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Believe It Or Not - Frequent Flier Seats are Truly Available - New Research by IdeaWorks

Even during the peak travel season of summer, reward seats for a family of 4 were available in top markets more than 46% of the time.

May 29, 2008, Shorewood, Wisconsin. Consumer activists, frequent fliers, and even members of the U.S. Congress love to complain about the lack of reward seats offered by frequent flier programs. It seems almost everyone, to include a growing number of airline executives, believes there are too many miles chasing too few reward seats. Consumers have come to believe all the news is bad.

IdeaWorks offers clarity on this issue by creating the first-ever quantitative evaluation to answer the question, “How readily available are frequent flier reward seats?” The results from the research conducted by IdeaWorks suggest the airline industry has been unfairly criticized on the issue of reward travel. Contrary to popular opinion, the reward availability analysis indicates a reasonable supply of seats is available to frequent flier members.

From lowest to highest, here’s how the largest programs scored in the Airline Reward Availability Index:

Ranking	Frequent Flier Program	Index Score
1	American AAdvantage	100
2	United Mileage Plus	95
3	Continental OnePass	85
4	Alaska Mileage Plan	83
5	Northwest WorldPerks	83
6	Delta SkyMiles	81
7	US Airways Dividend Miles	76
*	Southwest Rapid Rewards	128

American AAdvantage was the program that offered best overall availability of mileage-based programs. These operate like bank accounts by allowing members to accumulate miles over time. For reward seats, AAdvantage essentially is the program upon which all others were measured. *However, Southwest Rapid Rewards offered more overall availability, but the fact it is a flight credit based program (in which unused credits and rewards do expire) suggested it be given special treatment apart from the mileage programs.

Airline Reward Availability

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IdeaWorks has created a first-ever 45-page report on the topic of reward seat availability. Booking data collected for the report is based upon more than 5,000 online booking queries made via airline websites during April and May 2008. 640 booking queries were made at each airline website to create a matrix of results based on these attributes: top 20 reward travel markets, family and couple travelers, summer and non summer travel dates, hub-based travelers, and travelers residing in smaller markets.

The following is a sampling of the information and results described in the **Airline Reward Availability Report by IdeaWorks**:

- The eight airlines in the report carried more than 26.5 million reward passengers during 2007; that's lower than the record number carried in 2002 of 27.9 million.
- Since 2000, reward travelers occupied approximately 3.4% of the seats flown by the eight airlines.
- Some routes carry an amazing quantity of free rewards such as American's DFW - Maui and LAX - Honolulu, on which reward travelers represented 30% of the seats sold.
- Continental OnePass and Southwest Rapid Rewards had the highest scores for offering more seats to a family of 4 travelers during the summer peak season.
- American AAdvantage, Alaska Mileage Plan, United Mileage Plus, and Southwest Rapid Rewards had the highest scores for reward availability for a couple traveling on non summer dates; reward seats on these airlines were found to be available 96% or more of the time.

The report offers the following additional features:

- 14 pages of research analysis and commentary to include the growth of mileage liability and which programs offer the most reward flight options.
- Airline rankings for these travel categories: 1) Family Summer Reward Travel, 2) Top Reward Airport Pairs, 3) Smaller Market Travel, and 4) Non Summer Reward Travel.
- Complete statistical analysis for each of the eight airlines.
- Top 25 reward markets and the percentage of seats provided for free travel.
- Eight years historical trend reporting on reward activity and airline seat capacity.
- Matrix displaying the results of the 640 booking queries made at each website.

The Airline Reward Availability Report by IdeaWorks may be ordered direct from IdeaWorks at an early bird price of US\$1,975 per copy for orders received by July 10, 2008. The regular price (for orders starting on July 11) is US\$2,475. The report will be available for online delivery June 6, 2008.

Please visit **IdeaWorksCompany.com** to order the report and for more information.

About IdeaWorks: IdeaWorks was founded in 1996 as a consulting organization building brands through innovation in product, partnership and marketing and, building profits through financial improvement and restructuring. Its international client list includes the hotel, airline, marine, railroad, consumer products and health care sectors. IdeaWorks specializes in ancillary revenue improvement, brand development, customer research, competitive analysis, creating partner-marketing strategies, cost reduction programs and business restructuring.