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JULY 11, 2006 -- Short's Travel Management late last week announced it acquired Executive Travel in North Kansas City, Mo., for an undisclosed amount. David LeCompte, president and CEO of the Overland Park, Kan.-based travel management company, said to expect further acquisitions in the coming months.

"We haven't been on an acquisition growth strategy, but more organic growth," he said. "It seems recently there have been quite a lot of opportunities for acquisitions and we're actively exploring three right now that are in travel, but not necessarily on the corporate side. We'll pursue it, if the price is right."

LeCompte said Executive Travel appealed to him because the two firms have a similar corporate culture. "There are synergies," he said. "It aligns well with our business mix, which prior to the acquisition was 60 percent corporate, 20 percent meetings and incentives and 20 percent sports business. The idea popped up through someone that was representing them. We talked for several months and I liked the company's managerial style and I saw a lot of benefits to integrating the staff."

Executive Travel's percentage of online booking is higher than most of Short's clients, LeCompte said, adding that he looks forward to bringing Executive's success in that arena to his business.

The integration is expected to end in September, at which time Short's headquarters will relocate to new offices in Overland Park. A largely midwestern agency with offices in Indiana, Iowa and Missouri, Short's in 2004 also bought Blackhawk World Travel in Moline, Ill., and Passport Travel in Kansas City, Kan., in 2001. Scott White, president and owner of Executive Travel, will remain with the company and report to LeCompte.

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"We're determining his position as we speak," LeCompte said, who added that he and White have been friends for some time. "He will evolve into a senior role within the company." Leading the integration team is Austin Lorenzen, manager of special operations at Short's and a Six Sigma black belt.

Short's maintains a client roster that mainly consists of small to midmarket clients in the \$1 million to \$6 million range, although LeCompte said the company serves at least one very large client as well. As a participant in BTN's 2006 Annual Business Travel Survey (*BTN, May 29*), Short's Travel Management ranked 20th out of 35 participating corporate-owned agencies, with 132,183 in Airlines Reporting Corp. transactions.

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