



## **PRESS RELEASE** **19 September 2008**

### **Travel Counsellors sees jump in bookings following XL collapse**

Travel Counsellors has seen its UK sales jump by 11% in the seven days following the XL collapse, compared to the week before. Total sales are also 12% up on last year's figures for the period.

Instead of discouraging customers from booking travel arrangements, the XL collapse seems to have led to customers choosing to book with an agent where they know that their money is financially protected.

In the UK there were 2,240 customer bookings for the week since the XL collapse (12-18 September) compared to 2,054 for the seven days before (5-11 September). Travel Counsellors' total UK sales for the week since the collapse totalled £4.1 million compared to £3.7 million for the previous week.

Many customers who had booked directly with XL have now re-arranged their travel through Travel Counsellors having seen how well the company has responded to the crisis. Prior to the XL news breaking, Travel Counsellors had already got to work running reports of the customers who would be affected so that it could immediately find alternative arrangements for them should the need arise.

Newcastle based Travel Counsellor Jenn Leggett is just one of dozens of the company's agents who have picked up new bookings as a result of the XL collapse. Says Jenn: "I took 67 calls from people wanting help last Friday, it was unbelievable. I've now got at least 20 enquiries from customers who had booked directly and needed help. I've rebooked a group of five ladies who were going to Palma for a 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party next month – they were absolutely delighted I could help them so quickly, and of course they have the reassurance now of knowing their new booking with me is financially protected through the Travel Counsellors Trust."

Perth based Travel Counsellor Val Ramsay has secured bookings worth over £50,000 in the past week from XL affected clients. Says Val: "Our Trust is really coming to the fore now and not before time. It's unbelievable how many people are booking with me now because they know about the financial protection we can offer to our customers. The feedback about our service has been phenomenal."

Travel Counsellors is one of the few travel companies in the industry to operate a financial trust, a unique financial guarantee that covers absolutely everything the customer books via their Travel Counsellor including hotels, low cost airlines, scheduled flights and car rental.

It means its customers can be sure when they hear news about a travel failure, such as that of XL, that they will not have lost their money for their flights, which is proving extremely reassuring in the current economic climate.

The Trust is more comprehensive in scope than the ATOL protection offered by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) because it covers all kinds of supplier failures and not just travel arrangements including flights. In 2006 ABTA removed the financial protection it offered to customers through its travel agents bonding scheme.

Travel Counsellors has over £21 million of customer money held in Trust on behalf of its customers, providing a financial guarantee that very few other travel agencies can match.

Travel Counsellors chairman David Speakman said: "In the current economic climate the last thing anyone wants to do is risk losing their well earned holiday through no fault of their own. Our Trust provides a unique level of financial reassurance against supplier failure that is easy for customers to understand. There is no doubt that following the XL collapse, travellers will be a lot more wary about how and where they book their travel and we will see more customers choosing to book through their local Travel Counsellor."

To find your local Travel Counsellor visit [www.travelcounsellors.co.uk](http://www.travelcounsellors.co.uk), or alternatively call direct on **0800 074 7800**.



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**About Travel Counsellors:** Travel Counsellors is the world's largest home based travel company, operating in eight countries and with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2007) of £212 million, a 21% increase year on year. Founded in 1994 it currently has over 900 travel consultants who work from home with the support of over 200 head office staff. The company operates in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, South Africa, Australia, the US and Canada. In the UK Travel Counsellors was the winner of the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2003-2008, the technology category of the 2005 CBI Growing Business Awards and was voted Travel Agent of the Year by readers of the Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited in 2006 & 2007.

**Case studies of customers affected by XL who are now choosing to book with Travel Counsellors because of its Trust Fund are available. Please call the Travel Counsellors press office for more details**

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