

BTN

BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS



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TRAVEL MANAGER SALARIES

Averages based on BTN's annual surveys



BY ELIZABETH WEST

BTN'S ANNUAL SALARY SURVEY & REPORT

Travel Managers Eye More Opportunity Post-Covid

BTN's 2021 Salary Survey revealed an upbeat perspective among many travel managers as business travel inches toward recovery amid a global pandemic. For some, the global crisis underscored the strategic value of their work; for others, it opened new opportunities to expand or deepen their roles—and sometimes both. The effects of the pandemic weren't positive for all travel managers, however. BTN's survey uncovered instances of job loss for some whose companies suffered financially or altered their business travel outlook for the foreseeable future.

The average salary for a travel manager taking BTN's survey in 2021 was

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SHARING STORIES OF ANXIETY AND HARASSMENT

LGBTQ+ Business Travelers Navigate Complexities

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

As she was preparing for a long-term assignment in Algeria, Kristina Martinez received from her employer a one-page document on local laws and customs that was supposed to be informative but instead was jarring.

"The one-pager had, as the first bullet point, that homosexuality is illegal, and I was shocked that there was no further information," said Martinez, who has traveled around the world for nearly the past two decades while working in the oil and gas industry. "Imprisonment for homosexuality in Algeria is up to two years if convicted, and I remember thinking, 'Will the company's lawyer defend me? Is this safe for me?'"

Knowing the additional dangers the assignment presented to her as a lesbian, Martinez wrestled with the decision of whether to go. She knew it was a great opportunity that would look good on her résumé, and

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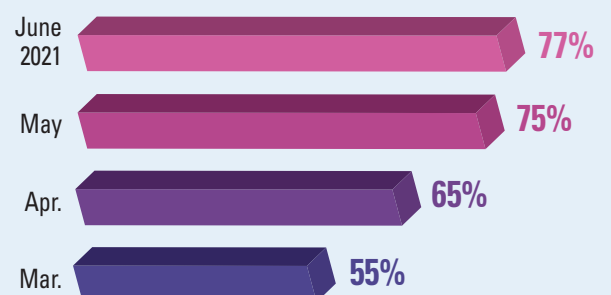
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Buyers: Business Travel Willingness Gaining

Respondents who indicate their travelers are "very" or "somewhat" willing to travel for business



Source: Global Business Travel Association monthly surveys of member travel managers and procurement professionals



CORPORATE TRAVELERS CAN MODIFY THEIR BOOKINGS AT NO EXTRA COST.

Turkish Airlines Corporate Club members can cancel or change their tickets without penalty. Therefore, any work-related compulsory travel changes will not financially affect our members.



United Aircraft Order Heralds Shift to Premium Seats, Bigger Planes

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

United Airlines has agreed to an order of 270 new aircraft from both Boeing and Airbus as part of long-term fleet plan to increase premium seating and cut down use of 50-seat regional aircraft, the carrier announced.

The new order includes 150 Boeing 737 Max 10 aircraft and 50 737 Max 8 aircraft as well as 70 Airbus A321neo aircraft. Added to its previous orders, United now has more than 500 new narrow-body aircraft on the way, including 40 that will be introduced in 2022 and 138 in 2023.

"It's a nose-to-tail plan for the future that we've been working on for many years," United EVP and chief commercial officer Andrew Nocella said during a media call. "We're building an airline that can compete with anyone across a range of product types."

The fleet overhaul will increase total seats per departure by about 30 percent, an average of 30 seats per flight, on North American flights by 2026 and will significantly boost premium seating availability. The Max 8 aircraft includes 16 United First and 54 Economy Plus seats, and the larger Max 10 aircraft, which United plans to debut in early 2023, will have 20 United First and 64 Economy Plus seats. The A321neo aircraft will begin service in 2023 as well and have premium seating similar to that of the Max 10 aircraft, according to United.

Economy seating will not get tighter on the new aircraft, Nocella said. "This is not an opportunity for United to densify our aircraft," he said. "We're keeping the same comfort standards we have today."

