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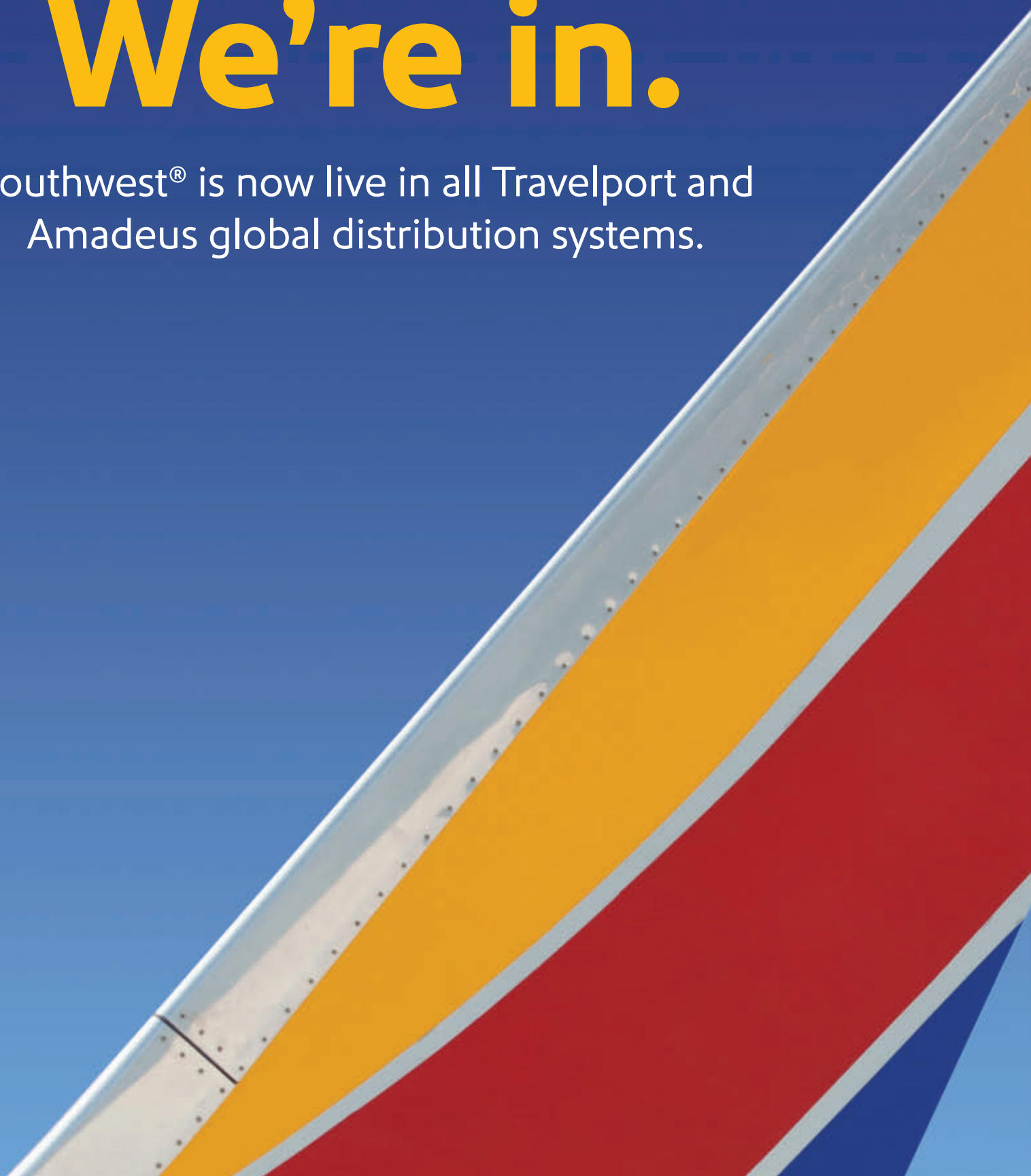
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BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS



INNOVATE 2020
Green-tech travel startup Thrust Carbon's Mark Corbett captures The BTN Group's Innovator of the Year award over nine other entrants.
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LODGING
Some hotel companies are expressing cautious optimism for improved business travel demand in 2021, but not everyone is confident.
PAGE 18



VOICES
Travel managers now should engage with budget owners to understand why people travel, argues Festive Road's Caroline Strachan.
PAGE 28

TOP STORY

HOW CORPORATE TRAVEL BUYERS RATE U.S. AIRLINES

Average of each airline's scores—on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)—across 13 categories

1. DELTA 4.59

2. AMERICAN 3.94

3. UNITED 3.91

4. SOUTHWEST 3.88

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

BTN'S 2020 AIRLINE SURVEY

Delta Leads, Others Up

For the 10th year in a row, travel buyers rated Delta Air Lines as the top carrier in BTN's Airline Survey, atop a tide of improved buyer satisfaction with airlines even as they faced a near total evaporation of corporate travel demand amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Delta earned a total score of 4.59 on a five-point scale and once again earned the highest score among its competitors in every criteria measured in the survey. BTN this year added three criteria specific to airlines' Covid-19 response, but the rest of the categories were consistent with last year's survey. Delta also improved its score year over year in all survey criteria.

Delta was not alone in its improvement. American Airlines and Southwest Airlines each improved across all comparable categories, and more than 60 percent of buyers indicated that their customer service had improved since last year.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 7

Looking for Bubble

Carriers Explore Routes Around Quarantine Requirements

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

As such experts as U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Anthony Fauci caution that a return to a pre-pandemic "normal" remains more than a year out, travel industry leaders are making progress on programs to jumpstart business travel in the interim.

Even as Covid-19 spread in recent weeks has been worsening in many corners of the globe, airlines have received encouraging news from various studies (see story, page 17) indicating a relatively low rate of Covid-19 transmission aboard aircraft with proper safety and sanitization procedures in place. As such, they see the disparate border restrictions and quarantine requirements around the world as the biggest obstacle to demand recovery.

"In terms of returning to something that even looks remotely like

a pre-pandemic travel level, we're going to need to have, in the short and medium term, a rapid-testing strategy that balances the public health considerations [and] economic recovery," JetBlue president Joanna Geraghty said in a recent earnings call. "[That] allows countries and states to reopen or relax and eliminate what we see as largely ineffective quarantines and other travel restrictions."

Making the Case for Testing

Rapid testing is becoming more readily available, but airlines also are finding a challenge in persuading some jurisdictions that testing is an acceptable alternative to quarantine. Emirates president Tim Clark, speaking at a recent CAPA Centre for Aviation virtual conference, said the carrier had put pre-flight

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Global Business Travel Association interim executive director Dave Hilfman discusses recovery and progress.

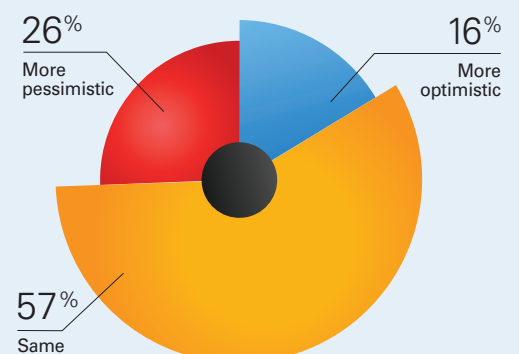
"I do believe that we've stabilized the organization and made significant progress in restoring relationships around the industry for GBTA."

6 | Data Hub

Little Optimism Among Travel Suppliers

Attitude toward travel industry recovery vs. one week prior

Source: Global Business Travel Association Oct. 12-17 survey of 330 supplier and travel management company members



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U.S. Carriers to End Measures Blocking Middle Seats

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

Southwest Airlines will end capacity controls that enable it to keep middle seats vacant on Dec. 1, though it is increasing flexibility for passengers who prefer not to be on full flights, the carrier announced last month. Meanwhile, Alaska Airlines will continue blocking middle seats for the rest of this year but is “mapping a framework” to end the policy in early 2021, executives said last month.

The move will leave Delta Air Lines as the only carrier among the four largest U.S. airlines with a policy of blocking middle seats. Delta CEO Ed Bastian last month said that policy likely would be lifted in the first half of 2021.

Only five major airlines in the world, including Southwest and Alaska, currently have such policies to block the middle seat, Southwest chairman and CEO Gary Kelly said.

The carrier, which does not assign seats, since the early days of the pandemic has been selling flights at a lower capacity so that middle seats are not filled except by groups traveling together who wish to use them. Kelly said that policy “bridged us from the early days of the pandemic, when we had little knowledge about the behavior of the virus, to now.” Citing recent studies that indicate Covid-19 transmission aboard aircraft is low, Southwest will begin selling flights to full capacity in December.

“The Department of Defense [study] is very compelling,” Kelly said during Southwest’s earnings call of a U.S. Transportation Command study released in October that indicated the risk of exposure to Covid-19 on aircraft is low for masked passengers. “They’re not biased—they wanted to make sure it was safe for them to move their troops around—and the conclusions were very compelling.”

Passengers who already have tickets booked for December and beyond will be given an option for a full refund if they are not comfortable with the new policy, Southwest president Tom Nealon said. In addition, Southwest will communicate with passengers booked on flights filled beyond 60 percent capacity and try to reaccommodate them if they wish, he said.

Alaska Airlines, meanwhile, has extended its middle-seat blocking policy through Jan. 6 but will begin to phase out the policy after that. Short-haul flights will be among the first to end the policy along with flights to Hawaii, where pre-flight Covid-19 testing “is already reinforcing traveler confidence,” according to Alaska president Ben Minicucci.

“We’ve got the next couple of months where we can educate even our own employees and educate customers that it is safe to fly as we slowly ease into the end of the year. Honestly, it’s safe to fly right now, but we’ve got some work to do, just getting the information out there.”

—ALASKA AIRLINES’
BEN MINICUCCI

Alaska has continued to reduce its daily cash burn, which was \$4 million in the third quarter, compared with \$5 million per day in the second quarter and \$13 million per day earlier in the pandemic. In order to reach a break-even point, Alaska will need to recover to about 60 percent of normal passenger levels, or about 70,000 to 80,000 passengers per day, Minicucci said. Blocking middle seats caps makes it impossible for flights to have load factors that reach those levels, EVP and CFO Shane Tackett said.

“We’ve got the next couple of months where we can educate even our own employees and educate customers that it is safe to fly as we slowly ease into the end of the year,” Minicucci said. “Honestly, it’s safe to fly right now, but we’ve got some work to do, just getting the information out there.”

Passenger revenue in the third quarter declined 74 percent year over year to \$572 million. The carrier has seen “a month by month steady uptick” in passengers and improving future bookings, and it is continuing to rebuild its network, chairman and CEO Brad Tilden said. Alaska’s network, which dropped from 1,300 daily flights to 350 “nearly overnight” at the onset of the pandemic, has grown back to 760 daily flights and soon will be increased to 840 daily flights, he said.

Demand to Hawaii already is showing improvement with the testing availability and removal of quarantine requirements for those who test negative, EVP and chief commercial officer Andrew Harrison said. Capacity to Hawaii in the third quarter was down 88 percent year over year, but the carrier will be down only half of that in the fourth quarter, he said.

Plans to end middle-seat blocking will be “calibrated to changing conditions,” Minicucci said. “Things like rising Covid cases or more restrictive state postures that could change our plans.”

Alaska Air Group reported a net loss of \$431 million for the third quarter, compared with a net income of \$322 million in the third quarter of 2019.

Southwest’s Q3

For the third quarter, Southwest’s passenger revenue declined 72.2 percent year over year to \$1.5 billion. Travel demand, which had stalled in July after two months of growth in May and June, due to a surge in Covid cases in July, began to show “modest improvements” again in August and September, according to Southwest. Those have continued into October, and Southwest projects operating revenue will be down between 65 percent and 70 percent year over year in October and down between 60 percent and 65 percent year over year in November.

Cash burn improved in the third quarter to \$16 million per day, compared with an average of \$23 million per day in the second quarter. Southwest forecasts that will decrease further to \$11 million per day in the fourth quarter, and breaking even will require operating revenues to reach between 60 percent and 70 percent of last year’s levels.

Southwest reported a net loss of \$1.2 billion for the third quarter, compared with a net income of \$659 million in the third quarter of 2019. ■



What's Next for GBTA?

The Global Business Travel Association has completed an organizational diagnostic with association consultancy MCI USA. The three-month process delivered recommendations to GBTA that included increasing its value proposition with supplier members, providing greater transparency to all members and stimulating greater diversity at the board level. Interim executive director Dave Hilfman, leading GBTA since former CEO Scott Solombrino in July departed amid controversy, spoke with BTN editorial director Elizabeth West about progress GBTA has made toward goals and about launching a new advocacy and education campaign called "Ready. Safe. Travel." These comments have been edited for length and clarity.

WHAT IS THE "READY. SAFE. TRAVEL." CAMPAIGN AIMING TO ACCOMPLISH, AND WHAT ARE ITS COMPONENTS?

It's a lot about education and advocacy. First, about the economic impact of travel worldwide. Many people don't fully appreciate what that is, including people in government positions. When you talk about the \$1.4 or \$1.5 trillion economic impact of travel worldwide, and the millions of jobs that are tied to it, people might start to look at the need to travel in a different light. Second, we want to get businesses back on the road, obviously in a safe manner. We want to marshal the information we have from government authorities, our own polling data and all these resources about how to get back to travel safely. Everyone understands we have to be safe, and we are highlighting new safety protocols from our great travel suppliers and all the enhancements they've made. That part is about giving people significantly more comfort and confidence to start to drive, and then fly and then stay at hotels. We've got to get that started. We are encouraged by what we've seen so far, but we have more to do.

HOW WILL YOU MEASURE RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN?

We'll look to a number of data and metrics. Not the least will be GBTA polling data, as to members' sentiment toward travel. Then, the actual results. We'll be looking to [travel] buyers and suppliers regarding increases in travel. Of course, we'll leverage social media and measure what kind of response we are getting and the number of views.

BEYOND THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF, WHAT IS GBTA FOCUSING ON AS THE BEST PATH TO BUSINESS TRAVEL RECOVERY IN THE SHORT TERM?

