



On completion of the feasibility study, Mango Aviation Partners Ltd were contracted to arrange the start-up of the airline. To ensure a fast start-up, and to bring the requisite low fares expertise (unavailable in Saudi Arabia) to bear, Mango were asked to provide interim management covering a number of functions. Unlike alternative consulting firms, Mango's team draws on professionals who have held significant positions in airlines around the world. The team working on the launch of Sama between them have worked for Go, easyJet, Air Asia, Virgin Nigeria, Jazeera Airways, Ryanair, and Jetstar Asia.

The manpower strategy underway is to steadily replace experienced interim Mango low fares airline specialists with high quality Saudi permanent staff, drawn from all industry sectors. This ensures that the airline does not have to poach staff from Saudi Arabian Airlines, as well as ensuring best practice from other Saudi industries is joined with the low fares expertise provided by Mango.

In January 2006, after a detailed consumer research and development process, the airline's brand name, Sama was selected and announced to the world. Selection of the name Sama was consistent with one of the core objectives of the investors - to establish an airline with a strong Saudi identity. Importing a brand name from elsewhere or choosing an English or other foreign language name would not have the

same relevance and meaning in the Saudi market, established through extensive consumer research.

Sama means "to soar, or to rise, to fly high amid the skies" though its common usage also references the sky.

In May 2006, the Saudi Arabian General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) invited interested parties to apply for national air carrier licenses that would be issued in 2006 as part of its Air Transport Liberalisation Initiative.

The initiative was structured to deliver a gradual phasing-in of competition across the Saudi Arabian airline sector. In the first phase, GACA has outlined a process which culminated in the issuing of two national scheduled carrier licenses. Alongside the new licence issuance, Saudi Arabian Airlines is being privatised as part of which a number of business units deemed non-core are being offered for sale.

In December 2007 the licences were allocated to Sama and NAS, bringing with it the award of a 'home' base airport (either Riyadh or Dammam), and the requirement to serve a number of operator-allocated Public Service Obligation (PSO) routes from that home base. Riyadh was awarded to NAS, whilst Sama were awarded Dammam.

