

TRAVEL | Industry still far from dying

Agencies weather airlines' struggles

The companies say their personalized service can help them stay afloat during troubled times.

By ROBERT COLE
The Kansas City Star

The recent struggles in the airline industry haven't made daily operations any easier for area travel agents.

Airlines frequently overbook flights and cancel others at short notice. Whenever there's a blip in service due to mechanical delays or weather, there's rarely any excess capacity to rebook passengers onto other flights.

With so much of an agency's annual revenue typically driven by airline transactions, air travel is a subject that's taken very seriously, said Brent Blake, co-president of **All About Travel inc.** in Mission.

Travel agency executives say, however, that they haven't given in to skyrocketing ticket prices and an increasing number of ticket restrictions being imposed on travelers by airlines.

Several of Kansas City's largest agencies increased their revenue volume last year, and many travelers are going ahead with trips they had already

planned for 2008. Sales volume at **BCD Travel** in Kansas City increased to \$1.7 billion in 2007, up from \$1.6 billion in the previous year. The total includes BCD's online fulfillment services, in addition to its bookings for local clients.

Volume at **All About Travel** grew to nearly \$95 million, compared with about \$81 million in 2006. About 85 percent of the agency's revenue comes from travel management services for corporate clients, Blake said.

The totals for the remainder of this year and for 2009 may have different results, particularly if corporations scale back their budgets for meetings, conventions and incentive events.

Some corporate clients of **BCD Travel** are cutting back on travel in North America because of rising fuel costs, said Rodney Plattner, vice president of operations. But this is being offset by companies expanding their travel into overseas markets, he said.

Dealing with airline woes is an opportunity for many agency owners to ratchet up their level of personalized service, a key industry trait.

KC STARS | Travel agencies

Ranked by 2007 gross revenue

	Company Address Phone Internet	Gross revenue 2007 2006	Air ticket revenue 2007 2006	Specialty services (partial)	Business Breakdown Corporate Leisure Other	Top officer(s)
1.	BCD Travel 10150 N. Ambassador Drive Kansas City, MO 64153 816-980-3000 www.bcdtravel.com	\$1,700,000,000* \$1,600,000,000*	\$1,300,000,000 \$1,200,000,000	Simplifying and streamlining the business of travel	C-100%	Rodney Plattner, vice president of operations
2.	Travel and Transport Inc. 10220 N. Ambassador Drive Kansas City, MO 64153 816-980-9957 www.tandt.com	\$173,000,000 \$157,000,000	N/A N/A	Business travel management, global, vacations, meetings, group and incentives, credit card fulfillment	C-90% L-5% O-5% (groups, meetings, incentives)	William Tech, president and CEO
3.	Short's Travel Management 7815 Floyd St. Overland Park, KS 66204 913-677-7771 www.shortstravel.com	\$128,400,000 \$131,900,000	\$74,800,000 \$76,900,000	On-site corporate travel departments, incentive travel, corporate meetings, events, leisure travel	C-75% L-2% O-23% (groups)	Scott White, John Johnson, executive vice presidents <i>SR EX UP SUSAN RICE</i>
4.	All About Travel Inc. 5331 Johnson Drive Mission, KS 66205 913-671-7700 www.aatusa.com	\$94,390,580 \$80,977,000	\$52,292,382 \$48,281,429	Corporate travel management, corporate meeting planning, vacation planning	C-75% L-25%	Gary Davis, Brent Blake, co-presidents
5.	Bishop-McCann LLC 1701 Walnut St. Kansas City, MO 64108 816-474-3555 www.bishopmccann.com	\$33,200,000 \$25,600,000	\$3,800,000 \$2,800,000	Meetings and event planning, incentive travel	C-100%	Dan Nilson, president
6.	WingGate Travel 3645 College Blvd. Overland Park, KS 66210 913-451-9200 www.winggatetravel.com	\$23,945,600 \$19,000,000	\$22,500,000 \$18,900,000	Full-service travel agency	C-50% L-10% O-40%	Young Sexton, president
7.	AAA Travel Agency 3245 Broadway Kansas City, MO 64111 816-931-5252 www.aaa.com	\$17,600,000 \$12,482,000	\$3,324,000 \$3,980,000	Leisure travel, corporate travel, group travel, auto travel	C-25% L-75%	Pam Bollin, Denise Thomas, area managers
8.	Shelton Travel Service Inc. 4800 Bellevue Ave. Kansas City, MO 64112 816-753-4888 www.sheltontravel.com	\$8,600,000 \$8,600,000	\$2,100,000 \$2,100,000	Honeymoons, luxury travel, African safaris, corporate travel discounts	C-40% L-60%	Mark Ebbitts, president