[Our biggest concerns are] some of the policies in place about quarantine and border closures. We have to find ways to solve those problems, beyond the most restrictive things that we've seen in place, and do them safely and responsibly. We've seen testing become so much more accurate and fast. With the reduction in cost, we think that kind of initiative, which has been talked about regularly now, would help open up the planet. In many countries today, [policies] have been so restrictive and [sometimes] inconsistent [that you] can't get to the level of confidence that travelers need.



GBTA's Dave Hilfman talks:

- GBTA's "Ready. Safe. Travel." campaign launch
- The results of GBTA's organizational assessment by MCI USA
- The most important thing he has achieved in his interim role
- Why now is the time for members to get involved

"Transparency is key to success in any organization, and particularly so in a membership association."

This is particularly true if you're looking at international, but also from a domestic perspective. The inconsistency by state [has been challenging]. We believe if there was enough public and private investment in testing, we could stimulate a very significant increase in travel here in the U.S. and around the world.

GBTA THIS SUMMER BROUGHT IN A CONSULTANT TO ASSESS ITS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. IS THAT ENGAGEMENT NOW COMPLETE?

Yes. MCI USA specializes in consulting for non-profit associations, like Deloitte, PwC, Accenture or some of those other great consultancies. The board felt, based on what had transpired this past year, it was time to get a fresh look at the organization, [with perspective] on our operations and best practices. From there we could move forward in a positive way. We finished that diagnostic in mid-October.

YOU WROTE A LETTER TO THE GBTA MEMBERSHIP ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS, WHICH SEEMED LIKE THE START OF A RESPONSE TO ONE RECOMMENDATION.

Transparency is key to success in any organization, and particularly so in a membership association. While [the report showed] we were great at marketing and the commercial side of the business, transparency was an area of communication where we didn't score as well, relative to the committees or board. We want to be better about communicating with our members, and that is now the focus of the GBTA staff, the board of directors and the leadership team.

HOW IS GBTA IS ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF DIVERSITY ON THE BOARD?

The association was aware and respectful of the unique strengths of our members in Canada, Europe, Latin America and Asia-Pacific, even if the [member] numbers [in those regions] aren't as large as they are in the U.S. It's been a recommendation over the years that we have better structure to represent these critical members. Knowing that, and seeing it validated in the MCI report, the chairs from GBTA Latin America, GBTA Canada and GBTA Europe will join the global board [as of Dec. 7, 2020] and have a seat at the table. We're thrilled about that and, more importantly, so are our members.

Also regarding the board, over the next nine months leading up to our convention in Orlando in July, 11 of 13 of the current board member seats have the potential to change out, either through elections or appointments. If people want to get in, get involved, whether on the board or committees, we need them to step up, show their interest and run.

YOUR INTERIM DIRECTORSHIP WILL WIND DOWN AT YEAR-END. HAVE YOU ACHIEVED YOUR GOALS?

I'm just one person, fervently working with an enormous number of great people. The members have been so supportive. The staff has been great, the board, all the chapters, advisory boards and committees ... they have all jumped in to make this a tremendous team effort. I do believe that we've stabilized the organization and made significant progress in restoring relationships around the industry for GBTA. We understand we don't exist unless we're doing a good job for our members. If I'm most proud of anything, it's that we've gotten focus back on them. ■

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BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS

CORPORATE TRAVEL INDEX CALCULATOR

BTN's free online tool customizes our Corporate Travel Index data for your travel program. Now includes quarterly updates and risk scores for each city.

Presented By: **BTNGROUP**

Summary | Hotel | Car | Meal | Risk

U.S. Index | Non U.S. Index | Reset Filters

Data Partners: ADVITO | DVI | geosure | PRIME NUMBERS

Search Cities: Select all, Akron, OH, Albany, NY, Albuquerque, NM, Allentown, PA, Anaheim, CA, Atlanta, GA

Hotel Tier: Luxury, Upper-Upscale, Upscale, Midscale, Economy

Car Rental Class: Full Size, Intermediate, Compact

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Select Quarter: 2018/Q4, 2019/Q1

All Cities Selected: Avg Risk Score **43** | Hotel **\$176.36** + Car Rental **\$46.97** + Meal **\$98.09** = Total Cost **\$321.41** | QoQ Change **2.99%**

City	Risk Score	Avg Hotel Cost Across Selected Tiers	Avg Car Rental Cost Across Selected Classes	Total Cost for Selected Meals	Total Daily Cost	QoQ Change
Akron, OH	46	\$140.39	\$43.21	\$86.53	\$270.13	-2.45%
Albany, NY	44	\$167.76	\$44.18	\$95.73	\$307.67	4.00%
Albuquerque, NM	37	\$127.51	\$42.48	\$86.53	\$256.52	-0.24%
Allentown, PA	34	\$145.94	\$42.54	\$89.66	\$278.14	2.58%
Anaheim, CA	31	\$215.59	\$45.91	\$103.21	\$364.71	2.36%
Atlanta, GA	55	\$198.26	\$46.96	\$106.37	\$350.98	7.69%
Austin, TX	40	\$233.58	\$43.30	\$102.12	\$379.00	6.64%
Bakersfield, CA	42	\$145.12	\$49.56	\$85.47	\$280.15	14.86%
Baltimore, MD	52	\$171.86	\$47.27	\$109.50	\$328.63	-0.21%
Baton Rouge, LA	50	\$141.03	\$59.98	\$90.91	\$291.92	3.79%
Biloxi, MS	54	\$126.20	\$55.23	\$87.73	\$269.16	14.56%
Birmingham, AL	56	\$154.79	\$40.75	\$95.78	\$291.32	-1.99%
Boston, MA	31	\$225.70	\$47.12	\$113.62	\$386.43	-18.89%
Buffalo, NY	44	\$167.01	\$51.87	\$85.87	\$304.69	12.52%

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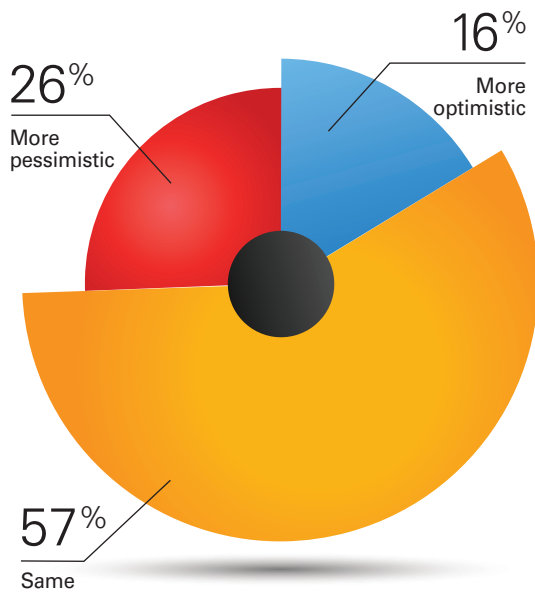


Industry Reassesses as Covid-19 Surges

The startling increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in the United States, Europe and some other parts of the world appears to be denting not only the pace of travel's recovery but also the attitudes toward it. Airlines Recovery Corp. sales figures show a reversal of positive trends, while travel suppliers' pessimism is on the rise, and British business owners don't appear eager to see employees take to the skies again. Meanwhile, Hertz detailed the effect of the pandemic on its on-airport rental volume.

LITTLE OPTIMISM AMONG TRAVEL SUPPLIERS

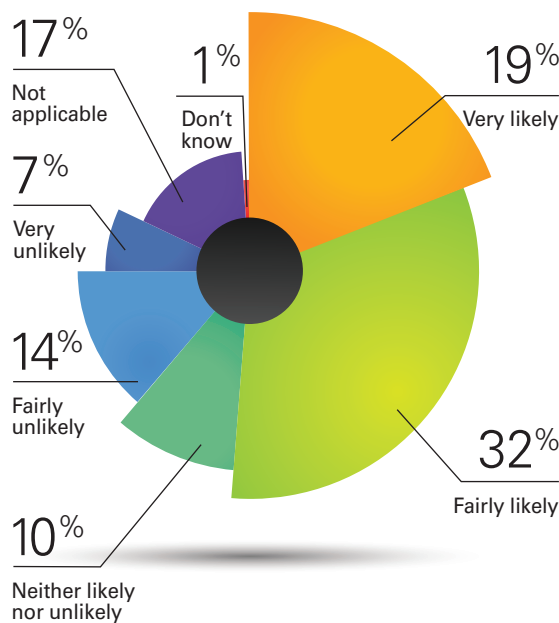
Attitude toward travel industry recovery vs. one week prior



Source: Global Business Travel Association Oct. 12-17 survey of 330 supplier and travel management company members

U.K. BUSINESS OWNERS BEARISH ON INT'L TRAVEL

Respondents who indicated it no longer will be necessary for staff to travel internationally for their work due to videoconferencing

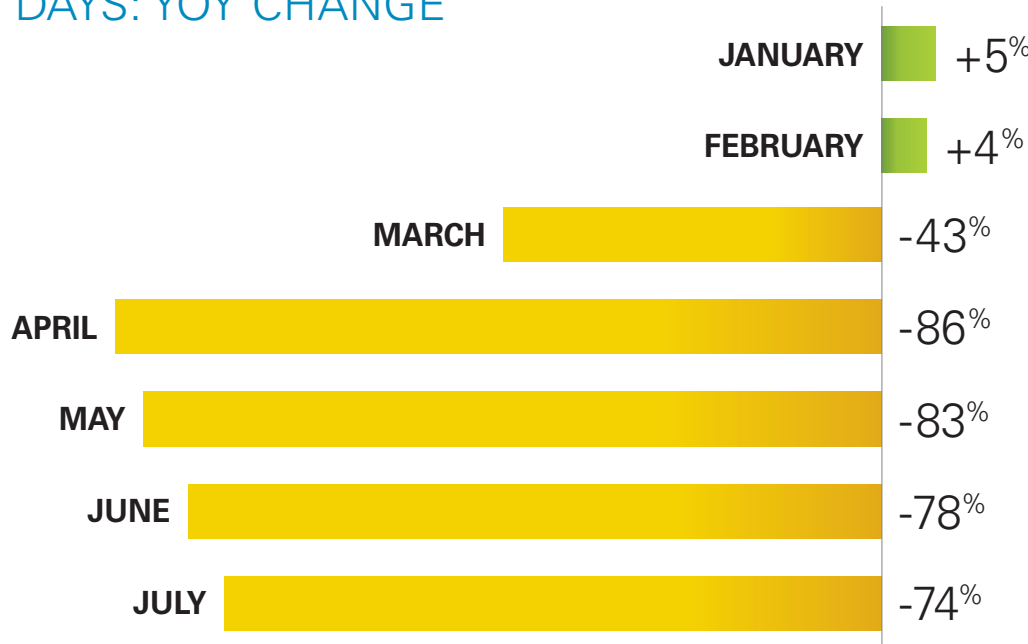


Source: An Oct. 7-16 Ipsos MORI survey of 505 Confederation of Business Industry business owners whose staff traveled in 2019

46%

INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION FORECAST DECLINE IN 2021 GLOBAL AIRLINE REVENUE COMPARED WITH 2019; IT PREVIOUSLY ESTIMATED A 29 PERCENT DECLINE.

HERTZ'S 2020 ON-AIRPORT TRANSACTION DAYS: YOY CHANGE



Note: Includes Hertz and the Dollar, Thrifty and Donlen brands
Source: Hertz Corp.

ARC: U.S. AGENCIES' AIR TICKET SALES RECOVERY STALLS

7-Day Period Ending	Agency type, YOY change		
	Corporate	Online	Leisure/Other
Oct. 4	-86.1%	-51.0%	-71.5%
Oct. 11	-85.7%	-49.8%	-69.7%
Oct. 18	-85.4%	-48.1%	-69.2%
Oct. 25	-84.8%	-49.6%	-67.6%
Nov. 2	-85.3%	-53.8%	-69.6%
YTD	-69.46%	-53.57%	-61.50%

Source: ARC

DELTA MAINTAINS WINNING STREAK AMID COVID CHALLENGES



BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

For the 10th year in a row, travel buyers rated Delta Air Lines as the top carrier in BTN's Airline Survey, atop a tide of improved buyer satisfaction with airlines even as they faced a near total evaporation of corporate travel demand amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Delta earned a total score of 4.59 on a five-point scale and once again earned the highest score among its competitors in all criteria measured in the survey. BTN this year added three criteria specific to airlines' Covid-19 response, but the rest of the categories were consistent with last year's survey. Delta also improved its score year over year in all survey criteria.

Delta was not alone in its improvement, however. More than 60 percent of buyers in the survey indicated that their customer service had improved since last year. A third said customer service had stayed the same, leaving only a small percentage indicating it had gotten worse.

American Airlines and Southwest Airlines

each improved across all comparable categories year over year, while United Airlines, which ranked second last year, fell a bit year over year. For American, that was enough to surpass United to rank second this year, and Southwest remained in fourth, though the spread between all three airlines was just 0.06 points.

As corporate air travel has recovered as yet only to a small fraction of where it was prior to the pandemic, much of the commentary in open-ended questions in the survey centered around two key areas: communication and flexibility.

Communication Removes Barriers

Hygiene and sanitization procedures have taken center stage amid the pandemic, and they also are playing a critical role in airline communication strategies they hope will lay the groundwork for a corporate travel rebound.

Both client communication and effective communication related to Covid were

among Delta's highest-scoring areas. Several buyers in open-ended questions praised the carrier's response.

"Our Delta rep kept informing us about their plan and the situation of Covid-19," one buyer wrote. "As a frontline industry, we are still heavily traveling, so it is a big help to have an account manager who cares about our business and travelers."

Another buyer noted that Delta's "communication and sales reps have been phenomenal during the pandemic," with "everything from emails to airport and plane inspections."

Delta VP of sales operations and development Kristen Showlin said Delta has "hit every channel" in its communication strategy to provide a "constant flow of communication." That has included producing videos to show the new traveler experience amid Covid-19 precautions, bringing in experts to answer questions, hosting town halls and talking one-on-one with corporate clients, she said.