United also will retire older mainline jets and at least 200 single-class regional jets. While the 50-seat regional aircraft will still be used to fly to smaller markets, "we will no longer use them to fly to large communities," Nocella said.

By having more larger aircraft in its narrowbody fleet, United also can add capacity in markets where runway constraints make it difficult to add more flights, specifically

"This is not an opportunity for United to densify our aircraft. We're keeping the same comfort standards we have today."

—UNITED'S ANDREW NOCELLA

Newark and San Francisco, he said. The Max 10 aircraft largely will be used from those airports, he said.

With better fuel efficiency and aerodynamics than the older fleet, the new aircraft will cut carbon emissions per seat up to 15 percent by 2026, according to United.

In addition, the new aircraft will feature larger overhead bins capable of housing one carry-on bag per passenger, fast in-flight Wi-Fi capable of streaming video and Bluetooth technology to connect wireless headphones and seatback entertainment screens. Along with the new aircraft, United is retrofitting its current mainline narrowbody fleet to meet similar standards by 2025, which will bring the "same, consistent experience" across the mainline network, Nocella said.

UNITED EASES LOYALTY RESTRICTIONS

Meanwhile, United Airlines has loosened restrictions in its MileagePlus program, a move the carrier hopes will help stimulate business travel demand later in the year.

Recent changes have included eliminating blackout dates for all members—previously, Premier members and qualified co-branded Chase cardholders had no blackout dates, but it has now been expanded program-wide—and cutting award prices on certain routes. One-way Economy fares on some routes to Europe, including Madrid, Lisbon and Reykjavik, have been cut to 22,500 miles, and some domestic routes are available for as little as 5,000 miles, according to the carrier. Additionally, it has increased premium cabin availability for upgrade rewards and discounted the co-pay for upgrade requests to Europe. United also has temporarily cut the cost in PlusPoints for skipping the premium upgrade waitlist and made the option available across more of its network.

Although business travel levels remain highly depressed—and reward travel generally is used for leisure travel, anyway—the adjustments also have been made with the future of business travel in mind, said Luc Bondar, president of MileagePlus and United VP of marketing and loyalty.

"It's getting customers familiarized again with travel, encouraging them to return to travel and take that first trip," Bondar said. "Whether it was company policy or their personal decisions, many have not traveled for the last 12-plus months, but we've found when customers take that first trip, the second trip happens in short order." ■

Southwest EVP Jordan to Succeed Kelly as CEO in '22

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

Longtime Southwest Airlines chairman and CEO Gary Kelly next year will step down as chief executive officer, and Southwest EVP of corporate services Robert Jordan will succeed him, the carrier announced.

Southwest's CEO since 2004 and a Southwest employee for 35 years, Kelly officially will leave his role on Feb. 1, 2022, and become the executive chairman of Southwest's board of directors. He intends to stay in that position at least through 2026, subject to the board's annual elections, according to William Cunningham, the lead director for Southwest's board.



Southwest's Robert Jordan

Kelly leaves Southwest with a much broader network than when he took the helm, having led during the carrier's acquisition of AirTran, expansion out of Dallas Love Field following repeal of the Wright Amendment and the carrier's first international service and service to Hawaii.

Jordan has been with Southwest nearly as long as Kelly, having joined the airline in 1988 and served in numerous executive positions over the subsequent decades, including VP of procurement, VP of technology, SVP of enterprise spend management and chief commercial officer. He led the AirTran acquisition as well as the development of Southwest's Rapid Rewards program and Southwest's e-commerce platform via its website.

"Bob and I have worked side by side for more than 30 years," Kelly said in a statement. "He is a gifted and experienced executive and well-prepared to take on this important role."

