

## BA backs business in ticket giveaway

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British Airways has announced the launch of a multi-million pound package of measures to help small and medium sized British businesses beat the recession and regain their rightful altitude.

BA ([http://www.britishairways.com/travel/about-british-airways/public/en\\_gb](http://www.britishairways.com/travel/about-british-airways/public/en_gb)) has teamed up with UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) and BritishAmerican Business (BAB) to offer 5,000 return flights ([http://www.britishairways.com/travel/flights-to-london/public/en\\_gb](http://www.britishairways.com/travel/flights-to-london/public/en_gb)) worth up to £15 million to help UK small and medium enterprises (SMEs) win new business abroad.

The airline (<http://www.britishairways.com/>) is also calling on other big businesses to throw their weight behind small British companies through a consortium to provide products, services or expertise that UKTI can offer as an additional package of help for SMEs, on top of the services already provided.

Willie Walsh, British Airways' chief executive, said: "Small and medium businesses are the backbone of the British economy and they are hurting badly. 120 of them close every week. We are working with UKTI and BAB to give flights ([http://www.britishairways.com/travel/home/public/en\\_gb](http://www.britishairways.com/travel/home/public/en_gb)) that will support British business as it tries to spearhead the UK's recovery. We live in a globalised economy so business opportunities don't always live on your doorstep. This initiative gives small businesses the chance to promote and sell their products overseas."

"We'd love to see other British businesses pulling together in order to help the UK out of the recession. We've put up the flights to allow the SMEs to travel to do business and we'd be delighted if other companies would join us by offering services and skills that will bring real value and benefit."

Minister for Trade and Investment Lord Davies of Abersoch, said: "This is a great initiative. Exporting companies are more competitive and resilient. Although the global slowdown has meant increased challenges for businesses, it has also created opportunities internationally for companies that want to expand into other markets.

"Small and medium-sized enterprises can find it hard to break into new markets on their own. It is critical we support them and UKTI's partnership with British Airways will help our customers to look to new horizons."

The initiative is designed to support UK SMEs relatively new to exporting or looking to expand into new markets with UKTI's help. Independent research about UKTI's customers found that more than half were experiencing increasing demand from abroad.

Peter Hunt, Managing Director of BritishAmerican Business, added: "Our organisation is dedicated to helping our member companies connect and build their international businesses, and we think that this initiative of British Airways will be of great help to our small and medium sized enterprises in developing their overseas businesses, primarily between Britain and the United States."

British Airways will also announce further plans to benefit British business and travellers throughout

the next six months as part of its campaign to get Britain moving again.

About British Airways:

British Airways is one of the world's leading scheduled international passenger airlines. Our principal place of business is Heathrow, one of the world's premier airport locations, which serves a large geographical area with comparatively high proportion of point-to-point business. Operating one of the most extensive international scheduled airline route networks, with our codeshare and franchise partners, we fly to more than 300 destinations worldwide. In 2007/08, we carried more than 33 million passengers. Our airline generates economic value by meeting the demand for business travel, by providing vital arteries for trade and investment, as well as providing leisure travel opportunities for individuals and families.

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