BTN'S 2020 AIRLINE SURVEY

Delta also has hosted more than 500 fam trips for more than 2,500 customers, so they can see firsthand the measures in place, SVP of global sales Bob Somers said.

American also has been conducting airport tours with clients and agencies, which helps “take the mystery out of the check-in experience,” managing director of strategic account sales Hank Benedetti said. The tours let buyers see such procedures as the cleaning of aircraft and application of the SurfaceWise antiviral treatment, he said.

For Southwest Airlines, the pandemic was an impetus to create “an industry-standard marketing automation tool,” which it previously did not have, Southwest Business VP Dave Harvey said. The resulting tool allows Southwest to message travel managers globally and equips account managers to customize their own communication, he said.

“It’s allowed us to be more timely and more tailored with our messaging,” Harvey said. “If we need to get something out about the Southwest promise or schedule changes, we

come back to work, but we’re making sure people have the confidence to travel.”

Airlines now are expanding that communication strategy to include other parts of the travel ecosystem. American, for example, is partnering with companies including Hyatt, Marriott and Avis to “showcase the entire journey,” chief customer officer Alison Taylor said. United has put together a “return-to-travel” toolkit for buyers with multiple resources from them to pass on to travelers, VP of sales strategy and effectiveness Glenn Hollister said.

“Air travel is not seen as the barrier to business travel at this point,” Hollister said. “The barriers we’re hearing about now have more to do with travel restrictions imposed by governments and the simple fact that, in reaction to those, many offices are closed.”

Making Changes for Flexibility

Since business travel grinded to a quick halt in March, flexibility has been the second crucial need for buyers from airlines, both in travel booking and in the contractual relationship.

In the early days of the crisis, airlines responded with change fee waivers, as they would have during a natural disaster. As it became clearer that this would be a more prolonged and global issue, unlike anything the industry has faced before, some of those changes have crystallized into something more permanent for the industry.

One of the biggest changes came this fall when airlines announced that the elimination of

change fees would be permanent, at least for domestic travel. Policy changes have varied a bit across each airline. United, which was the first to announce the permanent elimination, also eliminated fees for same-day standby, Hollister said. American, meanwhile, so far has been the only carrier to enable refunds of price differentials when new tickets are booked at a lower price.

Southwest, of course, previously always had stood alone among the four largest U.S. carriers in not charging change fees—nor checked-bag fees—and “overall price value” continued to be its strongest area of performance this year.

The increased flexibility has presented an added challenge for buyers in dealing with

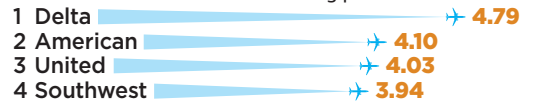
OVERALL COVID-19 RESPONSE

Implementing & communicating health, safety plans



COVID-19 COMMUNICATION

Effective client communication during pandemic



COVID-19 ACCOUNT FLEXIBILITY

Change-fee waiver & corporate contracting management



unused tickets. Delta alone, for example, has issued about 4 million refunds, totaling about \$2.8 billion in revenue, Somers said. The carrier worked to make sure agencies were able to manage name changes in global distribution systems without having to go through Delta and worked to create Universal Air Travel Plan accounts for customers to manage unused ticket funds as well, Shovlin said. Southwest also formed a partnership with UATP to form a process for buyers and travel management companies to aggregate unused funds, Harvey said.

American took an additional step to ensure travelers were not able to rebook unused tickets for corporate travel for personal use, making sure they had to go through authorized agencies so new tickets were used for business, Benedetti said.

As with the elimination in change fees, some structural changes will be permanent. For example, airlines worked with ATPCO to automate ticket changes for rules to match current information rather than what was the case at the time of booking. The change, which ATPCO head of global accounts Chris Phillips called “one of the most successful implementations ATPCO has done in quite a while,” will continue to benefit the industry beyond Covid for changes related to hurricanes or other natural disasters.

“We don’t want to build a single-use solution that will help us for a few months,” Phillips said. “The solutions we’re delivering are ones intended to be long-standing solutions for the industry that can be built on.”

Airlines have been flexible in other areas as well, such as extending loyalty program points beyond expiration dates and extending status into next year. They also have been extending corporate contracts, waiving requirements on current contracts and lowering thresholds for programs targeting small and midsize companies, which generally have been quicker to rebound to travel than larger companies.

While airlines report some recent increases in request-for-proposals activity, that flexibility with contracts will extend into next year.



can go through a decision tree about the most effective platform. Our communications muscle has been taken up a notch.”

In recent months, airlines have reported that all-out travel freezes have ended for most of their corporate clients, with a majority of them having at least some small level of travel. Having those communication strategies in place in turn is meant to help buyers who now need to gauge how to send their travelers back out on the road.

“Every day, all day, we’re on calls with customers,” Somers said. “It started with corporate travel managers, and now it’s chief medical officers and risk officers, and they’re sharing it with their traveling employees. Science and government will drive when people

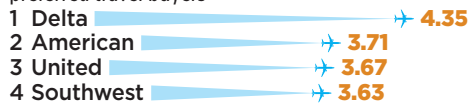
TRANSIENT PRICING

Customizing discounts & other negotiated prices



MEETINGS TRAVEL PRICING

Customizing discounts & other negotiated prices for preferred travel buyers



SERVICES & AMENITIES

Customizing traveler-focused offerings like soft-dollar benefits & VIP treatment in flight & at the airport



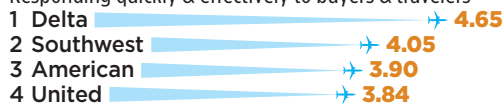
DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Providing comprehensive published & private content through preferred booking channels



COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

Responding quickly & effectively to buyers & travelers



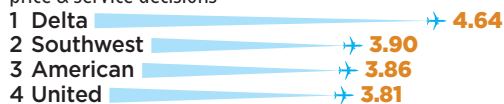
COMMUNICATION WITH BUYERS

Informing buyers of changes in airline management, products, programs, data, reporting, sales & service



ACCOUNT MANAGERS & SALES REPS

Participating in productive & frequent meetings & holding the power to negotiate agreements, offer options & make price & service decisions



CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR TRAVELERS

Timeliness, reliability, cleanliness, support & communication



QUALITY OF DATA & REPORTING TOOLS

Data and program insights provided by airline as well as tools/portals enabling access to that data



NETWORKS, PARTNERSHIPS & FREQUENCIES

Service to the destinations corporations need to reach



VALUE

Worth of service levels relative to fares, fees & other services



American, for example, is extending all contracts set to expire before June 30, 2021, by an additional year, though corporate customers are also welcome to return to the negotiating table in lieu of an extension, Benedetti said. "What we did very early on was place the power of choice with the customers," he said.

Looking Forward

Industry analysts project true recovery in corporate air travel is unlikely to happen until at least later next year, pending widespread distribution of effective vaccines, and airlines are positioning themselves to take advantage when that recovery happens.

Delta has seen about 90 percent of its corporate customers return to travel, with such industries as entertainment and manufacturing leading the way, Somers said. It also has been leaning on its partnership with private aviation supplier Wheels Up to offer a charter option for companies returning to travel.

In the meantime, it has continued with investments in place prior to the pandemic, such as in its sustainability efforts and helping to build a better retail shopping experiences for air travel, Shovlin said.

American has announced several new partnerships over the past year, including working with both Alaska Airlines and JetBlue, which fills "obvious gaps in our Northwest and Northeast network," Taylor said. In terms of global network, American also is working with Qatar Airways and is adding its own new services to Shanghai and Bangalore next year, she said.

"What's next is making sure we have the right network in place," Taylor said. "Demand for next year is really starting to improve, and that reassures corporate accounts, to see some normalcy returning."

United is watching where demand rebounds to determine where to add routes, Hollister said. It recently extended its service to Africa, and major business travel routes on tap for next year include flying between Chicago and New Delhi and between San Francisco and Bangalore.

The carrier also has developed a new data reporting method for monitoring contract performance, working with ARC and Grasp Technologies to flow corporate travel program identification information from TMCs to ARC, enabling ARC to match that data

with direct booking data. United will be moving all U.S. point-of-sale customers to the new system and plans to have its reporting available through its Jetstream portal next year.

Southwest this year delivered on its announcement last year to make its content available for corporate travel via global distribution systems without workarounds and has gone live in both Travelport and Amadeus' systems. The carrier also is planning entry into two major airports—Chicago O'Hare and Houston Bush Intercontinental, complementing its service at Chicago Midway and Houston Hobby—which will open the door for some new potential corporate customers, Harvey said.

"We feel like a combination of pillars are going to make Southwest more attractive as we go into next year," Harvey said. "Coupled with the flexibility of funds and duty of care, plus all of the GDS and channel investments we made, it's going to be a dogfight for every customer."

In recent weeks, airlines have been adding Covid testing programs to open up travel opportunities to Hawaii and some Caribbean destinations. Work is happening for key business destinations as well—United recently introduced a testing program for travelers from Newark to London, for example—and those efforts will continue to help business travel's rebound.

Some buyers will have new relationships to build into the new year, however, as many airline employees, including on the sales side, will have left amid workforce reductions made necessary by the pandemic. Several buyers in the survey indicated they were worried about losing representatives they had worked with for years, though carriers said they have plans in place for continuity. For example, sales team members that were customer-facing "really had priority to remain at American" as it restructured, Taylor said.

"[Covid] did drive much more disruption in relationships we had with the customer than I've ever seen, which is not desirable from ours or the customer's point of view," United's Hollister said. "We made sure we let customers going through the process ... know ahead of time the outcome for them personally, so the person giving up a relationship can talk to the person picking up the relationship and do a warm handoff." ■

METHODOLOGY From Sept. 24 to Oct. 26, BTN collected 576 responses from travel manager and buyer members of the BTN Research Council and subscribers of BTN and Travel Procurement and 92 responses from travel agents. Nine percent of the travel buyers spent less than \$500,000 on U.S.-booked air volume in 2019, 12 percent spent \$500,000 to \$1.9 million, 37 percent spent \$2 million to \$12 million, and 43 percent spent more. BTN developed the categories with travel buyers, corporate travel agency managers and airline sales executives. The categories were the same as the 2019 survey with three additional categories to specifically address airlines' response to the Covid-19 pandemic. BTN averaged scores in each category to create an overall score for each carrier, weighing each category equally. Respondents graded only those airlines with which they negotiated a contract or booked a meaningful amount of business in the past year. Participants who offered no response for a particular category or airline were not included in that category or airline's average rating. The survey listed the largest domestic airlines as identified by the U.S. Department of Transportation, excluding regional affiliates of major carriers. Alaska Airlines, Frontier Airlines and JetBlue elicited responses from less than 30 percent of the final survey sample and therefore were excluded from this report. Equation Research hosted the survey and tabulated the results.



Thrust Carbon co-founder and director Mark Corbett

Winner: Thrust Carbon The BTN Group's Innovator of the Year

London-based green-tech travel startup Thrust Carbon last month captured The BTN Group's Innovator of the Year award. By simplifying the path toward sustainable travel programs, Thrust Carbon beat out fierce competition from nine other entrants.

The Thrust Carbon platform includes several tools, centered around the Thrust Calculator, which crunches complex data to measure emissions for travel and other business activities. It presents emissions information via customizable reports and suggests offset opportunities to mitigate climate impact.

In awarding Thrust Carbon the top prize, the Innovation Faceoff judges noted the power of using data to help companies solve the sustainability issue, which remains the biggest long-term priority in the travel industry, according to head judge Norm Rose, despite the current focus on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recommendations for the startup included automating travel data entry into the calculator instead of the current manual process, perhaps via global distribution system integration. But the judges were confident Thrust Carbon was moving in that direction and seeking partnerships with corporate travel stakeholders.

Co-founder and director Mark Corbett spoke with BTN's Adam Perrotta about how Thrust Carbon could thrust the industry toward a more sustainable future.

HAS COVID-19 TAKEN THE FOCUS OFF SUSTAINABILITY? ARE YOU STILL SEEING INDUSTRY GREEN EFFORTS?

As difficult as the pandemic has been for the industry, many forward-thinking and leading organizations and individuals are seeing the current pause in business-as-usual travel activity as a real opportunity to implement valuable solutions that bring new capabilities into the context of their travel programs, and no more so than where sustainability is concerned. The fact we support retrospective analysis to generate a baseline and accurate reporting is a big draw. Then, with a mind on the road to recovery, our tools that build on top of our emissions calculator ensure clients can build the frameworks to drive more sustainable travel decisions in the future.

YOU OFFER YOUR PRODUCT THROUGH TMCS AND DIRECTLY TO CORPORATES. WHAT'S THE CURRENT MIX?

It was an even split. Since the pandemic, large enterprises with high levels of resilience and little to no travel have benefited from the increased breathing space to proactively innovate with Thrust Carbon, which has shifted that balance of our client portfolio. By contrast, demand from TMCs has risen as a result of our partnerships with Advantage Travel Partnerships, WIN, UniGlobe and Travel-Operations, but budgets remain limited with so few people traveling. Our model is designed with

a reseller license, which means we will be a big part of driving a sustainable recovery in travel and across TMCs.

OTHER PROVIDERS OFFER EMISSIONS MEASUREMENT SERVICES, LIKE TRAVELBANK, EGENCIA AND AMEX GBT'S NEO. WHAT SETS THRUST CARBON APART?

Not all calculations are made equal. Some competitors are a great step in the right direction, but the problem for the consumer is, how do you know who to trust without total transparency? That's why our methodology is included on every single client report. Furthermore, our reporting is actionable rather than just displaying a raw amount of CO2. TMCs and clients can use data to create travel policies that answer questions like, 'Which airlines are greener to fly with? What flights do we take that sit on high-speed rail routes? Who are the biggest emitting departments in my organization?' Another core element that sets us apart is that we're not just about flights. We offer calculations for the entire travel spectrum.

HOW DO YOU ENSURE YOUR DATA IS ACCURATE AND UP TO DATE?