Kelly said he, along with Southwest president Tom Nealon and COO Mike Van de Ven, soon will begin working on transition plans. ■



New HRS Payments Growth Chief Eyes Recovery Boon

When corporate travel industry veteran Kurt Knackstedt recently took over as chief growth officer for HRS's Payment Solutions business unit, it became the latest step in his long and varied career in corporate travel. Knackstedt previously spent more than six years leading Troovo, the Australian-based virtual payments startup he co-founded. He previously led the travel and expense management program for global mining group Rio Tinto and served as president of the Association of Corporate Travel Executives. Knackstedt spoke with BTN payments and technology editor Adam Perrotta about his plans for building out HRS's payments offerings as corporate travel's return accelerates.

AS YOU TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR GROWING HRS'S PAYMENT SOLUTIONS, WHAT ARE YOUR TOP INITIAL PRIORITIES IN THAT ROLE?

My first priority is to listen—to customers, to the market, to my new colleagues and to our partners. I want to hear how they've recalibrated during the pandemic and what their plans are to emerge, what challenges we are collaborating on to solve, and what opportunities are out there for us to go after together.

Following that, my goal will be to help crystallize and deploy a clear message around the power of payments and how HRS can help transform the role of payments within the corporate program. The components of travel and payment tech have all been assembled nicely within the HRS Invisible Pay travel fintech ecosystem, and I'm excited to help increase awareness of the multiple cascading benefits of our capabilities with customers around the world.

AS CORPORATE TRAVEL RESUMES, WHAT WILL BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR BUYERS WHEN IT COMES TO HOTEL PAYMENTS, AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO HELP YOUR CLIENTS ADDRESS THEM?

It's not just about payments for hotels but payments, full stop. For too long, we've focused energy on trying to catch the horse from the barn, rather than teaching the horse to just not run outside when the doors are open. What I mean by this is that we need to change the role of payments within the ecosystem to not just be a facilitator of settlement between buyers and suppliers, but rather a powerful tool to drive compliance, performance and satisfaction from the very first moment a traveler considers planning their journey.

So, coming out of Covid, we have a phenomenal opportunity to reshape the way travel buyers think about the role of payments within their program. It gives travel managers the ability to open up a meaningful and long-term strategic dialogue with finance, risk, compliance, security and HR within their organization to demonstrate how a smarter, completely secure and transparent payment program can free up companies from spending too



HRS Payment Solutions' Kurt Knackstedt talks:

- The strategy behind HRS's fast-growing payment offerings
- Payments' potential to reshape corporate T&E post-Covid
- Leveraging his full range of industry experience in the new role

"We need to change the role of payments within the ecosystem to not just be a facilitator of settlement between buyers and suppliers, but rather a powerful tool to drive compliance, performance and satisfaction."

much time on the wrong things. If the industry just comes out of Covid-19 with the idea that "we just need to find a way to manage our program back to pre-pandemic levels and use the same techniques we did before," then we'll have lost a great chance to retool for the better.

We know that many programs have indeed rethought their programs and priorities during this unprecedented down time. But when it comes to payment, it can't just be a focus on, "How do I get a fax to the hotel that they won't throw away?" Instead, let's shoot for something more transformative, like, "How do I get all parties in the chain to embrace payment as a way to remodel the way we do things?"

FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS, YOU LED TROOVO, WHICH WAS FOCUSED LARGELY ON PROVIDING AUTOMATED VIRTUAL CARD ISSUING SOLUTIONS. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU PLAN TO GROW THAT CAPABILITY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF HRS' PAYMENTS OFFERINGS?

Troovo pioneered and delivered on the concept that virtual payments are far and away the best opportunity for companies to centralize, digitize, fully secure and globally scale payments both technically and commercially. The same principles we used to guide the strategy at Troovo are just as relevant at HRS Payment Solutions: payment should be easy to use, incredibly efficient, able to truly change the game on how business and travel processes are done and have global applicability. Invisible Pay already achieves a number of these goals, and that's part of why I'm so excited to take on this role. The key elements of a truly end-to-end payment program are all there, and it's now time to fully bring it to market.

BEYOND VIRTUAL CARDS, WHAT OTHER PAYMENT CAPABILITIES ARE YOU LOOKING TO DEVELOP FURTHER IN YOUR ROLE WITH HRS?

