CORORATE TRAVEL BUYERS RATE U.S. AIRLINES

RANKINGS ON A SCALE OF 1 (POOR) TO 5 (EXCELLENT)

	Flex. in transient pricing	*Flex. in meeting pricing*	*Flex. in services and amenities*	*Distribution channels*	*Complaint/ problem resolution*	*Quality of airline commun-ication*	*Value of relationships w/acct. mgrs., sales reps*	*Quality of customer service*	*Networks, partnerships, frequencies*	*Overall price value*	*Overall average*
Continental Airlines	**3.12**	2.85	2.94	**3.47**	**3.43**	**3.56**	**3.43**	3.42	3.47	3.17	**3.28**
American Airlines	2.98	**2.96**	**2.96**	3.37	3.30	3.51	3.33	3.15	3.54	3.02	3.21
Southwest Airlines	2.78	2.70	2.32	2.59	3.20	3.41	3.03	**3.59**	3.19	**3.89**	3.07
Northwest Airlines	2.99	2.57	2.67	3.30	3.03	3.40	3.04	3.03	3.34	2.96	3.03
Delta Air Lines	2.85	2.59	2.51	3.33	2.89	3.29	3.05	3.00	3.47	3.00	3.00
United Airlines	2.66	2.44	2.55	3.21	2.64	3.19	2.93	2.83	**3.62**	2.82	2.89
US Airways	2.42	2.31	2.21	2.99	2.71	2.76	2.50	2.69	3.12	2.68	2.64
Average attribute rating	*2.82*	*2.63*	*2.59*	*3.18*	*3.03*	*3.30*	*3.04*	*3.10*	*3.39*	*3.08*	*3.02*

Rating Criteria Definitions Presented To Respondents

Flexibility in negotiating transient pricing: The airline's demonstrated ability to customize business travel program discounts and other negotiated pricing elements.

Flexibility in negotiating meeting pricing: The airline's demonstrated ability to customize meetings travel discounts and negotiated pricing elements for a preferred business travel buyer.

Flexibility in negotiating services and amenities: The airline's demonstrated ability to negotiate additional offerings for individual business travelers, including soft-dollar benefits and special VIP treatment in flight and at the airport.

Distribution channels: The airline's demonstrated ability to provide the most comprehensive published and private airfare content for preferred corporate bookings.

Complaint/problem resolution: The airline's demonstrated ability to respond quickly and effectively to business travel buyer and corporate traveler concerns.

Quality of airline communication: Demonstrated performance in informing travel buyers about airline management, products, programs, sales and service changes.

Value of relationships with account managers and sales reps: Demonstrated performance in the productivity and frequency of meetings with local, regional, national and other airline representatives and their power to negotiate agreements, offer options and make decisions regarding price and service.

Quality of customer service: Overall perception of airline based on timeliness, reliability and cleanliness of service; support from airline personnel and communication to travelers.

Networks, partnerships and frequencies: The airline's ability to provide the necessary service to the destinations your company's travel patterns require.

Overall price value: The perceived worth of an airline's service levels relative to fares. ■

Methodology

The 12th *Business Travel News* Annual Airline Survey is a unique measure of corporate travel buyer perceptions of airline performance in negotiating for and delivering service and maintaining preferred relationships. This year, *BTN* again contracted Equation Research to host and tabulate the survey.

BTN this year added two categories to address the evolving needs of corporate travel professionals—distribution channels and networks and partnerships (see definitions above)—and discontinued one category that previously was included in the survey: Availability of timely and accurate contract performance data.

The categories presented in the questionnaire were developed through a series of exchanges with travel buyers, corporate agency managers and airline sales executives to reflect more clearly the way in which corporate air travel buyers perceive each airline.

Asked to grade only those airlines with which they did business in the past year, respondents ranked domestic carriers on a scale of one (poor) to five (excellent) in 10 categories. *BTN* averaged scores in each category to create the overall score for each carrier.

Not every respondent rated every airline in every category. Those participants who left out a category or airline were not included in that average rating.

BTN from late August through early October invited by e-mail a randomly selected subset of qualified readers, producing 453 responses, 186 of whom spent more than $500,000 annually on airline tickets.

Respondents whose organizations spent less than $500,000 annual U.S. booked air volume were excluded from the results in an effort to capture managed travel programs. Though similar to last year's methodology, this is a marked change from prior years.

Air program size distribution among the 186 respondents included in the final results was as follows: $500,000 to $1.9 million, 38 percent; $2 million to $11.9 million, 32 percent; $12 million or more, 30 percent.

The domestic survey contained a list of the 12 largest domestic airlines as identified by the U.S. Department of Transportation, excluding regional affiliates of major carriers. Airlines that elicited answers from less than 35 percent of the survey base were excluded from this report. Though their merger closed last year, Delta Air Lines and Northwest Airlines were treated as two carriers in this year's survey since they continue to fly under separate operating certificates. ■