyTravel UK chief executive Duncan Wilson and deputy chief operating officer Steve Endacott.

Mr Aird-Mash, who has been

with the group for eight years, and Mr Barrass have worked alongside each other for the past two years and were particularly involved with Airtours' new pricing models.

Mr Barrass, who retains responsibility for Going Places in his expanded role, said: "We've done a strategic review and put in place a number of turnaround projects that are now being embedded into the day-to-day business."

## ROUND-UP

### ABTA says fraud case 'going well'

ABTA claims its civil case against former head of legal services Riccardo Nardi is "going well". Chief executive Ian Reynolds said: "We aim to make a full recovery."

### Spain urged to promote the Costas

Thomas Cook UK chief executive Manny Fontenla-Nova has urged the Spanish Tourist Office to concentrate on promoting the Costas rather than inland areas. In a swipe at the STO's Spain Marks campaign, he said: "They should be spending more time promoting sun and beach." *End of Spain's reign? Analysis, page 18*

### Advantage nears conference target

Advantage has claimed it is "not far short" of its 400-delegate target for its conference in Kuala Lumpur later this month – its first overseas event for 10 years. Sales and marketing director Colin O'Neill said there was an even split between members and suppliers.

### Qantas plans Asian no-frills carrier

Qantas is to launch another no-frills subsidiary. The unnamed co-venture, which will be based in Singapore, will start flying by the end of the year with four aircraft. Qantas chief executive Geoff Dixon said the airline would fly to cities within five hours' flying time that were not covered by the airline's current network.

### ABTA issues insurance warning

ABTA has reminded members that they are only exempt from regulation by the Financial Services Authority if their insurance sales are combined with travel arrangements. If selling accommodation-only, members must be regulated by the FSA. For more details, see [www.abtamembers.org/insurance](http://www.abtamembers.org/insurance).

### Air Canada refinance deal collapses

Air Canada is to seek an extension to its bankruptcy protection after a refinancing deal collapsed at the last minute. Trinity Time was due to pump £265 million into the carrier to allow it to exit protection this week.



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