I am indeed enthused about the potential for broader use of current and future payment automation. That said, as I get started ... I'm most excited for the nearer-term fulfillment of scenarios where companies can leverage HRS Payment Solutions to cover the entire spectrum of their lodging program, and that includes transient, meetings and groups, extended stay and the growing segment of long-stay, which is already showing itself to be a popular choice for travelers as they get back on the road.

One impact of Covid is the trend of booking longer stays due to revised duty-of-care and safety protocols. Employees getting clearance to travel are increasingly being asked to fit in more meetings, client and prospect visits, et cetera, into each trip. We're also seeing vertical markets like energy, logistics, construction and healthcare drive more project-driven travel, and those long-stay scenarios are burdensome for travelers to put on personal, or even corporate cards, with so many nights accumulating. Companies with centralized payment solutions like Invisible Pay can handle these situations and gain transparency into the totality of their lodging spend, while also simplifying the payment and expense process for the traveler and the hotel. ■

BTNGROUP SYMPOSIUM

VIRTUAL



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Series

The BTN Group DEI Symposium Series is a platform to address the long-recognized shortfalls in diversity, inclusion and equity in the business travel industry through a series of discussions with travelers and industry experts. Each event in the series will follow a similar format, covering core topics including the traveler experience, policy and duty of care considerations, and sourcing practices.

12:30 to
4:30pm
ET

JUNE
22

LGBTQ+
TRAVELERS

JUNE
29

TRAVELERS WITH
DISABILITIES AND
HEALTH CONDITIONS

JULY
14

BIPOC
TRAVELERS

JULY
28

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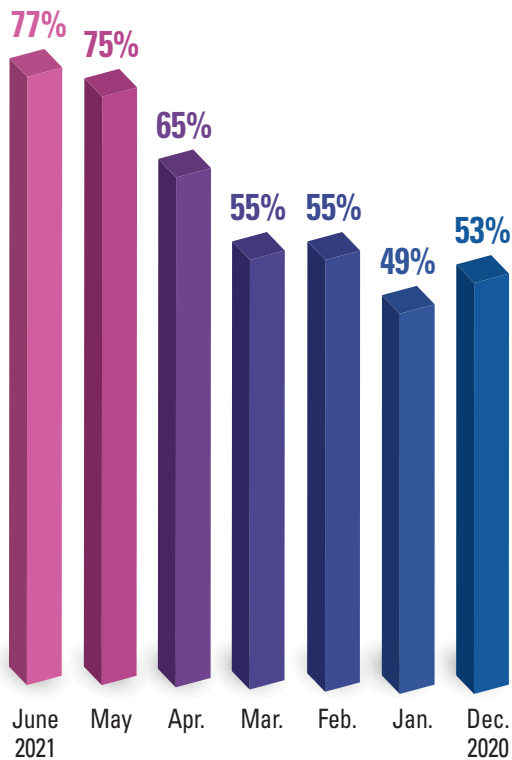


Corporate Demand Returning, If Slowly

Many post-vaccine indicators continue to point toward a business travel landscape that's getting back to normal: the willingness to travel continues to increase, meeting planners once again are contracting in-person events, and leisure travel continues to blossom. But the return to normal has been anything but rapid. Likely, reopening offices and schools will help accelerate the comeback, but the worrying Covid-19 variants also illustrate travelers' comfort with suppliers' health and safety measures, or lack thereof.

BUYERS: BUSINESS TRAVEL WILLINGNESS GAINING

Respondents who indicate their travelers are "very" or "somewhat" willing to travel for business



Source: Global Business Travel Association monthly surveys of member travel managers and procurement professionals

64%

NUMBER OF U.S. DOMESTIC CORPORATE AIR BOOKINGS ON MAY 20 AS COMPARED WITH THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2019.

Source: Mastercard Economics Institute

DO YOU TRUST TRAVEL SUPPLIERS TO ROBUSTLY ENFORCE COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES?