SEE AGENCIES | D19

KC STARS | Travel agencies

Ranked by 2007 gross revenue

9.	Veterans Travel Service Inc. 406 W. 34th St., #106 Kansas City, MO 64111 816-531-5850 www.vtstvl.com	\$5,600,325 \$5,717,784	\$5,044,108 \$5,225,924	Corporate travel, cruises, vacation travel groups, experienced agents	C-50% L-35% O-15% (groups)	Valerie Cooper, president
10.	Great Southern Travel 300 S.W. Ward Road Lee's Summit, MO 64081 816-525-3377 www.greatsoutherntravel.com	\$5,000,000** \$5,000,000**	\$1,000,000 \$1,000,000	Corporate, leisure and group travel	C-50% L-50%	Kris Conley, managing director
11.	Burke Travel Inc. 719 State Ave. Kansas City, KS 66117 913-621-1306 www.burketravel.com	\$4,600,000 \$4,800,000	N/A N/A	Full-service travel agency	C-40% L-60%	John Burke, president, Robert Burke, vice president
12.	Great Getaways 4800 College Blvd., Suite 103 Leawood, KS 66211 913-338-2244 www.greatgetaways.travel	\$4,200,000 \$3,628,708	\$321,667 \$323,263	Upscale vacations, cruises, golf, safaris, space travel	L-100%	Barbara King, Michael King, co-presidents
13.	All Purpose Travel 6102 N.W. Barry Road Kansas City, MO 64154 816-741-9080 www.allpurposestravel.com	\$2,200,000 \$2,000,000	\$456,000 \$400,000	Vacation packages, escorted European travel, family, group	C-20% L-80%	Kathleen Smith, president
14.	The Travel Store 2400 S. Lee's Summit Road Independence, MO 64055 816-254-4200 www.tvlstore.com	\$1,990,200 \$1,825,000	\$465,320 \$522,185	Cruises, leisure, honeymoons, reunions, incentive travel	C-22% L-78%	Becca Roberts, president Ray Roberts, vice president
15.	Travel Concepts Inc. 9324 Rosner Drive, Suite A Lenexa, KS 66219 913-888-1671 www.travelconceptskc.com	\$1,800,000 \$1,700,000	\$512,000 \$434,000	Honeymoons and destination weddings, incentives, vacations	C-30% L-70%	Denise Canon, president and CEO
16.	Deidre's Travel Service Inc. 7443 Broadway Kansas City, MO 64114 816-444-0404 www.deidrestravel.com	\$1,600,000 \$1,500,000	\$732,000 \$728,000	Cruises, tours, corporate travel, group travel	C-30% L-50% O-20% (groups)	Deidre Langseth, president
17.	Wilson Travel and Cruises 4901 Main St., Suite 100 Kansas City, MO 64112 816-531-2000 wilsontravelandcruises.com	\$1,600,000 \$1,200,000	\$680,000 \$555,000	Groups, tours, cruises, resorts	C-20% L-70% O-10%	Dave Wilson, president
18.	Cruise Connection LLC 7932 N. Oak Trafficway, Suite 210 Kansas City, MO 64118 816-420-8688 www.cruiseconnectionllc.com	\$1,500,000 \$1,400,000	\$0 \$0	Cruises, resort vacations	L-100%	Susan Perkins, Susan Vanderkamp, partners
19.	All Points Travel Inc. 18675 E. 39th St., Suite O Independence, MO 64057 816-795-0606	\$750,000+ \$750,000+	N/A N/A	Full-service travel agency offering certified destination specialists	C-25% L-50% O-25% (groups, incentive travel)	Judith Dickmeyer, president Ron Dickmeyer, vice president

Information is based on questionnaires sent to area travel agencies. N/A indicates information that is not available. When tied, agencies are ranked alphabetically.

*BCD Travel's gross revenue and air ticket revenue includes its online fulfillment operations in addition to its traditional agency business.

**Great Southern Travel is headquartered in Springfield, Mo. and had agency-wide revenue of \$85 million in 2007.

Compiled by Robert Cole | rcole@kcstar.com

AGENCIES: Many depend on corporate clients

FROM D18
Travel Concepts Inc. in Lenexa posts an updated list of airline travel guidelines on its Web site, including items that can be randomly screened.

Denise Canon, president and CEO of Travel Concepts, said agents reconfirm a client's flight information 24 hours before departure. They also make sure

travel details are stored on the client's cell phone, she said.

"It's our job to check daily on changes that may affect our client's travel arrangements," Canon said. "It's an ease of mind for people when they're traveling."

Corporate clients typically put their business out for bid when changes happen in the

travel industry.

During a slow economy, creative suggestions about corporate travel policy often find home, Blake said.

"We take the approach that now is when we can really provide our value," he said.

To reach Robert Cole, call 816-234-4296 or send e-mail to rcole@kcstar.com.