We place a significant effort in the constant updating and maintenance of our sources. Every time a change is made, it will be published in our reports, and clients notified. Furthermore, our analysts are here to help our clients understand what this data means, how to set emissions goals and how to use the data to drive the necessary reductions in emissions. In terms of data sources, we're not just saying this because our founders are British, but the U.K. government really is a global leader in emissions science, data and publications. We are immensely grateful for their rigorous approach and open data.

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU SEEING END-USER CLIENTS LEVERAGE EMISSIONS DATA TO PUSH FOR MORE SUSTAINABILITY FROM PROVIDERS?

We already have a client who is planning to use our data to influence airlines, and a potential client who sees this as one of the most exciting reasons to purchase our calculator subscription. As a starting point, it is incredibly valuable to see your travel split across various routes and carriers. It enables clients to compare average emissions per traveler in the context of destinations and other elements, and even make decisions regarding routing and providers.

Prior to the pandemic, we were speaking directly to a lot of airlines. ... They have a responsibility to accurately measure their emissions. What we're offering is a cost-effective means to do so, with safe hands and total objectivity. Suppliers that can better articulate, reduce and offset their emissions may well have an edge over their competition. ◀

THE JUDGES



STEVE CLAGG
Travel technology manager at Microsoft



MICHELLE DE COSTA
Head of global travel, meetings and events, fleet and aviation at Takeda Pharmaceuticals



NORM ROSE
President of Travel Tech Consulting



DEVON TIVONA
CEO and co-founder of Pana



Tripkicks CEO
Jeff Berk

People's Choice: Tripkicks

Launched in 2017 as a corporate travel cost-saving tool built upon offering rewards to encourage travelers to save money when booking, Tripkicks pivoted its core service model with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. With travel grounded, the company got to work building a new booking tool add-on that presents relevant travel information and alerts within the booking flow—with the ultimate goal of helping support companies' return to the road as

business travel resumes.

"The needs and priorities of travelers have changed, and with that, traveler experience has changed, and we at Tripkicks have changed," noted Tripkicks CEO Jeff Berk. "Travelers who were asking, 'What's in it for me?' are now concerned with the most fundamental aspects of travel: 'Can I go?' 'Should I go?' and 'What can I expect?' and that's the new focus of traveler experience."

The agility with which Tripkicks transitioned its focus and built out services to fulfill that new demand impressed both the Innovation Faceoff judges and attendees—the latter of whom named the New York City-based company winner of the People's Choice award.

Tripkicks's messaging tool plugs into OBTs to deliver real-time insights and alerts to travelers while booking their trip. Companies can

choose what information to display to travelers, including such Covid-19-specific information as infection rates, travel disruption alerts and border and visa entry requirements. Data is gleaned from a variety of public and industry sources, and the platform can be integrated via API with third-party risk management services, Berk said.

At the moment, Tripkicks' messaging tool is live only with Concur Travel, but Berk said the company is in integration discussions with other OBTs. And while Covid-related messaging is the main use-case at the moment, the service also can deliver other relevant information, such as safety alerts for additional types of risk, policy and budgeting notifications, and sustainability information—all of which are expected to remain priorities long after the pandemic runs its course. Looking ahead, Tripkicks is planning to deepen mobile integration and add post-booking messaging capabilities, along with expanding to more OBT partners, according to Berk.

But for now, job No. 1 for Tripkicks is to help business travel get up and running again—and Berk speculated that focus most likely was what resonated with the Innovation Faceoff audience and earned the company People's Choice honors.

"Every travel manager is looking for simple and tangible tools to help relaunch their travel programs," said Berk. "By bringing the most essential information to the point of sale, Tripkicks is allowing companies to empower travelers to make better, more confident and safer decisions. As an industry, we're seeing that become a top priority for all companies."



Mint House
CCO Shane
Berry

HONORABLE MENTION: MINT HOUSE

Apartment-style rentals are growing more popular, especially among younger professionals, but remain anathema to many corporate travel departments. Recent studies have found that nearly 75 percent of Millennial business travelers have stayed in an apartment-style rental for work, while fewer than 10 percent of travel managers allow such accommodations in their policy.

Enter Mint House, the three-year-old startup aiming to bridge that gap by providing apartment-style accommodations designed specifically for business travel, distributed over a platform designed to serve the needs of both corporate travelers and their organizations.

For travelers, Mint House offers features like mobile check-in, 24/7 digital concierge service with guest preference tracking, smart room features and the ability to pre-stock room fridges with specific items. For corporations, the company offers flexible stay lengths, global distribution system availability and competitive pricing based on a lean business model that cuts out such typical cost centers as staffing and food service operations. And with health and safety concerns top of mind in light of Covid-19, Mint House has implemented a series of hygienic and cleanliness measures across its properties.

The company's operations have "significantly outperformed" the hotel sector amid the pandemic, according to chief customer officer Shane Berry. "Our occupancy has roared back," since early summer, Berry said, with rates reaching 86 percent in June and remaining above 80 percent each month since.

Currently active in 10 U.S. cities, Mint House plans by year-end to increase its unit count by 40 percent and has targeted more than a dozen additional markets for expansion in the U.S. and abroad. The company also has begun partnering with TMCs to reach more corporates, and earlier this year was added to American Express Global Business Travel's Business Extras and Rest Assured Solutions suites.

The Innovation Faceoff judges were sufficiently impressed to name Mint House as one of two Honorable Mentions in the competition, praising the company's emphasis on such smart room features as sound monitoring and in-room virtual exercise classes, as well as touchless check-in capabilities. Potential areas for improvement included increasing room inventory and offering some form of on-site concierge services for less tech-savvy guests.



Shep CEO
Daniel Senyard

HONORABLE MENTION: SHEP

Already a complicated process, managing corporate travel has become all the more complex with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disrupted policy rules and added quarantine policies, infection rates and supplier hygiene processes to the mix. To make matters worse, the information is spread across many channels and providers, requiring travelers to piece together data from multiple sources to get the complete picture for a given journey.

Shep aims to simplify that process by presenting all relevant information in one central channel: the booking flow. Built as a browser extension for Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge and compatible with online booking tools, online travel agencies and direct supplier sites, Shep enables travel managers to deliver key messaging in the way that is most relevant for travelers, according to CEO Daniel Senyard.

Senyard demonstrated during his presentation that corporate travel managers can craft messages simply and quickly, add photos and tailor delivery for particular searches and sites. Additional capabilities include pre-drafted email templates that travelers can access when planning a trip requiring pre-approval, along with flexible data sourcing, including the ability to integrate via API with third-party risk monitoring services.

In the market for the past several years, Shep has earned accolades including a previous Honorable Mention nod at BTN's 2018 Innovation Faceoff. The Austin, Texas-based company also has inked corporate clients including Discovery Inc. and struck a reseller deal with TMC group Flight Centre—one of whose brands, FCM Travel Solutions, this year made an equity investment in Shep.

Awarding Shep an Honorable Mention, the Innovation Faceoff judges noted Shep's increased relevance in the post-Covid era of corporate travel and lauded the platform's messaging functionality. However, they noted that its browser extension model could raise IT security issues with some corporates, potentially hindering adoption.

Amid increasing competition in the space, the judges suggested Shep could differentiate itself by adding mobile functionality and deepening integration with automated data sources to make its messaging even more actionable for travelers.

THE COMPETITION



ATRIIS

Israel-headquartered Atriis set out to fix what it viewed as a “broken” business travel supply chain that hinders TMCs’ content and servicing ability, and leaves corporates overly dependent on TMCs.

As such, Atriis focused on bringing midsize TMCs and their corporate clients together on an OBТ platform offering air, hotel and ground content from more than 20 sources, including GDSs, OTAs and aggregators, with an emphasis on NDC content availability.

Integrating the OBТ with a companion agent desktop enables the accurate flow of information, ensuring both parties are on the same page, said Atriis chief revenue officer Omri Amsalem.

“By having your TMC with you on the same platform, you won’t hear any more excuses about certain content that can’t be serviced, supported or doesn’t fit the TMC’s processes” said Amsalem.

Judges were impressed with Atriis’ collaborative model, range of content and API-based compatibility with back-office systems. However, they noted the closed-model platform’s limited potential with large TMCs that support multiple OBТs, while suggesting improvements to the user interface and enhancing NDC-based bundling options.



GETT

Ground travel accounts for about 5 percent of a typical organization’s total travel spend but “90 percent of the headaches” for travel managers, said Keren Fanan, chief commercial officer for Gett.

That’s because existing corporate ground transport options often are low-tech, driving travelers to out-of-channel alternatives, while corporations contract with a patchwork of different suppliers to cover the full range of their needs.

Israel-based Gett aims to alleviate that pain by bringing together all available providers in a market, including ride-hailing apps, taxi companies and black car services, on one platform. Integrating payment and expense reporting completes the picture, giving travelers the full range of choices via mobile app, while ensuring all relevant data flows into travel management systems.

Judges were impressed by Gett’s smooth user experience, demonstrated traction in the market, and its payment and expense integration. However, they sought the addition of other ground transport forms, such as car rental, train and public transit, to offer a fuller gamut of options.



PILOTA

Founded last year by four Cornell University graduate students, Pilota has earned attention for its AI-based flight disruption and rebooking services. But when Covid-19 shifted priorities, Pilota steered a new course.

In July, the New York-based firm launched FlySafe, a messaging tool designed to provide air travelers with “everything they need to know about the safety of their upcoming journey,” said Pilota co-founder and CEO Saniya Shah.

Available as a Google Chrome browser extension or through API integration with booking platforms, FlySafe lets travelers select which health-related factors, such as capacity limits, cabin sanitation and cancellation policies, are most important. Once set, flight results are given a rating based on those factors, with users able to view further breakdowns of grades for each category.

Judges commended Pilota’s pivot and were excited about a support chatbot’s ability to provide in-booking support. Pilota’s challenge, they noted, will lie in developing a business travel-specific focus for FlySafe, and figuring out the nuances of deployment into the corporate sector.



3VICTORS

Founded by a trio of travel veterans with decades of industry experience (none actually named Victor), and billing itself as a pioneer in what it calls Travel Data Analytics as a Service, 3Victors aims to help air travel suppliers make key pricing decisions faster by leveraging real-time, streaming data.

Founded in 2017, the Dallas-based company already has made a splash in the travel industry, earning venture funding from JetBlue Technology Ventures and Airlines Reporting Corp. During the Innovate Faceoff, 3Victors CEO Rick Seaney demonstrated a new feature in the firm’s demand insight suite focused on business/leisure segmentation, enabling users to track how the dynamics within each segment have changed due to Covid-19. Users can view and compare data for business and leisure travel between any two U.S. destinations to assess changes over time.

The judges lauded 3Victors’ powerful data analytics capabilities and adaptable service model, but were a bit unsure on the applicability of its services to add value for corporate travel buyers. They also suggested expanding data beyond air into hotel and other segments.



UNDELAY

Every departing or arriving airline flight has more than 100 processes that take place that can result a delay. They typically are relayed via radio communication between multiple parties, such as pilots, ground operators

and gate agents. UnDelay aims to tap into that communication to give travel companies information on delays, which can be used for reimbursement, rescheduling and planning purposes.

“By analyzing radio conversations, we can determine the exact cause of a flight delay at a specific time,” said UnDelay CEO Safir Monroe, noting that most jurisdictions require such air-related radio communication be made publicly available. UnDelay’s platform uses artificial intelligence to segment radio transcripts into delay categories such as weather, airline internal codes, baggage, ramp handling and other reasons, he added.

The judges were intrigued by the potential application of UnDelay’s platform, but were a bit unclear where it fits in the corporate travel process, and they warned airlines could alter communication habits to obscure compromising information.



READYBID

Travel sourcing specialist ReadyBid simplifies the request-for-proposals process by leveraging preformatted, customizable hotel RFP forms, it says, designed using feedback from more than 50 travel buyers.

Available in free and premium versions, ReadyBid’s platform includes such tools as document preparation assistance, historical data and trend-tracking capabilities, rate-auditing assistance and follow-up services with hotel suppliers to ensure RFP documents were received.

Carlsbad, Calif.-based ReadyBid plans to add RFP support for a bevy of additional services, including air, ground transport, corporate credit card, small meetings and TMC, according to president Joseph Friedmann. The company also is working on an integration with SAP Concur, he added.

The judges welcomed an RFP tool with a free version and praised ReadyBid’s user-friendliness, large property list and support for Covid-19-related RFP questions. They suggested finding ways to more fundamentally change the RFP process, perhaps by automating more of the workflows.



U.K.'s BTA Eyes Industry Standards, Definitions In TMC Model Review

BY JAY BOEHMER

The United Kingdom-based Business Travel Association last month kicked off a consultation with buyers and agencies with a plan to set industry standards around the service structures and pricing models that govern relationships between travel management companies and corporate clients.

TMC pricing has been a hot topic this year, as a reliance on transaction fees stung the sector and deepened some TMCs' resolve to evolve.

"For seven months now there's been no income coming through the till, but work hasn't stopped," BTA CEO Clive Wratten said of the TMC sector in an interview. "The transaction-fee model has been out there for a long time. It works in good times. In bad times, it wasn't so clever. In disastrous times, it's disastrous for a TMC."

Formerly known as the Guild of Travel Management Companies until a name change last year, BTA's members are TMCs that operate in the United Kingdom. They include multinationals and local operators.

"TMCs need to reestablish their importance as a strategic partner with a corporate, rather than just this partner that you pay a bit of money for to turn an air ticket up," Wratten said. That's the thinking behind the consultation.

A white paper BTA released last month in conjunction with consultancy Nina & Pinta examines from the buyer and TMC perspective the characteristics as well as the pros and cons of the three most common pricing models: transaction fees, subscriptions and management fees.

According to research released this year by The Beat, transaction fees currently are by far the most popular model.

The white paper also tackles a few key issues with which TMCs long have grappled: the commoditization of client fees, a need for transparency and, also, the potential conflicts of interest that arise from the flow of supplier-based and client-based revenues.

In the white paper, BTA advocates for "sustainable" and "equitable" pricing models, while trying to square the value a TMC provides with how they price their services.

By way of the white paper, Wratten said BTA was "throwing a bit of a grenade out there to get people talking."