	Global	U.S.
Mandatory wearing of face masks	61%	60%
Access to sanitizing gel/wipes, face masks & gloves	58%	54%
Plexiglass at check-in	54%	58%
Temperature checks	53%	51%
Pre-flight Covid-19 testing	53%	47%
Contactless services	52%	49%
Social distancing	50%	45%
Managed boarding/queueing	50%	46%
Improved air filtration	46%	43%

Source: Travelport/Edelman March 19-29 survey of 12,000 travelers in 11 countries

WHEN DO PLANNERS HAVE FACE-TO-FACE EVENTS CONTRACTED?

	Week Ending	
	May 30	Online
Q3 2021	39%	52%
Q4 2021	55%	64%
Q1 2022	49%	59%
Q2 2022	45%	53%
None contracted	12%	5%

Source: I-Meet May 3-9 and May 24-30 surveys of meeting planners

ARC: STEADY REBOUND FOR U.S. CORPORATE AIR SALES

7-Day Period Ending	Agency type vs. same week in 2019		
	Corporate	Online	Leisure/Other
June 13	-66.4%	-10.1%	-38.0%
June 20	-64.6%	-6.5%	-36.1%
June 27	-62.2%	-11.2%	-37.4%
July 4	-58.2%	-11.8%	-38.7%
52-week average*	-82.0%	-43.6%	-64.1%

* Rolling average of prior 52 weeks vs. full-year 2019
Source: ARC



After Deal, CTM, T&T Ready Client Migrations, Unify Tech

BY JAY BOEHMER

Corporate Travel Management has made “tremendous progress” aligning operations, technology and people from last year’s acquisition of Travel and Transport, CTM North America CEO and former Travel and Transport CEO Kevin O’Malley last month said in an interview.

Integration is not completely done, but “we’re well through,” he said. The slow period in industry activity made way for greater consolidation speed than “normal times” would allow—“when you have a thousand things coming at you from all different directions,” he said.

“Getting teams aligned, getting platforms aligned has been the focus these past eight months,” O’Malley said. He said CTM North America “will start client migration shortly,” beginning with small and midsize customers before larger clients move.

The combined entity has been migrating to a single platform that includes “one profile, one mobile [tool], one portal, one reporting solution, one point-of-sale solution,” he said.

For profiles, Travel and Transport had developed some proprietary technology, and both travel management companies used a common third-party system from Umbrella. “We’ll continue down that same path together,” said O’Malley.

For agent-facing tools, Travel and Transport had a customer relationship management system that had flown under the name BARTT, or Booking Agent Reservation Technology Toolbox. This remains. “We call it CTM Advisor now, and it will be on all advisor desktops,” he said.

Mobile and portal solutions represent a combination of both TMCs’ capabilities. Travel and Transport was an early mover among TMCs in releasing its own mobile app. CTM also offers proprietary mobile tech.

The client-facing reporting system also will blend elements from both. “We’re moving the reporting to the CTM reporting solution, but a lot of the bells and whistles that were in the legacy T&T side have been moved into the CTM solution,” said O’Malley.

As for mid-office technology, Travel and Transport had adopted SAP Concur’s Compleat, while CTM in North America used Cornerstone Information Systems’ iQCX. “We’ve been migrating everything over to iQCX,” said O’Malley.

In addition, CTM North America is exploring capabilities from Tramada, the mid- and back-office tech provider that CTM acquired last year. CTM long had used Tramada in its native Australia.

CTM managing director Jamie Pherous during BTN Group’s Business Travel Show America conference in May commented on Tramada’s capabilities: “In North America, there’s not one tool that does everything. There’s five or six tools. They’re doing file finishing, automation, invoicing, reporting. [Tramada] is a great tool. It does everything. There’s a big reason why we are very productive in certain parts of the world where we use it. We see that as a big opportunity to take that offshore through our business but also to other agents and distribute that as well.”

