

Business travel in 2021 - is it possible to plan ahead?

According to a survey conducted by Corporate Traveller, words like 'challenging, uncertain, difficult, quiet and non-existent' are just some of the terms used by travel procurement managers to describe the travel industry following the Covid-19 outbreak.

"As the year slowly comes to a close, decision-makers are faced with the gargantuan task of attempting to budget and plan for business travel in 2021. The task is daunting not only because finances are tight, but also because nobody has any inkling regarding what the world is going to look like in six to 12 months from now," says general manager, Oz Desai.



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Desai suggests that there are a few considerations for travel teams to keep in mind when planning their corporate travels for 2021:

Look back

"You cannot possibly look to the future if you have little idea of what has occurred in the past. Review corporate travel spend over the course of the last two to three years, watching out for trends that could provide an indication of what to expect next year," says Desai.

Find the middle ground between your travel spend in 2020 and your corporation's 'normal' spend and use that as a good general estimation for 2021.

Find smart ways to save

Countless corporations will be hunting for opportunities to cut costs, and many will decide to reduce the funds that are usually reserved for backing business travel. Instead of reducing business travel, however, companies should be on the look-out for a reliable TMC to aid them in keeping travel-related expenses to a minimum.

"There are many ways TMCs can save businesses money. Firstly, they can assist in improving travel policies in light of

current times. They can also negotiate rates and benefits with travel suppliers," says Desai. "Most importantly, TMCs know which fares and rate to book that will allow clients to cancel or alter bookings without incurring too many penalties along the way."

Update your travel policy

"The travel landscape is constantly evolving, and the pace has only increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. To ensure your travellers' safety, meet your business' duty of care obligations and make your budget work harder, you need to make sure your travel programme keeps up. This could mean creating a temporary travel policy, updating your supplier agreements or implementing a travel risk management tool," explains Desai.

Based on data from Corporate Traveller's State of the Market Report, travel policy priorities are transforming. To get their policies Covid-ready, decision-makers need to be focusing on:

- **Health and hygiene:** Guidelines on Covid-conduct and what to do if travellers start to feel ill ahead of or during a trip.
- **Pre-trip approval:** Travel must be deemed essential and permissible before it can take place.
- **Business class:** Business class will only be accessible by employees of certain levels.
- **Journey changes:** Information on changes and protocols at airports, accommodation check-in, etc.
- **Preferred and Covid-safe suppliers:** A list of suppliers taking Covid-related safety seriously.

"As the world starts to consider what travel will look like, there is no better way to begin re-evaluating or improving your travel policy than understanding where you sit within the market, adds Desai.

Ask some difficult questions and make informed decisions

The implementation of a new travel programme presents the ideal opportunity to review the entire travel process: from travel policies and procedures to new technologies and even a new TMC. As your travel programme changes, it's important to consider a provider that offers a proactive and innovative approach to your changing travel management needs.

Desai explains that in today's world ever-changing world, your business needs to move quickly. This includes switching over to and getting set up with, a new travel management company.

Nobody knows what lies in store next year – but what remains evident is that corporate travel still has its place and that it will prove invaluable to the revival of many businesses both in the short- and long-term future.

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