Yet, he stressed, the goal of the consultation is not to kill transaction fees and replace them with, say, subscriptions or management fees. That's up to the market, he said.

"The role of the BTA is not to say what the commercial options should be," he said. "It could be all three of them; it could be one of them; it could be none of them and go in a completely different direction. Our role is to get that debate out there."

Debate is good. What about deliverables?

"The criteria is to get by the end of the year the definitions around what the standards are and some commonality in language," said Wratten, "and then next year, widening it out to say, 'How does this actually work?'"

Wratten, himself a former TMC exec with an airline background as well, said an essential first step is to clear the haze on nebulous terminology.

Universally accepted definitions are hard to come by. What is a "transaction," and what does it include? When we say "manage-



"The transaction-fee model has been out there for a long time. It works in good times. In bad times, it wasn't so clever. In disastrous times, it's disastrous for a TMC."

—BTA'S CLIVE WRATTEN

The Beat

ment fee," what, exactly, does that mean?

"We need definitions of what a transaction is, or at what point it's a transaction, and at what point it isn't a transaction or an additional cost," Wratten said. "That's very much around the standards we can drive. It's not our role to police them or be a regulatory body around them, but what it gives is a benchmark to move the industry to a much more straightforward understanding for the customer."

He added: "It will all be documented: what the base management fee or subscription fee will include. And you can match one against the other and start driving the one that works for you as a corporate customer on product and service offering."

Wratten said TMCs, buyers and eventually other parties will hash these out in roundtable discussions with an eye toward consensus. Consultations are scheduled in the coming weeks with TMCs and corporate buyers.

"This is not around saying, 'Here is the commercial model' and 'It's a £25 fee,' because clearly you can't do that," Wratten said. Rather, he said, the initiative is about "setting the standards."

Wratten said the consultation is structured to ensure it won't stray into anti-competitive areas. "We were very conscious at the beginning and were very clear at the outset for all those involved that this is not about discussing pricing," he said. "This is about concepts but, more importantly, about raising standards in the industry by delivering standards. What commercially goes on absolutely is not at the table."

Wratten expects to release initial documentation around standards and definitions by the end of the year. The next step of the consultation, he said, is to "involve the supply chain," including airlines and global distribution systems.

Wratten added that BTA was keen to engage with other trade associations or industry bodies.

"At the moment, BTA is for the U.K. market, but clearly we have global players within our members," Wratten said. "This is to create a better industry moving on."

Of the TMC consultation and business model standard-setting: "I think it will organically grow," he said. ■



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Carriers Try Quarantine Dodge

testing in place early on in the pandemic with those hopes in mind.

“It was a bit of a shot in the dark, but we believed at the time it was a meaningful way forward,” Clark said. “We were unable to persuade the U.K. government or Europeans that this was a smart way of going about it.”

In the United States, Hawaii is one of the most high-profile destinations to allow travelers to skip quarantine with a negative test from approved providers, and several airlines began pre-flight Covid testing for Hawaii service in mid-October. Those carriers say they already are seeing positive effects on demand. Alaska Airlines EVP and chief commercial officer Andrew Harrison said in the carrier’s third-quarter earnings call that demand to Hawaii has begun to recover and capacity to Hawaii will be up significantly in the fourth quarter compared with the third. United Airlines reported that passengers from San Francisco to Hawaii nearly doubled over the first 10 days the testing was available.

American Airlines also is working on similar programs for travel to Jamaica and is exploring further Caribbean expansion.

American Express Global Business Travel chief commercial officer

United Beginning Free Covid Testing for Select Newark-London Flights

By Michael B. Baker

United Airlines this month will begin a pilot program requiring free Covid-19 testing to all passengers aboard select flights from Newark to London.

The testing program will run from Nov. 16 through Dec. 11 for passengers on United Flight 14, which departs Newark at 7:15 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Passengers can schedule on-site rapid testing at a facility in the Newark United Club near Gate C-93. Appointments are required, and United advises passengers to schedule tests at least three hours prior to their departure.

All passengers aboard those flights over the age of 2 will be required to undergo testing, and those who do not wish to be tested can move to another flight, according to United.

Upon arrival in London, passengers will still be subject to United Kingdom quarantine restrictions, which currently require travelers arriving from the United States to self-isolate for two weeks. Similar to Air Canada’s program testing arriving passengers in Toronto that began in September, United will be sharing feedback on the program with the U.S. and U.K. governments in the hopes of presenting testing as an alternative to quarantine.

“We believe the ability to provide fast, same-day Covid-19 testing will play a vital role in safely reopening travel around the world and navigating quarantines and travel restrictions, particularly to key international destinations like London,” according to United chief customer officer Toby Enqvist. “Through this pilot program, we’ll guarantee that everyone on board has tested negative for Covid-19.”

United was the first of several carriers to announce pre-flight testing programs for travelers to Hawaii, where passengers who have negative tests from approved providers are exempt for quarantine requirements. On the first 10 days of the program—which began Oct. 15 and requires passengers to pay for their testing but does not make it a requirement for boarding—United saw passengers between San Francisco and Hawaii nearly double, which the carrier said shows both a pent-up demand for travel and customer willingness to participate in testing programs.

“It was a bit of a shot in the dark, but we believed at the time it was a meaningful way forward. We were unable to persuade the U.K. government or Europeans that this was a smart way of going about it”

—EMIRATES’ TIM CLARK

Drew Crawley said that testing is ultimately more effective than quarantine in slowing Covid-19 spread. With the exception of areas that are strictly enforcing quarantines, such as placing arrivals in hotels with armed guards, quarantine is mostly “a human activity that relies on people complying,” he said. Testing, meanwhile, provides a high probability that all arrivals are virus-free.

“Tests are not 100 percent accurate; we know that,” Crawley said. “You cannot mitigate risk to zero. But you can get comfortable with the level of risk.”

Building the Bubble

In terms of a business travel focus, creating a “bubble” between New York and London is one of the key priorities for the industry, as it would allow travelers who undergo testing pre-flight and upon arrival to bypass quarantine restrictions in both cities. Industry leaders working to make that a reality hope to have it in place by the end of the year, and so far, “the U.S. side is moving at a faster pace than the U.K.,” said Crawley, who has been involved in the discussions.

The U.K. government’s travel task force is expected to deliver a report this month, but right now, some expect the task force to recommend allowing a shorter quarantine for passengers who are tested rather than eliminate it altogether, which Crawley said “won’t make any difference—a quarantine is a quarantine.”

New York-London has been the focus “because there are lots of airlines who fly it, it’s highly profitable for those airlines, and the trade at both ends is stunning,” Crawley said. “In addition, there is enough demand in London and New York without needing lots of feeder services to fill the airplanes.”

United next month will begin free testing of all passengers older than two years old on select flights from Newark (see sidebar). Tested passengers still will be subject to quarantine requirements in the United Kingdom, but the carrier hopes the data will help make the case for eventually allowing an exemption.

In the meantime, other European Union countries are further ahead than the United Kingdom in terms of enabling testing to replace quarantine restrictions, including Italy, France and Germany, Crawley said.

In Asia, Hong Kong and Singa-

BA Decries Border Restrictions After Q3 Losses

BY MARK FRARY

Executives at British Airways parent International Airlines Group last month criticized the changing border restrictions governments around the world have implemented, suggesting pre-flight testing as a quarantine alternative. IAG reported losses during its third quarter, as did Air France-KLM, which also cited border restrictions as well as the Covid-19 pandemic.

IAG, parent of Iberia, Aer Lingus and Vueling along with BA, posted an operating loss of €1.92 billion for the third quarter, including exceptional items relating to fuel hedges plus restructuring costs.

Passenger revenue for the nine months to the end of September was €4.83 billion, 71.4 percent lower from the same period in 2019.

IAG chief executive officer Luis Gallego said: "These results demonstrate the negative impact of Covid-19 on our business, but they're exacerbated by constantly changing government restrictions. This creates uncertainty for customers and makes it harder to plan our business effectively."

"We are calling on governments to adopt pre-departure testing using reliable and affordable tests with the option of post-flight testing to release people from quarantine where they are arriving from countries with high infection rates. This would open routes, stimulate economies and get people traveling with confidence. When we open routes, there is pent-up demand for travel."

He added: "We continue to expect that it will take until at least 2023 for passenger demand to recover to 2019 levels. The group has made significant progress on restructuring and we continue to

reduce our cost base and increase the proportion of our variable costs.

"We have also successfully completed a €2.74 billion capital increase in the quarter. It strengthens our financial and strategic position and makes IAG better placed to take advantage of a recovery in air travel demand."

The group said it had reduced employee numbers at British Airways and Aer Lingus by around 10,000, for which it recognized a €275 million exceptional cost.

British Airways said it would operate 52 long-haul routes alongside its short-haul network this November as it continues to adapt to changing restrictions around the globe as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

AIR FRANCE-KLM TO 'TRANSFORM'

Air France-KLM is engaging in a "profound transformation" to meet changing customers' expectations after the Covid-19 crisis ends, the group announced along with its third-quarter results.

The airline said that revenue in the third quarter was €2.5 billion, down 67 percent on the same period in 2019, and that operating losses were €1.04 billion, a deterioration of nearly €2.0 billion year over year.

Group CEO Benjamin Smith said: "After a promising recovery during the summer, the gradual closure of international borders in the second half of August and the resurgence of the pandemic strongly impacted our results in the third quarter, with the group reporting an operating loss of €1 billion. We have accelerated the implementation of cost reduc-

tion and cash preservation measures."

He added: "We are also working closely with our partners on various means, such as rapid detection tests, that would allow traffic within the best sanitary conditions for our customers and employees. Beyond these immediate necessary measures, we are engaged in a more profound transformation of our group, with the objective of exiting this crisis in a stronger position, ready to address the future challenges of our industry. Air transport will continue to connect people and cultures, but we foresee changes in customers' expectations that we anticipate too."

The group said it had €12.4 billion of liquidity or credit lines at its disposal but net debt had increased by €3.2 billion to €9.3 billion since the end of 2019.

Third-quarter passenger traffic was down 80.7 percent year over year, according to the company, which noted, "The tightening of travel restrictions, border closures and absence of corporate travel delayed the expected traffic recovery. July and August were relatively strong in term of traffic compared to a disappointing September affected by restrictive travel measures."

The national lockdown in France lasting until the end of November at least will further weigh on the group's activities.

Smith added: "We expect a challenging fourth quarter 2020, with current forward booking sharply down compared to last year." ■

pore also are working on setting up their own travel bubble that they expect to be up and running this month. In addition, Japan is looking at exemptions for business travelers who will be staying in the country for 72 hours or less.

Managing the Data

Another major step toward the eventual elimination or easing of border restrictions and quarantine requirements occurred earlier this month with the first transatlantic trial of CommonPass, a digital health pass app, on a United flight from London to Newark. Earlier in October, CommonPass also was tested on a Cathay Pacific flight from Hong Kong to Singapore.

With CommonPass, travelers are tested before travel, and the results are uploaded into the app as a QR code, which border officials can scan upon arrival.

Having that common platform gives those officials a better way to review results than paper from laboratories, which could be in a language with which they are unfamiliar or even forged.

"We believe the CommonPass framework allows governments to implement much more nuanced policies, if they can count on laboratory results and vaccination records from other countries," Brad Perkins, cofounder and chief medical officer of the Commons Project Foundation, said in a call to media after the Newark test. "They can avoid closing the border or having mandatory quarantines in place for all arrivals."

In addition, the platform provides an extra level of data security,

Commons Project Foundation CEO Paul Meyer said, as they do not have to hand over testing paperwork to airline or border officials.

"It verifies that a traveler has been tested, but it's not stored or conveyed to an airline or government," Meyer said. "It complies with [General Data Protection Regulation] and the other data privacy requirements."

CommonPass in the next two months will roll out to other locations with broader deployment planned for 2021, Meyer said. Even after vaccines become widely available, the platform will continue to be of use for travelers to show their vaccination status. It has uses outside of Covid as well, such as showing proof of yellow fever vaccinations for those destinations that require it.

"Countries will decided to integrate vaccines at different periods, so this will become important for crossing borders," Perkins said. ■



Apartment-Style Provider Kasa Living Raises \$50M in Two VC Rounds

BY DONNA M. AIROLDI

It remains to be seen whether apartment-style accommodations will continue to play a growing role in managed travel programs, as they were prior to the pandemic, yet it's clear investors are betting that demand for these options will increase. After raising \$2 billion in capital this spring, Airbnb filed for its IPO this year and has been valued most recently at \$21 billion. Sonder raised an additional \$170 million in June in a Series E round.

Another alternative accommodation player Kasa Living announced this month that it had raised \$50 million—\$30 million in a recent Series B round and \$20 million from a previously undisclosed Series A round less than a year ago. Ribbit Capital led the Series B round; First-Mark Capital led the Series A round. Additional participants included RET Ventures, Zigg Capital, Allegion Ventures and BoxGroup.

Launched in 2016, Kasa currently holds management agreements with multifamily and hotel property owners in 35 markets across 15 states. The company also claims that since the beginning of the year, it has maintained occupancy rates of about 75 percent, expanded the units under management by 50 percent, launched in five new cities, and saw monthly revenues climb 50 percent since December.

"We see a generational opportunity to innovate in a beleaguered travel sector," said Kasa founder and CEO Roman Pedan in a statement. "This raise allows us to grow our technology team significantly to power a flexible and distributed hospitality offering that delivers on our mission."

Kasa plans to use the funds to accelerate investment in proprietary technology and build on "its existing suite of product and systems that has enabled the company to manage units across various property sizes and locations."

Prior to the pandemic, about 50 percent of Kasa's bookings came from business travelers, and "we expect that in the long run, business travel will come closer to historic levels," wrote Pedan in an email to BTN.

Since the pandemic began, that share has dropped to about 15 percent, "but it's a bit of a tricky question during Covid times," he said, noting that about 39 percent of room nights are represented by mixed-

"We have found that this wide distribution has led to corporate travel managers booking Kasas for their clients despite a lack of a direct relationship with us."

—KASA'S ROMAN PEDAN

purpose rentals of three to six weeks.