As for global distribution systems, CTM is a Sabre shop. Travel and Transport primarily used Sabre and to a lesser degree Travelport, with a smattering of Amadeus in Europe.

“We’re in the throes of making that decision right now,” said O’Malley. “We’re having conversations with the GDSs. There’s a lot to it in that it’s not just about points of sale,” he said, citing considerations around access to content and different levels of supplier participation across systems.

CTM also brings to legacy Travel and Transport clients a proprietary traveler-facing booking tool, Lightning. O’Malley said that self-booking system was a factor in Travel and Transport’s choice of CTM as its acquir-



“If you think about the lifecycle of point-of-sale all the way to the end of a traveler getting back, we own all the pieces from where it starts to where it finishes.”

—CTM’S KEVIN O’MALLEY

The Beat

er last year. “Owning our own online booking tool is a huge competitive advantage, and you’ll see us double down on Lightning,” said O’Malley.

Tech Alone Not Enough

O’Malley echoed Pherous’ point that successful TMCs must compete on both technology and service to thrive.

“The CTM philosophy in so many ways is about owning our own destiny,” said O’Malley. “That’s the Tramada buy; that’s owning and building Lightning. If you think about the lifecycle of point-of-sale all the way to the end of a traveler getting back, we own all the pieces from where it starts to where it finishes.”

Already, some legacy Travel and Transport clients have migrated to Lightning, he said.

“We still support Concur and Deem and GetThere,” said O’Malley. “We will continue to take an agnostic approach. Certainly, we’re going to make sure our solution has as many bells and whistles to try to satisfy the customer as we can, but there are different reasons why sometimes another tool is the right fit.”

CTM in June announced the establishment of a new global organization to lead on multinational clients and global suppliers and partners “in support of what we do across the globe in all four regions as one big global TMC,” said O’Malley.

CTM as a multinational TMC is structured around four primary regions, with leadership in key markets of North America, Europe, Asia and its home base of Australia. “We all roll up as one big global TMC,” said O’Malley, the leader of North America, CTM’s largest region by client activity.

Pherous said, “We want to be in the key feeder markets, and we are.” Still, he said, “There’s a lot of regions where we prefer to use partners.”

The Radius network that Travel and Transport took whole ownership a few years ago and came over in the CTM deal factors into that partner strategy. Pherous last month said CTM liked the Radius hotel program, and he sees further opportunities with partners—not just for our network partners to enjoy hotel deals, but it’s non-GDS content, it’s NDC, it’s our Lightning booking tool. We don’t compete with most of our partners. It’s more about how we can make them a better partner, as well, and I think that’s something we see as a big opportunity moving forward into the next half of this calendar year.” ■



TravelPerk Acquires U.K. TMC Click Travel

BY ADAM PERROTTA & JAY BOEHMER

TravelPerk has acquired U.K.-based travel management company Click Travel, the company announced, its second major acquisition this year following its January purchase of U.S.-headquartered NexTravel. The deal is TravelPerk's first since closing a \$160 million funding round in April.

The acquisition brings under the TravelPerk umbrella more than £300 million in annual business travel spend across more than 2,000 Click Travel clients—mainly small and midsize businesses, including Five Guys and Red Bull, according to TravelPerk. All 150 of Click's Birmingham-based staff will join TravelPerk, the companies said.

In the near term, Click's business and platform will continue to operate independently under TravelPerk's ownership before Click clients eventually are migrated to TravelPerk, according to TravelPerk chief commercial officer Jean-Christophe Taunay-Bucalo.

"We are not in any hurry and expect the process to be slow and gradual," Taunay-Bucalo said of the planned integration roadmap.

Financial terms of the sale were not disclosed, but TravelPerk described it as "largest" of the three acquisitions it has made to date, which includes the July 2020 purchase of travel risk management startup Albatross as well as this year's NexTravel deal.

In the months since closing its \$160 million Series D funding round, TravelPerk has made no secret of its plans to deploy that war chest of investment on acquisitions in a bid to gain significant market share in preparation for the return of corporate travel after the Covid-19 pandemic.

