



CASE STUDY



Best Flights

Leading Travel Company Reduces
Online Booking Abandonment with
VeriSign® Extended Validation SSL Certificates



Best Flights



SOLUTION SUMMARY

Best Flights deployed VeriSign® Extended Validation SSL Certificates to stay ahead of competition and build consumer confidence when booking travel online. This leading Australian travel company wanted to provide as much visual assurance to customers as possible that their travel bookings are protected at all times from online threats. Best Flights has experienced a reduced rate of booking abandonment and a noticeable drop in customer concerns relating to security issues since deployment.*

Industry

- Travel Services

Key Challenges

- Driving online sales and keeping ahead of the competition with new online services.
- Finding the best way to build consumer confidence online and reduce booking abandonment rates.

Solution

- VeriSign® Extended Validation SSL Certificates

Results

- Customer concerns relating to online security issues are now minimal.
- The abandonment rate at booking stage is now very low.

The competitive nature of the travel industry is forcing travel companies to constantly find new ways to stay ahead of their competition in order to attract and maintain customers. Improving online services and maintaining consumer confidence is always top of mind.

As one of the top ten travel agencies in Australia, Best Flights is no exception. Faced with customers abandoning online bookings due to a lack of available information about its online security, as well as a need to update its range of services online, the Perth based company revamped its travel booking Web site and implemented proactive security measures from VeriSign.

+ Online Sales Taking Off

Operating since 2001, Best Flights is fast becoming known as one of the most innovative and proactive retail travel companies in Australia and a major supplier of discounted airfares. It offers a unique international booking engine enabling customers to book a trip from any country to any country, not just from Australia. It also owns and operates the Web sites for Best Coach Tours, Best Cruises and Best Adventures.

Best Flights' core Web site averages over 3.5 million hits every month with 1 million unique users. Online bookings currently account for 50 percent of overall sales, with telephone sales making up the other half. According to Best Flights' IT Manager Matt Lynch, online sales have really taken off over the past two years and it hopes to continue to drive more customers to book trips online. Not only does the convenience of buying online save people from having to wait around at a travel agency to book a trip, but customers can also find all the information they need at their fingertips.

While customers' confidential information is used primarily by Best Flights for processing and completing their travel bookings and associated purchases, it may also be used by relevant third parties such as travel wholesalers, airlines, hotels and car rental companies. For this reason, it is crucial that Best Flights not only has the best security available for its customers, but that it also educates customers on the stringent security practices in place to maintain their trust and confidence when booking online. The problem was that Best Flights' old Web site lacked essential information about its online security policies and procedures to reassure them.

+ Early Adoption Gives Competitive Advantage

To maintain its position as a leading travel provider in Australia, Best Flights undertook a revamp of its online booking portal in 2006, adding hotel bookings, car hire and travel insurance into the one package with its other travel services. According to Mr Lynch however, "There was no point spending all this time and energy designing a fabulous Web site if we were going to lose customers at the secure payments page because they don't feel confident that we will protect their personal information online, particularly their financial security."

The previous Best Flights booking portal used an SGC-enabled Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) Certificate, which allowed each site visitor to connect at the strongest level of encryption available to them to prevent the loss, misuse or alteration of their information

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"We have had a 'sit back and relax' attitude since we implemented VeriSign EV SSL Certificates, with the only implementation requirements coming from the renewal process. We are comfortable that it is doing its job and presenting our business with the best secure face to our customers."

Matt Lynch,
IT Manager,
Best Flights

under Best Flight's control. However, with its revamped travel booking portal, Best Flights wanted to provide as much visual recognition to customers that their confidential data was protected at all times. It was aware of a new form of SSL Certificate called Extended Validation (EV) SSL, which contains a number of user interface enhancements in the latest high security browsers aimed at making the identification of a secure and authenticated site much simpler to the end user. Best Flights reviewed a number of different offerings in the market and discussed its options with reputable industry professionals to help make an informed decision.