While Kasa currently is not working directly with corporate travel programs, it is in conversations with a few prospective corporate travel partners, Pedan wrote. "All of Kasa's inventory across 35 cities is managed through a centralized property management and distribution system," he said. "We have found that this wide distribution has led to corporate travel managers booking Kasas for their clients despite a lack of a direct relationship with us. In some ways, this is more seamless and convenient for both the end guest and for the travel partner as we and they do not need to go through a time-consuming and cumbersome process to integrate directly into a partnership."

What differentiates Kasa from some competitors is that it allows rentals for less than 30 days, it uses property management leases as opposed to master leases for its portfolio—meaning owners share in the profits as opposed to collecting a set monthly rent—and it targets a different consumer segment than, say, Sonder, wrote Pedan, adding, "If Sonder is Kimpton, Kasa is Southwest Airlines. The Kasa guest experience is less interested in designer furniture and more interested in ease of booking, contactless check-in and consistent quality amenities at sensible prices."

The company is in advanced conversations with property partners to add several units in the next 12 months, Pedan wrote, but the specific cities "will evolve over time." A few of the potential expansion markets include Cincinnati; Indianapolis; Kansas City; the New York metro area; and Portland, Ore., as well as locations in Canada and Mexico. ■

SAP Sees No 2020 Corp. Travel Recovery as Concur Slides in Q3

BY CHRIS DAVIS

Business travel won't recover in any meaningful way for the remainder of 2020, SAP executives projected as part of the company's third-quarter earnings report. Quarterly revenue for the SAP Concur travel booking and expense system slid 14 percent year over year to €357 million, although that decline is 10 percent in constant currency, according to the company.

SAP in April as part of its 2020 outlook projected some recovery in business travel volumes later in the

year, but as the Covid-19 pandemic persists throughout the world, it's clear that won't meaningfully happen, according to the company.

"Regrettably, lockdowns have recently been reintroduced in some regions, infection rates have reaccelerated, and as a result demand recovery has been more muted," SAP CFO Luka Mucic said last month during an earnings call. "Further and for the same reasons, we now no longer anticipate a meaningful

recovery in SAP Concur business travel-related revenues for the remainder of the year."

While SAP CEO Christian Klein noted Concur is "hard to sell in times of Covid," SAP in its earnings report nevertheless cited Uber Technologies, Bridgestone, Sysmex Europe and Keio University as among the organizations who chose SAP Concur solutions during the quarter.

For the third quarter, revenue for SAP as a whole fell about 4 percent year over year to more than €6.5 billion, holding steady at constant currency. Operating profit fell 12 percent year over year to €1.47 billion. ■



Study: With Safe Practices, Inflight Covid Transmission Low

Researcher rebuts IATA calculations

BY CHRIS DAVIS

The risk of inflight Covid-19 transmission is low, provided passengers remain masked throughout the flight and maintain social distancing when boarding and deplaning, according to a study released last month by Harvard University's public health school.

The study, conducted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health's Aviation Public Health Initiative and sponsored by a consortium of airlines, airplane manufacturers and airport operators, indicated that airlines' air-circulation practices are effective at virus filtration and echo results announced this month of a U.S. Transportation Command study.

Researchers pointed to planes' inflight air exchange and high-efficiency particulate air filtration practices as able to remove more than 99 percent of particles containing the virus from the air.

"Our team found that, together with their high-performing ventilation systems, the actions that the airlines put in place—including mandatory use of face masks—significantly reduce risks of viral transmission aboard an airplane," APHI co-director Leonard Marcus said in a statement. "With comprehensive adherence to these preventive measures by airlines and passengers, air travel, along with other sectors of society, can responsibly return to some level of normal activity as we await development of an effective vaccine."

The study examined current airline transmission mitigation efforts and modeled inflight virus transmission to reach its conclusions, according to researchers.

"With comprehensive adherence to these preventive measures by airlines and passengers, air travel, along with other sectors of society, can responsibly return to some level of normal activity as we await development of an effective vaccine."

—APHI'S LEONARD MARCUS

The study cited universal mask-wearing—save for brief periods of eating and drinking—maintaining social distancing while boarding and deplaning, providing pre-flight passenger health attestations and maintaining hand cleanliness as key measures to limit inflight virus spread.

Researchers considered the gate-to-gate inflight experience for this phase of the study; a second phase will examine the "curb-to-curb" experience, according to the report.

Researcher Refutes IATA Calculations

Meanwhile, a University of Alabama infectious disease specialist who co-authored a study of inflight transmission has rebutted the International Air Transport Association's interpretation of the included statistics. IATA's contention that there have been 44 confirmed cases of inflight transmission among 1.2 billion passengers—a ratio of one passenger in 27 million—is "bad math," Dr. David Freedman told Reuters.

"1.2 billion passengers during 2020 is not a fair denominator because hardly anybody was tested. How do you know how many people really got infected?" he said. "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

IATA defended the calculation to Reuters, calling the figure a "relevant and credible" sign of low risk without claiming it is a "definitive and absolute number."

Another recent report, however, details the inflight infection of 13 passengers on a summer 7.5-hour flight into Ireland. The report published in European infectious disease journal Eurosurveillance detailed the infection of the 13 passengers on a commercial flight with 48 passengers and 12 crew on a plane with 283 seats. Nine of the infected passengers were wearing masks, one—a one-year-old—was not, with status unknown for the other three.

The passengers were from three different continents, according to the report, all connecting at a "large international airport" for the flight to Ireland. Neither the airline, flight origin or destination nor the exact date of the flight were specified. The report links further spread to 46 more people in Ireland from the 13 passengers. ■

Cost Cuts, Lengthier Rentals Mark Avis Budget's Q3

BY DAWIT HABTEMARIAM

Avis Budget Group during the third quarter cut \$1 billion in costs amid a spate of lengthier rentals by both corporate and leisure customers, the company reported late last month. Avis Budget reported third-quarter revenue of \$1.5 billion, down 44 percent year over year.

Leisure continues to dominate Avis Budget' customer rental mix, and pricing for on-airport rentals is trending upward, according to Avis Budget Group CEO Joe Ferraro. Pricing of one-week on-airport rentals is "posi-

tive" compared with last year and is being influenced by longer rental periods, Ferraro said during Avis Budget's earnings call.

"People have kept the cars not just for weeks. We have an incredible amount of people, whether it's commercial [corporate] or leisure, that have kept the cars for months," Ferraro said. "The pandemic has created uncertainty, and vehicle solutions allow them to have that."

Avis Budget expects a slow demand re-

covery for the rest of the year. "We currently foresee demand proceeding with a slow recovery, especially where new cases are low and quarantine restrictions are lifted. Our experience during this initial recovery period continues to show as states or countries reopen rental activities accelerate," said CFO Brian Choi. "We believe they are meeting pent-up demand by those experiencing cabin fever. However, we believe a full recovery is contingent upon effective therapeutics and a vaccine."

Avis Budget cut \$1 billion in costs globally in the third quarter, bringing total costs cut to more than \$2 billion for the year so far. The car rental company said it profitably disposed of 75,000 vehicles in the U.S., including a record 49,000 vehicles sold through alternative channels. "We remain focused on what we can control," said Ferraro said.

The car rental company reported third-quarter net income of \$45 million and an adjusted net income of \$79 million. ■



Hotel Cos.’ 2021 Rebound Optimism Varies

Virus Resurgence Raises Business Travel Questions

Some hotel companies that reported third-quarter earnings this month expressed cautious optimism on an improved fourth quarter and continued recovery into 2021, but that view wasn’t unanimous amid a sharp resurgence of Covid-19 cases.

“We’re mindful of the recent increase of [virus] cases in the U.S. and Europe and the resulting increase in restrictions being put in place that will have a negative impact on travel in the near term and could produce flat demand in the fourth quarter,” said Hyatt Hotels Corp. president and CEO Mark Hoplamazian, adding that while leisure drive-to business is leading the recovery, “business transient and group, however, will both be necessary ingredients for achieving a full recovery and supporting better rate realization. We are prepared for the first half of 2021 to be challenging.”

Perhaps more optimistic, though cautiously, was Hilton president and CEO Christopher Nassetta, who pointed to a pick-up in business travel in the third quarter, as well as some group business bookings “in the year, for the year, and not in insignificant amounts.”

“We’re encouraged by the progress made over the last several months,” Nassetta said. “Travel demand is gradually picking up around the world, and we’ve welcomed back most of our corporate team members last month.” He added that Hilton is in the first phase of reopening its corporate offices, development deals have picked up, and travelers are feeling more comfortable.

Still, while some travel restrictions loosened during the summer, Covid-19 cases have picked up around the world, adding uncertainty to the fourth quarter. “There is a risk with the virus, it could go backwards,” Nassetta said. “Our best sense at the moment is people figuring out how to manage their own risk profile. We have a lot of data and information, and so long as countries aren’t locking them down, there’s some level of mobility that will likely allow us to maintain this level of operations we’ve been seeing.”

Marriott International president and CEO Arne Sorenson said booked group business at his company is down about 30 percent year over year so far for 2021, with the first quarter looking the worst in terms of group business on the books.

“We are optimistic we could have a vaccine or two by the end of this calendar year and see it get broadly distributed sometime in the first half of 2021,” he said a few days before Pfizer’s Nov. 9 announcement of strong preliminary results for its Covid-19 vaccine. “As that takes hold, we’re optimistic that group business will come back.”

Sorenson projected that the long-term effect of the pandemic on business travel would be similar to that of past crises.



“Generally, what we’ve seen in the few years following [a crisis] is that most of that group and business travel comes back. But not all of it.”

—MARRIOTT’S ARNE SORENSON

“Generally, what we’ve seen in the few years following [a crisis] is that most of that group and business travel comes back. But not all of it. We have seen a couple points shift from business transient and group combined toward leisure. I suspect we will continue to see that in the year ahead,” he said, adding that the industry still would see the lion’s share return “because people love to travel.”

Q3 Results

Marriott reported that third-quarter systemwide comparable constant-dollar revenue per available room fell 65.9 percent year over year as of Sept. 30, compared with a decline of 84.4 percent as of June 30. The figures include hotels temporarily closed due to Covid-19.

Third-quarter occupancy was 35.1 percent, a drop of 40.8 percentage points from 2019. Average daily rate fell 26.4 percent to \$117.44. In North America, comparable RevPAR was down 65.4 percent year over year, occupancy levels reached 37 percent, and ADR fell 27.6 percent to \$115.82. “Occupancy improved each month during the quarter, and we saw a steady climb in demand through August, then the improvement began to plateau,” Sorenson said, adding that he was pleased with the progress since April. “All chain scales saw improvements in the third quarter versus the second quarter.”

Hilton Worldwide third-quarter systemwide RevPAR declined 59.9 percent year over year on a comparable currency-neutral basis, compared with an 81 percent drop at the end of June. Year to date, it’s down 55.9 percent. U.S. RevPAR fell 58.6 percent year over year and has declined 54.6 percent year to date.

Occupancy levels also have begun to recover. The systemwide occupancy level as of Sept. 30 was 42.5 percent, down 36 percentage points from the year prior. This level compares with 22.3 percent occupancy for the second quarter. In the U.S., occupancy for the third quarter was 44.3 percent, down 34.8 percentage points from 2019.

The average daily rate was down 26 percent year over year for both the global portfolio as well as for the United States.

Hyatt Hotels Corp. third-quarter comparable systemwide revenue per available room declined 72 percent year over year, an improvement from the nearly 90 percent decline as of June 30. The company didn’t provide systemwide occupancy, but for the Americas, third-quarter occupancy at full-service properties was 17.7 percent for the quarter, and occupancy for select-service hotels was 44.3 percent. Net income decreased 154.2 percent year over year to a loss of \$161 million.

Greater China showed encouraging results, with group business at similar levels to this period in 2019, and business transient was off only approximately 200 basis points, Hoplamazian said. “Notably, on the group business front, we continue to host new product launches for car manufacturers as well as luxury goods companies. We view the China experience as an example of the strong desire people have to travel and gather and the type of demand you might expect to see elsewhere once travel restrictions lift and fear around the virus ceases to be such a limiting factor to travel.” ■

Trade Home Offices for Guest Rooms, Hotel Cos. Tell Workers



As companies extend their work-from-home regulations during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, hotel chains are getting creative with designing packages to appeal to consumers looking for an alternative to their home office and

the potential distractions that come with one. While these programs aren't necessarily geared toward traditional business travelers, they are designed for travelers in need of doing business during their stays.

Marriott International last month announced the Work Anywhere with Marriott Bonvoy program, which was partially designed based on customer feedback that showed 42 percent of more than 400 U.S. business professionals would consider working from a hotel.

"Working remotely doesn't necessarily have to mean working from home, where blurred lines between personal and professional lives can create distractions and stress," said Marriott group president of consumer operations, technology and emerging businesses Stephanie Linnartz in a statement.

The program's Day Pass makes a hotel room at participating properties available from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Benefits include a welcome amenity and complimentary bottled water, and use of business facilities where available. The



Stay Pass combines the Day Pass with an overnight stay, allowing for checkout at 6 p.m. the following day, plus use of hotel amenities like the pool or fitness center, and free breakfast and complimentary evening cocktails where available. Play Pass is available for longer stays at participating luxury and resort locations. The pass comes with a business concierge, supervised kids' activities, and preferred office and study spaces, among other benefits. The passes also allow guests to earn points on eligible hotel charges.

Last month, Hilton introduced a pilot of Workspaces by Hilton, a work-from-hotel program available at participating properties in the United States and Canada, excluding Quebec, "for both corporate customers and individuals seeking private office space to increase efficiency in their workday," wrote a company representative in an email.

The program includes a private standard guest room, food-and-beverage options, a desk and chair as well as a workspace, complimentary Wi-Fi, access to hotel amenities as available, and the ability to earn Hilton Honors points.