But TravelPerk's competitors in the tech-forward travel management vertical have been making some big buys, and raking in big bucks, as well. Most notably, TripActions in May acquired U.K. TMC Reed & Mackay three months after closing a \$155 million Series E round.

The acquisition brings under the TravelPerk umbrella more than £300 million in annual business travel spend across more than 2,000 Click Travel clients.

Legacy TMCs have been active buyers as well, including American Express Global Business Travel, which agreed in May to purchase Egencia in a megadeal uniting two of the top five biggest global travel management providers.

Pre-pandemic, Click Travel was growing at a strong clip. For the year ending March 31, 2020, the company reported gross travel sales rose 11 percent year over year to £262.6 million—"outperforming the sector yet again," according to an audited financial filing released this year with the U.K.'s Companies House. For those 12 months that ended just as the Covid-19 pandemic began disrupting business travel, Click Travel posted an £8 million pre-tax profit.

In the filing, Click Travel attributed its growth to proprietary self-booking technology, "exceptional customer value facilitated through Click Travel's technology," and a "ruthless focus on unbiased 'whole of market' content." Click Travel was among the earliest TMCs to embrace the New Distribution Capability and has facilitated direct connections with airlines and other suppliers.

Former Click Travel CEO Jill Palmer departed the TMC this year, as James McLean assumed the role. He co-founded Click Travel in 1999 with his brother Simon McLean, who was Click's chief technology officer before his death in 2018 at 41. ■

Pension Fund Sues Extended Stay America Over \$6B Sale to Blackstone, Starwood Capital

BY DONNA M. AIROLDI

A Michigan pension fund shareholder of Extended Stay America has filed a lawsuit against the hotel company in connection with its acquisition by Blackstone Real Estate Partners and Starwood Capital Group.

In a suit filed June 10 in the Chancery Court of Delaware, the City of Warren General Employees' Retirement System requested an inspection of ESA's books and records "in order to determine whether wrongdoing or mismanagement has taken place" in connection with the deal. The plaintiff also "seeks to investigate the independence and disinterestedness" of ESA's directors and officers with respect to the acquisition and to the value of the plaintiff's shares.

In addition, the pension fund filed a motion for expedited proceedings. On June 11, 65 percent of the available votes from ESA, the company, and 85 percent of the available votes from ESA's paired real estate in-

vestment trust, ESH Hospitality, approved the sale. The companies completed the \$6 billion deal on June 16.

The case includes a copy of a detailed demand by the plaintiff delivered May 26 to the ESA board of directors for the inspection of books and records. Attorneys for ESA responded on June 4 indicating that the company would produce "many of the documents" requested, subject to a "suitable confidentiality agreement." It also lists comments and objections to the request.

According to the filing, ESA did not produce any of the requested documents after more than five business days, resulting in the lawsuit.

The suit details much of the information made available in ESA's preliminary proxy statement filed April 13 with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, which showed ESA had been in and out of conversations with Blackstone and Starwood re-

garding a purchase of the company for about four years. It also alleges that the offer price is too low and alleges that ESA CEO Bruce Haase and the board quickly pushed the deal through after Tarsadia Capital said that it was "planning to run a competing slate of directors at the company's next stockholder meeting."

The deal initially had been opposed by other shareholders, including Tarsadia and Hawk Ridge Capital Management, along with two ESA board members. Tarsadia filed a preliminary proxy against the deal and continued to oppose it even after Blackstone and Starwood sweetened the offer by \$1 per share to \$20.50. The two board members changed their intended vote with the new offer, according to ESA.

It is unclear whether there is further action the plaintiff can take. Neither the attorney for the City of Warren General Employees' Retirement System nor ESA responded to requests for comment. ■



American Express GBT Unveils Travel Survey, Covid-19 Tools

BY ADAM PERROTTA

American Express Global Business Travel has rolled out new measures designed to give travel managers actionable insights regarding resumed travel activity and deliver Covid-19-related information to travelers during the booking process.

