

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Wheels Up acquired for \$2.1B

February 1, 2021



Wheels Up connects flyers to private aircraft. Image credit: Wheels Up

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Private aviation firm **Wheels Up** has agreed to become a publicly traded company through a merger with special purpose acquisition company **Aspirational Consumer Lifestyle Corp.**

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With this transaction, Wheels Up aims to accelerate marketplace growth and adoption, invest in adjacent lifestyle and consumer services to complement the platform and drive global expansion. Upon close, Wheels Up will become the first private aviation platform to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

"We are excited about crossing this milestone and our new partnership with Aspirational," said Kenny Dichter, founder and CEO of Wheels Up, in a statement. "We believe this will allow us to actualize our founding goal of democratizing private aviation, through our unique membership model, suite of products and benefits, and by bringing the shared economy to private aviation through our Wheels Up app.

"We are looking forward to joining forces with the Aspirational team as we continue to accelerate our global growth and expansion."

Transaction details

On Feb. 1, Aspirational announced the agreement to merge with Wheels up through a combination of stock and cash financing, valuing the aviation company at an enterprise value of approximately \$2.1 billion.

The transaction is expected to deliver up to \$790 million of gross proceeds to the combined company, including the contribution of up to \$240 million of cash held in Aspirational's trust account from its initial public offering in September 2020.



Headquartered in New York, Wheels Up has approximately 11,000 active users. Image credit: Wheels Up

The merger is also supported by a \$550 million private investment in public equity (PIPE) at \$10 per share, including commitments from T. Rowe Price, Fidelity, Franklin Advisors, Durable Capital, HG Vora Capital Management, Third Point, Luxor Capital and Monashee. Upon closing the transaction, Wheels Up expects to have up to \$750 million in cash on its balance sheet to fund operations and support new and existing business initiatives.

Wheels Up's current management team will continue to lead the company. Aspirational's chairman and CEO Ravi Thakran will join the combined company's board of directors upon completion of the transaction.

The transaction is expected to close in the second quarter of 2021, and is subject to approval by Aspirational and Wheels Up's respective shareholders and other customary closing conditions, including any applicable regulatory approvals.

Last fall, Wheels Up named Stephanie Chung as its first chief growth officer, as the company looks to build and diversify its customer base.

Ms. Chung comes to Wheels Up after serving two years as president at JetSuite. The appointment comes at time when private aviation is enjoying renewed interest and appeal among affluents as a result of the coronavirus pandemic ([see story](#)).

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