Hyatt Hotels Corp. expanded its Work From Hyatt program in late August after what it called a strong response to its initial launch, with nearly 90 hotels across North America and the Caribbean participating. "People are looking for more than just weekend escapes, and our extended-stay package allows guests to enjoy premium amenities and services at our resorts with the conveniences of still being able to work and learn remotely," said Hyatt SVP commercial services Asad Ahmed in a statement. Prices start at \$139 plus tax for a minimum stay of seven nights, and include such benefits as a separate workspace, daily F&B credit, complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi internet access and waived resort fees. Guests can earn World of Hyatt loyalty points and can use their points to redeem for a Work From Hyatt package. ■

Marriott Fined Nearly \$24M for Starwood Data Breach

The U.K.'s Information Commissioner's Office late last month fined Marriott International £18.4 million (\$23.98 million) for a cyberattack on the Starwood Hotels & Resorts reservation system, according to the ICO, which levied the fine after concluding its investigation into the data breach.

The attack began in 2014, before Marriott's acquisition of Starwood, and was discovered in September 2018 and reported that November. The ICO initially wanted to penalize Marriott \$123 million. Before setting its final penalty, the ICO considered Marriott's explanation,

the steps Marriott took to mitigate the effects of the incident and the economic impact of Covid-19 on its business. The penalty relates to the breach only from May 25, 2018, when new rules under the General Data Protection Regulation came into effect.

Marriott estimated that up to 339 million guest records worldwide were affected, with about 7 million of those related to people in the U.K., according to the ICO.

The investigation found that Marriott failed to put appropriate technical or organizational measures in place to protect

the personal data being processed on its systems, as required by the GDPR.

"Millions of people's data was affected by Marriott's failure; thousands contacted a helpline and others may have had to take action to protect their personal data because the company they trusted it with had not," said ICO information commissioner Elizabeth Denham in a statement.

Marriott in a statement said that it does not intend to appeal the decision, "but makes no admission of liability in relation to the decision or the underlying allegations. As the ICO acknowledges, Marriott cooperated fully throughout the investigation."

Marriott further stated that it "deeply regrets the incident," and remains committed to the privacy and security of its guests' information and continues to make significant investments in security measures for its systems.

In March, Marriott announced it had experienced a second data breach, which had affected up to 5.2 million guests. ■



New Brands Fueling Best Western Growth

Best Western in recent years has expanded from a hotel company with a single brand to one with 18, and those new brands are fueling the company's growth, president and CEO David Kong said late last month during Best Western's virtual annual conference.

About "40 percent of the pipeline is new brands," he said, adding that those brands were launched to add a contemporary and elevated image to the company as well as to help ramp up scale. "Yet this growth has not been at the expense of our members."

Thirty-five SureStay brand projects are in the pipeline, accounting for nearly 13 percent of the total. Glo and Vib each have 13, for a combined share of nearly 10 percent. Executive Residency follows with 23 projects, for 8 percent. And Aiden with six hotels and Sadie with three account for 3 percent.

Since 2017, SureStay has grown quickly. "We now have 200 SureStays open in North America and 150 in international markets," Kong said. "At the end of the year, we should have over 360 SureStays open globally."

He also noted that the SureStay brand was ranked highest in guest satisfaction in the economy segment in J.D. Power's 2020 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study. "That's an incredible achievement," he said.

Still, the traditional brands account for the majority of the pipeline, and the Best Western brand ranked No. 1 in BTN's 2020 Hotel Brand Survey among the midprice cohort.

A Pivot in Corporate Travel Targets

Kong noted that the current environment has "placed a burden on our membership unlike anything we have ever seen," he said, adding that fall business has been compromised because of the weak corporate segments. "There are corporate challenges, and growth will not return for a while.

"Going into next year, travel will still not be as great as in 2019. Buyers are shrinking their programs and not including as many preferred hotels in their programs right now."

—BEST WESTERN'S WENDY FERRILL

We pivoted and now are focused on Walmart, Amazon and traveling nurses, sports teams and project construction business."

Best Western SVP and chief marketing officer Dorothy Dowling echoed these sentiments when she presented. "There are changes in all segments, particularly business travel, but there is still business to win," she said. "We are focused on the right accounts at the right time to secure the most business. There is an increase for project, disaster and quarantine business," noting that GE, Siemens, Pacific Gas and Electric and BNSF all still are traveling. "We are using third parties to hone strategies and identify companies traveling today to capture that business and shift market share."

In a question-and-answer session after the close of the presentations, Best Western VP of worldwide sales Wendy Ferrill addressed a question about moving back to a seasonal rate strategy.

"Right now, I don't know if customers would buy into it," she said. "First, clients are finding lower rates, either in a comp set or at a hotel through promotions. The other piece is that our traditional comp set is now much bigger." Larger hotels that used to not want Best Western's type of business because they were filling up with group or other segments now are selling at a lower rate, she explained, "and lowering their rate by 20 percent is not as painful to them as what we feel at 20 percent. ... At the same time, once you step outside of some of those [corporate] programs, it will be hard to get back in. Going into next year, travel will still not be as great as in 2019. Buyers are shrinking their programs and not including as many preferred hotels in their programs right now."

She also noted that hotel owners should access the company's Business Advantage program to help grow their share of corporate travelers from small and midsize businesses. "It's a great program and it's producing well, with prior-year year-over-year business only slightly down, in the single digits."

Best Western senior director of worldwide sales Heather Bailey added that "some larger corporate business has been shifting to smaller midscale business," she said. "We are already going into conversations with customers with that offering." ■

Q3 U.S. Hotel Pipeline Slows

The total U.S. hotel construction pipeline, which includes projects under construction, scheduled to start in the next 12 months and those in early planning, at the end of the third quarter was down about 7 percent year over year for projects and down about 6 percent for rooms, according to Lodging Econometrics. The U.S. pipeline as of Sept. 30 stood at 5,282 projects and 655,026 rooms, according to the company.

The third-quarter pipeline also trailed second-quarter figures, which the company

expected as a cyclical higher number of projects under construction in the first quarter were delayed and opened in Q2. Further, new project announcements continue to be muted, and 191 projects with 21,859 rooms during the third quarter either exited the pipeline or moved to a canceled or hold status.

In Q3, 1,610 projects were under construction, a 7 percent year-over-year decline. Those projects totaled 216,136 rooms, down 8 percent year over year, according to the third-

quarter report. Projects in the early planning stage were at 1,559 with 192,362 rooms, representing both a year-over-year and a quarter-over-quarter increase, according to Lodging Econometrics.

Dallas had the largest total hotel construction pipeline at 154 projects with 18,592 rooms, followed by Los Angeles (134 projects with 25,188 rooms), New York City (144 projects with 25,147 rooms), Atlanta (134 projects with 18,670 rooms) and Houston (109 projects with 11,384 rooms). New York had the most projects under construction (105 projects with 18,453 rooms).

During the quarter, 280 hotels with 31,271 rooms opened in the United States. Year to date, 599 hotels with 68,712 rooms have opened in the U.S., with another 326 projects with 35,324 rooms anticipated to open by the end of 2020. ■



Lufthansa Launches NDC Continuous Pricing Offering

BY MARK FRARY

Germany's Lufthansa Group last month launched a continuous pricing offering, enabling its airlines to set fares in more than the 26 buckets traditionally used.

The airline says the existing system "leads to unnecessary price jumps" and does not allow them to "offer the optimal price to answer customer demands when the optimal price lies between two booking classes."

At launch, fares are available for most European continental routes on Lufthansa, Swiss and Austrian Airlines.

The continuous pricing offering has been enabled by the carrier's adoption of the International Air Transport Association's New Distribution Capability.

Lufthansa said that the new fare-setting system is part of its NDC Smart Offer program and will only apply "if the customer has a price advantage."

In its documentation for the new pricing offering, Lufthansa said the technology does not identify individual customers, "but differentiate[s] between customer enquiries and

"We champion direct connections with suppliers precisely because it means we can pass benefits like these on to our customers in full and without delay."

—CLICKTRAVEL'S ROBIN SMITH

search behavior." It said this means that fares are not differentiated on the basis of personal customer data, such as gender, weight, salary or place of residence, but are based solely on the general dynamic market requirements—for example, high season, day of departure/arrival, time between booking and departure.

Continuous pricing fare offers are available only via Lufthansa NDC application programming interface—specifically, Lufthansa Group airlines direct NDC API, NDC API via a certified technology provider or its Farelogix-powered SPRK agent portal—as well as the group's dot-com websites. Travel agents using a global distribution system do not have access to the new price offers, it said.

In the U.K., travel management company Click Travel this week has become one of the first companies to offer continuous pricing for all customers using its booking platform.

Robin Smith, Click Travel's chief product engineer, said: "We champion direct connections with suppliers precisely because it means we can pass benefits like these on to our customers in full and without delay. Whilst others will follow, when there is a third party involved in securing new fares such as these, the customer is paying for that service one way or another. Our customers will get the full benefit of the savings available."

Kevin Young, Lufthansa's senior key account manager, said: "Continuous pricing eliminates the high price jumps associated with traditional pricing that often impact business travelers. The new price offer, based on continuous pricing, is lower than the standard fare, which is offered in traditional distribution channels." ■

AgentWare Folds, Leaving Southwest Gap In GetThere

Agency-focused content aggregator AgentWare discontinued operations Oct. 31, creating a gap in the Sabre GetThere corporate booking tool for users that tapped AgentWare to access Southwest Airlines and a few other carriers.

"AgentWare recently informed Sabre it was ceasing operations starting the 31st October 2020 and will discontinue the provision of air content to GetThere with immediate effect," according to a Sabre client memo obtained by The Beat in late October. "After this date, it will not be possible to shop and book Southwest Airlines, Gol Linhas Aereas Inteligentes, Azul Linhas Aereas Brasileiras and Interjet Airlines."

Sabre is "working diligently to re-instate the ability to shop and book these airlines in GetThere and are committed to acquiring the best possible depth and

breadth of content for you to present the best offers for your travelers," according to the memo.

In a follow-up to The Beat, Sabre clarified the memo. "Unfortunately, our email oversimplified the situation and doesn't tell the full story as the majority of the content referenced is still available in GetThere through the Sabre GDS and other sources."

Officials from AgentWare could not be reached. Its website now is unresponsive.

"This is a difficult time for the travel industry and we are sorry to hear this unfortunate news," Sabre noted of AgentWare's discontinuation. "While the volume of GetThere bookings made through AgentWare is low, we recognize that the content is important to our GetThere customers. A majority of the content from the impacted airlines is still available in GetThere via

the Sabre GDS and other sources, and we are actively exploring a variety of options to secure the content previously accessed through AgentWare with minimal disruption to customers."

Southwest Business senior director of B2B strategy and services Rob Brown in an email to The Beat confirmed Southwest had a direct relationship with AgentWare and said the carrier was notified Oct. 28 "about their plans to cease operation."

AgentWare's cessation comes at a time when Sabre and Southwest have been unable to forge a broader distribution pact. Southwest last summer announced deals to participate for the first time in the Amadeus and Travelport global distribution systems in a traditional and comprehensive way. The carrier this year has gone live in those channels, but Southwest president Tom Nealon in July said the airline no longer was engaged in talks with Sabre. Further, Southwest at year-end will stop participating in the feature-light basic booking request distribution model it deploys through the Sabre GDS.

In light of AgentWare's cessation, Southwest's Brown on Oct. 29 said the carrier was "engaged in early conversations with our contacts at GetThere regarding the plans and next steps for accessing Southwest content." ■

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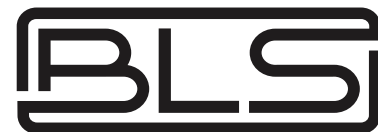
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The Lufthansa Group carriers are represented by Lufthansa German Airlines, SWISS, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines and Eurowings. Operating flights from Frankfurt, Munich, Zurich, Vienna, Brussels and Dusseldorf Lufthansa Group Airlines offer a high-quality product and service, and a comprehensive route network combined with the highest level of travel flexibility.

The Lufthansa Group Airlines have introduced extensive hygiene and safety measures on board and on the ground. The Group is also in close contact with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and national authorities to promote the ongoing development and harmonization of health standards in air transport during the corona pandemic.

With travel restrictions lifting, the Lufthansa Group continues to ramp-up its services. The aim is to reinstate as many flights as possible to meet the increasing demand for private and business travel.

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As BTN’s 2018 Best Practitioner and Concur’s 2019 Innovator Award winner, Yukari Tortorich (VP Global Travel Services @ Discovery Inc.) said, “What’s important [getting] the message to the travelers at the time they’re making their travel booking. So when Shep came around, I thought this is it, this is the answer for us.”

www.sheptravel.com



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www.thrustcarbon.com



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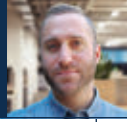


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www.undelayapp.com





Concerns Mount Over Europe's Strong Customer Authentication Deadline

BY AMON COHEN

Increased anti-fraud verification of electronic card payments, known as Strong Customer Authentication, on Dec. 31 will come into force across the European Economic Area. But the travel and payment industries look less than prepared. According to an Amadeus survey released last month, only a third of 60 airline, hotel and travel agency payment professionals expect to be ready to apply SCA checks across all sales channels by the deadline. Another quarter of all respondents indicated they would be fully ready by June 2021.

Part of the European Union Revised Payment Services Directive of 2018, SCA requires card users to confirm their identity through two out of three factors: something you know, something you own and something you are (biometric recognition). A typical two-factor authentication would be a customer entering a one-time passcode on their mobile phone and confirming with a biometric fingerprint.

According to an Amadeus white paper, "perhaps the biggest changes will be for travel agents which normally pass the entire payment process through to the travel supplier. From now on, travel agents in a 'pass-through' will either have to carry out authentication and forward confirmation that this has been done to the airline, hotel or other travel supplier; or indicate the payment is out of scope or exempt from SCA and therefore authentication need not be applied."

Enforcement of SCA already has been delayed once from a September 2019 deadline. The United Kingdom has pushed the deadline back a second time to September 2021, and 61 percent of the Amadeus survey respondents anticipated a similar postponement in the EEA, which comprises the European Union plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

However, the European Banking Authority, the

"Our focus is heavily on SCA, as is that of others in the travel industry. With other countries outside Europe likely to be coming in with similar legislation, that has sharpened our focus even more."

—TRAVELPORT'S KYLE MOORE

institution responsible for enforcing SCA within the EU, has said there will be no more delays.

