

# CallUma posts rise in agency business

**Lee Hayhurst**

**CALLUMA**, which operates an online and text messaging services for travellers, has reported a rise in business through trade partners, as agents seek to improve their service in the downturn.

The firm, which entered the travel sector last year having been set up as a translation service for the insurance industry and UK ex-pat community, said more than 150 people a day were signing up to use the service.

Key to this growth has been a co-branded deal with The Co-operative Travel Group, with customers who spend at least £400 on a holiday receiving the service for free.

Last week, CallUma launched an out-of-hours support service for the trade that will allow companies to offer round-the-clock customer service without having to increase staff hours.

It is hoped that this will particularly appeal to smaller companies taking on principal status by packaging up their own trips.

CallUma chief executive Tony Partridge said: "In the current

climate, being able to offer customers this round-the-clock reassurance is key.

"Customers are placing more demands than ever on their holiday providers, whether it's a small independent travel agent or a worldwide tour operator."

As well as its "Just text HELP" service, which offers a 24-hour interpretation service to answer all manner of questions, CallUma also has a "Tag 'n' Traq" luggage-label system. This is designed to help reunite lost bags with their owners without having to have their personal details on them.

CallUma has about 700 people on call around the world ready to answer texted questions and provide translations, supervised from its base in Sudbury.

Partridge said: "What we saw when XL Airways collapsed was that travel companies need to be interactive with customers, rather than having 15,000 customers calling to ask 'what do I do?'."

CallUma also has deals in place with Expedia and lastminute.com and provides the destination information for easyJet Text.

