

5.2%

of employment in Europe is created by tourism

SOURCES: EU/CITY & GUILDS



84%

of British business employers view vocationally trained staff as vital to the success of their business

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Creating opportunity

FACE TO FACE British Airways brings businesses together

In July 2009, BA launched its Face to Face programme, aimed at driving forward small and medium-sized businesses by focusing on face to face connections. The airline worked with the *Harvard Business Review* on a poll of business executives, 95 per cent of whom believe face to face meetings are the key to success in building long-term relationships and 89 per cent of whom agree that such meetings are essential for "sealing the deal".

BA committed to this idea and provided more than 600

businesses with free flights in autumn 2009. With a single meeting, some entrepreneurs were able to secure foreign distribution and make new partners, which might not otherwise have happened.

A few months later, BA announced the Business Opportunity Grants campaign, offering 100 US companies free business class flights, products and services. Companies were hand picked, primarily based on how a year's worth of business travel would positively impact on their growth and ability to

meet objectives for 2010.

One such winner, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) was founded by doctors and former professional football players in 2002. GRS trains African footballers, coaches, teachers and peer educators in the world's most HIV-affected countries to teach HIV prevention and life skills to young people.

"Thanks to the BA Face to Face programme, Grassroot Soccer was able to attend the initial meeting in Boston with global philanthropist Bobby Sager, who supported GRS by providing 10,000 indestructible soccer balls to GRS programmes across Africa," says Nik Haigh, director of Grassroot Soccer. "As part of the grant, BA shipped the indestructible 'Hope Balls' to Africa. The costs saved enabled GRS to provide many more children with the balls and the education to live healthier and happier lives."

Spreading the word

Left: a Grassroot Soccer mentor passes on life skills. Right: Alan Bain, HTT president, shown with Carloway Mill manager Ann MacCallum, is expanding his company into new markets

Harris Tweed Textiles (HTT), another grant winner, is an international distributor of high quality Harris Tweed and other hand-woven tweeds. This year it will introduce an expanded product line, including men's and women's fashions, interior furnishings and accessories, to new markets including China, India, Japan and Russia. "I've seen first-hand the success of what a face to face meeting does for business," says Alan Bain, HTT president. "I look forward to promoting our expanded product line in new markets throughout India and Asia thanks to British Airways. Being a grant winner will allow us to attend trade shows and attend meetings, which we normally wouldn't have been able to do." ●

“Face to face meetings are the key to building long-term relationships”



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