The payments industry is also running late with some aspects of its support for the travel sector. In particular, many corporate travel suppliers want to ensure they can flag requests to issuers for secure corporate payment exemption from SCA. Lodge and virtual cards, both of which are used heavily in Europe, are covered by this exemption, but it is not automatic. Travel agents can signal to the airline or other merchant that an exempt corporate payment method has been used, and the merchant can request the exemption. Yet, the final decision rests with the issuer.

The corporate travel sector has been waiting since summer for full guidance on exemptions from UK Finance, a U.K.-based association of financial services companies taking the lead on behalf of the European payments industry for SCA implementation.

Travelport finally received detailed but provisional information about the secure corporate payment exemption from UKF on Oct. 27, vice president for product marketing Kyle Moore told The Beat.

Amadeus head of merchant services for payments Jean-Christophe Lacour said his company has built as much of its corporate payment exemption-flagging process as it can while awaiting more detail from UKF. Amadeus hopes to deliver the flag in early 2021.

"We have made room in one of the fields of the message arising for that transaction for [agents] to let us know the card qualifies for an exemption," Lacour said, adding that "the control framework needs to be clarified" in the UKF guidance.

That framework would set out the obligations of each stakeholder in the booking and payment process for making corporate payment exemptions legally permissible and preventing abuse. For example, travel management companies likely will need to ensure that only permitted users can access their systems, and acquirers likely will introduce new rules in contracts with merchants on how they can apply the exemption.

UKF did not respond to a request for comment.

A Tech Breakthrough?

More encouragingly, an important breakthrough with another technical development should make introducing SCA easier for travel companies.

The International Air Transport Association last

Emburse Launches Small-Business Booking, Expense Platform

BY CHRIS DAVIS

Expense management provider Emburse launched a booking platform for small businesses that is integrated with its expense tools and allows users to generate virtual and physical payment cards, the company announced late last month.

Dubbed Tallie Travel, the platform's booking component is powered by travel management company Amtrav's homegrown booking tool, according to Emburse. Booking data flows into

Tallie in real time, according to Emburse, and the virtual or physical cards generated through Tallie can include restrictions on acceptable spending levels and categories.

"There's increased demand for more tightly integrated expense-payment-travel solutions," Emburse head of corporate strategy and business development Omar Qari. "With Tallie Travel plus Tallie Expense plus, this is part of our re-

sponse to that. Providing this more tightly integrated solution is what the market is looking for, especially in the lower end."

User companies would purchase from Emburse bundles of bookings that travelers could then use to book via Tallie, Qari said.

The move allows Emburse to deliver via Amtrav duty-of-care solutions to a segment of the markets that doesn't often have fully managed travel programs, Qari said.

"Historically, a lot of our customers for the Tallie solution are ad hoc, not using managed travel, and they were using things like Expedia or Kayak, or employees would just book it and then it would flow in or they would email it in," Qari said. "By working with partner like Amtrav, and having a more managed travel solution, what we are also able deliver is more duty of care or traveler safety and security and control, so organizations are able to pinpoint exactly where employees are." ■

month confirmed that Amadeus became the first “travel platform,” or global distribution system, to process an agency-initiated ticket payment authenticated through 3DS2. 3D Secure is the standard pre-authorization security check deployed by the card industry. The original 3DS1 is capable only of supporting SCA with considerable additional manual input. 3DS2 can exchange much more information automatically and is available on mobile, allowing such authentication processes as a one-time passcode.

“The agent can authenticate the transaction and send the proof in reporting files to the airline or other merchant of record,” said Lacour. In addition, the payment technology Amadeus offers to its airline and other merchant clients has been upgraded to 3DS2 and, said Lacour, tested across all formats.

Travelport also has been preparing. “As of August 2019, we have had a payment application programming interface capable of transmitting 3DS2 data through ARC and BSP,” said Moore. Similar Travelport APIs for hospitality providers and low-cost carriers also are in an advanced stage of development, he added.

“Our focus is heavily on SCA, as is that of others in the travel industry,” said Moore. “With other countries outside Europe likely to be coming in with similar legislation, that has sharpened our focus even more. With a lot of bookings in the indirect channel likely to be out of scope or exempt, we feel we’re in pretty good shape.”

Sabre did not respond to a request to comment.

What Next?

Despite the progress, the Amadeus survey found that two-thirds of respondents believe SCA will increase abandonment of transactions. However, the white paper highlights a temporary safety net which should help limit card refusals in the early days of SCA enforcement.

“For a limited (but so far unspecified) time, according to UK Finance, some payments might be signaled as Mail Order/Telephone Order (MOTO) or ‘Merchant-initiated transaction without proof of authentication,’ both of which are out of scope,” according to the white paper. “However, these are only temporary measures, and companies will be expected to clarify payment gateways and acquirers and find more permanent solutions in the medium term.”

The Amadeus white paper offers five recommendations to travel companies preparing for SCA. These include: mapping payment flows to understand which intermediaries are involved and will have to make upgrades; migrating to 3DS2; understanding use cases for different kinds of transactions and how to make payment for each compliant; and working with travel and payment partners to maximize exemptions.

The fifth is to plan for merchant-initiated transactions, including making charges to travelers’ cards for cancellations, or for hotel mini-bar bills after check-out. SCA requires travel suppliers and agents to present clear terms and conditions to the customer to gain their consent for these cardholder-not-present transactions and to perform a preliminary authentication at the time of booking even if payment won’t be taken until later. ■

The Beat

BTNGROUP

Louis Magliaro, Executive Vice President & Group Publisher
973.769.0028 • lmagliaro@thebtngroup.com

EDITORIAL

Elizabeth West
Editorial Director
732.494.1955 • ewest@thebtngroup.com

Jay Boehmer
Editor-in-Chief, The Beat
646.380.6249 • jboehmer@thebtngroup.com

Chris Davis
Managing Editor
646.380.6248 • cdavis@thebtngroup.com

Michael B. Baker
Senior Editor, Transportation
646.380.6250 • mbaker@thebtngroup.com

Donna M. Airoldi
Senior Editor, Lodging & Meetings
646.380.6264 • dairoldi@thebtngroup.com

Adam Perrotta
Editor, Payment & Technology
518.859.5117 • aperrotta@thebtngroup.com

Dawit Habtemariam
Staff Writer & Assistant Editor
646.380.6267 • dhabtemariam@thebtngroup.com

James Jarnot
Art Director
646.380.6252 • jjarnot@thebtngroup.com

DIGITAL

Alexandra Mancini
Digital Director
201.902.1984 • amancini@thebtngroup.com

SALES

Lindsay Straub
Associate Publisher
646.380.6274 • lstraub@thebtngroup.com

Rich Markus
Business Development Director
301.944.4324 • rmarkus@thebtngroup.com

Claire LaVelle
Business Development Coordinator
646.380.6271 • clavelle@thebtngroup.com

Debbie Anderson
Hawaii
808.739.2200 • debbieanderson@dmhawaii.com

Michiko Kawano
Japan • +81-3-3661-6138 • kawano-pbi@gol.com

Lavender Tan
Singapore
(65) 9752 8613 • lavtan@singnet.com.sg

PRODUCTION

Michele Garth
Production Manager
201.902.1930 • mgarth@ntmlc.com

Lisa Gonzales
Gayle Graizzaro
Production Specialists
201.902.2000
lgonzales@ntmlc.com • ggraizzaro@ntmlc.com

CONFERENCES & CONTENT SOLUTIONS

David Meyer
Executive Director of Conference Content & Strategy
646.380.6246 • dmeyer@thebtngroup.com

Mary Ann McNulty
Executive Director of Content Solutions
630.519.4510 • mmculty@thebtngroup.com

Jen Bankard
Director of Content Solutions & Conferences
717.460.1091 • jbankard@thebtngroup.com

Melissa Gain
Event Manager
917.626.6832 • mgain@thebtngroup.com

Mariza Moreira
Group Design Manager
201.902.1965 • mmoreira@ntmlc.com

MARKETING

Max Bzdyk
Marketing Manager
646.346.5676 • mbzdyk@thebtngroup.com

LIST RENTAL & Reprints
Danielle Zaborski • MeritDirect for list rental
914.368.1090 • dzaborski@meritdirect.com

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The Path to Purposeful Travel

BY CAROLINE STRACHAN

In a column for BTN in May 2020, I shared this line: *“They say you don’t truly know the value of something until it’s no longer there. Well, the ability to travel is currently gone. So now is the time to assess its true value.”*

In the months to follow, travel managers around the world grappled with how to plan their company’s return to travel and defining what “permissible travel” might look like. When might the return start? Trying to plan scenarios on a backdrop of total uncertainty, whilst trying to demonstrate value to their organizations to ensure their role wasn’t eliminated. Ouch, what a year!

While travel’s return is yet to fully emerge, it’s time to look ahead. A number of helpful assessments on what types of business travel will or won’t return are due. But travel managers shouldn’t wait for others to determine what types of travel will be valuable to their companies. It’s time to get strategic and, likely, uncomfortable—because the task will require letting go of potentially protective stances and start with “demand.”

As any world-class procurement professional can share, you always start with demand. What is driving the need? Why is the product or service needed? We don’t tend to start with this in travel management, albeit there were some early signs we were headed this way if you look at sustainability debates in our sector. For the most part, though, we have started with travel as the default and then focused on how to deliver travel services. It’s why for years travel has been seen as a cost line item. It’s a thing you do without even thinking about it; travel had become the default. Hence why CFOs always target T&E as a discretionary cost line.

So, what if we started from scratch: What if we took the initiative truly to engage with budget owners across the business to understand why their people travel? Not which flights they take, not how much they spend, not what percent of bookings are made online—you may get sidetracked, don’t let that happen!—but instead you want to drive a more valuable discussion, one that speaks their language. A discussion that helps them think through their true business need, aligned to the culture and company objectives.

Festive Road is working behind the scenes with clients and great thinkers* in the industry to test this theory, and we think we’re onto something. We believe you can classify travel into three broad categories and then a further 30-plus subcategories. Imagine a conversation where you take those types, along with the “why” (the value the travel creates) and debate which types of travel your company could be investing in? One technique to achieve this is to start that conversation by defaulting all interaction types to virtual and assume no



Caroline Strachan is managing partner at business travel consultancy Festive Road.

* Festive Road would like to thank the travel buyers who were able to join us for a two-day face-to-face (yes really in-person!) exercise to discuss defining the true value of business travel. We called the exercise and process “Macroscope” because of the necessity to think beyond our normal remit. The input of these buyers contributed to shaping our thinking and the output of this exercise will be provided to the industry in due course.

travel. Risky, right? We’re travel people, why would we attempt to justify travel for every type of defined company interaction? But try it. By taking something away, you must get to the true value to justify its return—and that’s really powerful. Here are some examples:

Category 1: Organization

Previously referred to as “internal” travel, it’s tempting to over-simplify this category of travel, painting with a broad brush where detail is actually required to determine value. Think about board meetings through to regulatory needs and beyond.

An example of a sub-category would be “supply chain assurance.” Consider which key suppliers would have an overwhelming negative effect on your business if they stopped operating tomorrow (e.g. a manufacturer has supply issues and stops creating an ingredient of a lifesaving drug). What’s the risk of not spending time in-person at their facilities? If there’s no risk, the assessment will determine a default to virtual meetings.

Category 2: Customer

In this category, a combination of what is often referred to as “client travel” and “sales,” it’s important to consider all activities related to the development of new customers as well as the servicing of existing ones.

A Category 2 sub-category would be a “revenue development” opportunity with existing clients. Consider how often customers expect your people to spend time with them. Are competitors targeting your clients? Which customers are at risk or up for renewal? What new products or services require an onsite to truly assess their need to buy?

Category 3: People

Finally, category three is an increasingly important and complex category, exacerbated by the accelerated change to corporate structure and cultures. Whilst all three will vary by organization, this third one is the most variable. Here you need to consider every type of travel needed to attract, motivate and manage your people.

An example of a subcategory would be “motivation through team building.” How is team engagement? How is the team feeling? What priority deliverables are slow-going? When did the team last gather in person? Are you still able to build team congeniality? How do future office plans impact these needs?

It’s such a different conversation. Imagine holding a series of meetings with your key budget holders or C-suite to introduce this approach. Not only would you reach a point of agreeing what purposeful travel is to your organization, but you would also be seen as the strategic thinker who can challenge wasteful demand and encourage valuable demand.

We’re on the start of this journey, no one has been here before. That can be both daunting and exciting. While we’re not traveling, let’s make use of this pause and create something better than we had before—purposeful travel that drives qualifiable value to your company. Are you ready? ■

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Being Business Travel News rebranded to Business Travel News Europe (BTN Europe). The new look features a refreshed design and navigation of the magazine, BTN Europe and the Business Travel News website. BTN Europe will continue to be a for weekly magazine, and will complement other titles within the BTN Group, including Business Travel News, Travel Procurement and The Beat, as well as weekly regional UK, events. The Business Travel News, Travel Technology Europe and The Beat magazine. BTN Europe will serve both the UK and European corporate travel market, and later this year launch a new series of award-winning professional events. A new website, businessandtravelnews.com, has also launched, incorporating BTN Europe content they represent, travel, as well as content from Business Travel News and Travel News, which BTN acquired along with The Business Travel News. Following the acquisition, the new content will be available in both of these websites as well as being available on the BTN Group's editorial platform.

BTN Europe will continue to be a weekly magazine, and will complement other titles within the BTN Group.

Editorial News, BTN Europe's editorial director, said: "Business Travel News is excited to merge two of the most respected content sources in the UK market and to have the opportunity to expand our reach. Emotionally, these two groups had to engage with our English, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Spanish colleagues and beyond. But our focus is also looking at how we can diversify our editorial and content products in Europe and make them to be your specific needs. If we do our job right, we can help you to make your job right - sharing market intelligence, industry engagement and leading-edge innovation in travel management."

"BTN's growth also leads us to see how we can improve our content, and I look forward to offering more research and editorial content to our long-standing audience."

Mark Brown, BTN Europe digital editor, added: "We really excited about what the future holds for us but we're part of the BTN Group. We have to make plans - we're in a tough market of the best industry."

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