"As an IT department we were aware of the marketing push the new visual features EV SSL Certificates offered and felt that it reassured customers about the protection in place in a more visually obvious manner," said Mr Lynch. "We definitely saw a competitive advantage for us and wanted to be seen as early adopters before our competition got onto it. It felt right to implement now rather than wait to see how the uptake in implementation went."

+ Green Bar Provides Immediate Assurance

At the time Best Flights went live with its revamped booking portal in August 2006, VeriSign EV SSL Certificates were not yet available in the market. But as soon as the renewal period for its previous SSL Certificate came around a year later, Best Flights took the opportunity to upgrade in August 2007. VeriSign EV SSL Certificates were deployed as part of the secure booking process for its online booking engine, securing confidential customer data and credit card transaction processing, as well as administrative access functions in the backend.

Not only do VeriSign EV SSL Certificates offer the strongest encryption advantage that SSL Certificates from VeriSign have always offered Best Flights customers before, but the main difference is that they now give immediate visual assurance to customers that they are in fact visiting an authentic Best Flights web site and that their information will be handled in a secure fashion. VeriSign EV SSL Certificates enable certain high-security browsers to turn the address bar an eye-catching green colour. Other visual cues include a padlock icon next to the Internet address and a new field that informs who the Web site owner is, as well as who the security provider who issued the SSL Certificate is (such as VeriSign).

Whilst the new visual cues only apply to browsers that currently support VeriSign EV SSL Certificates, such as Internet Explorer 7 and the latest releases of Firefox and Opera, those using older browsers or operating systems will still benefit from the strongest level of encryption available to them. The gold padlock icon will still show that the transaction is encrypted and the organisation has been authenticated according to the most rigorous industry standard.

"I have used VeriSign's SSL Certificates on several other Web sites in the past and consider VeriSign to be the industry leader—our customers will trust a well known brand rather than some dodgy mum-and-pop operation that nobody has ever heard of," said Mr Lynch.

As the most respected and trusted SSL authority on the Internet, VeriSign is the EV SSL Certificate provider of choice for more than 5,000 Internet domains, representing greater than 75 percent of the entire EV SSL Certificate market worldwide.¹ In fact, over 95 percent of the Fortune 500 and the world's 40 largest banks, secure their sites with SSL Certificates sold by VeriSign.² These organisations trust VeriSign because of its encryption technology and rigorous business authentication practices.



In addition to the immediate visual assurance that VeriSign EV SSL Certificates now give its customers, Best Flights also embarked on a security awareness program to educate customers about its security online. It posted information on its Web site about its security practices, as well as promoted it through RSS feeds and via its newsletter that was received by 390,000 customers. Best Flights now also displays the logos of its security partners and payment gateway providers to further reinforce its security message and provide further visual awareness to customers.

+ Reduced Booking Abandonment and Security Concerns

According to Mr Lynch, Best Flights' IT team is very comfortable with the visual awareness that VeriSign EV SSL Certificates can help give its customers and has recognised some very promising results. "There has been a noticeable reduction in customer feedback concerns relating to security issues that used to be present for online enquiries—these are now non-existent. Our abandonment rate at booking stage is very low and we certainly don't attribute any loss to our security systems now."

Due to its success, Best Flights now highly recommends VeriSign EV SSL Certificates for all of its new acquisitions and affiliate programs. Best Flights runs an affiliate network offering non-travel related businesses the opportunity to leverage its expertise and backend fulfillment. This is done by either a co-branding arrangement or as an extension of another company's Web site. It also plans on adding additional VeriSign EV SSL Certificates to its new domains as it continues to grow.

"We have had a 'sit back and relax' attitude since we implemented VeriSign EV SSL Certificates, with the only implementation requirements coming from the renewal process. We are comfortable that it is doing its job and presenting our business with the best secure face to our customers," said Mr Lynch.

+ About VeriSign

VeriSign is the trusted provider of Internet infrastructure services for the digital world. Billions of times each day, companies and consumers rely on our Internet infrastructure to communicate and conduct commerce with confidence.

Visit us at www.Verisign.com.hk for more information.

¹ *Netcraft Survey, Aug, 2008*

² *Includes VeriSign's subsidiaries, affiliates and resellers*