The mega travel management company now is offering post-trip surveys, conducted on an opt-in basis, that ask travelers to describe and evaluate their flight and hotel experiences. The survey data subsequently is delivered to travel managers, who can use it to evaluate suppliers' practices and make policy adjustments as needed.

Additionally, Amex GBT has added a new function to its Premier Insights data visualization platform. Dubbed the Live Travel Dashboard, the tool uses anonymized data to provide a visual summary of where GBT client companies are sending travelers, with views available on a regional, country or city level. The visualization is designed to help travel managers evaluate the overall travel activity at a destination and update their travel policies accordingly.

Additionally, the TMC's Neo online booking tool now automatically presents itinerary-specific Covid guidelines during the booking process, using information sourced from GBT's Travel Vitals data hub. After a booking is complete, travelers receive email notifications including reminders about relevant testing or vaccine requirements for departure and return legs of their journey.

The post-trip traveler surveys and in-booking data presentation currently are available to Amex GBT clients worldwide. The Live Travel Dashboard and email notifications initially are available in the U.S., with plans for phased expansion to other markets, according to Amex GBT.



GBT Adds WhatsApp Support

Meanwhile, Amex GBT has added WhatsApp as a support channel, enabling travelers to communicate with agents via the popular chat service to book trips and receive assistance while on the road. WhatsApp functionality currently is available to Amex GBT's small and midsize enterprise clients in the U.S. and will expand to large and global clients in the coming months, the travel management company said.

Amex GBT also provides chat-based booking and support through its mobile app and desktop platform, as well as via Apple Business Chat. The TMC recently has emphasized chat-based messaging—through both in-house and third-party platforms—as vital channels of communication between travelers, travel managers and support agents, especially in light of the increased demand for dynamic health and safety messaging amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Details recently emerged that travel management company FCM is transitioning its Sam mobile chat tool into a core component of its yet-to-be-revealed redesigned platform, where the technology will serve as a "digital avatar," providing live agent and chatbot assistance. ■

CWT Rejoins Global Business Travel Association

BY ELIZABETH WEST & ADAM PERROTTA

A year after separating from the Global Business Travel Association, citing the organization's failure to efficiently investigate the allegations against former CEO Scott Solombrino, the travel management heavyweight has rejoined the association.

According to a written statement from CWT's new CEO Michelle McKinney Frymire, "Now, more than ever, our industry must stand together to serve corporate travelers the world over as the post-pandemic return to travel gains momentum, and I am excited about the potential of our new partnership with GBTA. We look forward to playing an active role at GBTA events and meetings, and in various joint industry research initiatives."

Last June, CWT formally withdrew its GBTA membership as well as the participation of all CWT employees from the "GBTA board, committees, events or projects, plus any individual memberships which are paid for directly, or indirectly, by CWT," according to a letter sent to GBTA that was obtained at the time by BTN.

The turnaround and the announcement is good news for GBTA, as the organization works to regain the trust and confidence of the business travel industry. The organization has introduced bylaw changes that enforce leadership term limits and expand voting rights and board diversity, and has installed a new executive director. Those steps appear to meet the criteria CWT said would be required before the travel management company would consider rejoining.

"We are delighted that CWT has taken the decision to rejoin GBTA at this crucial time for our industry, as we return to business travel," said GBTA executive director Suzanne Neufang. "Collaboration and thought leadership is such an important element of the association, and it's vital to have representatives from a global TMC such as CWT."

CWT ENHANCES TRAVEL GUIDANCE TOOL

Meanwhile, CWT has added new features to its Travel Essentials guidance platform, a publicly ac-

cessible database providing information on Covid-19-related travel restrictions and entry requirements, which the travel management giant launched in July 2020.

The new features include support for more than 15 different languages and downloadable and shareable entry and passenger locator forms, health questionnaires and Covid-19 test result declarations. Meanwhile, a new vaccination status filter separately displays relevant entry requirements for vaccinated and unvaccinated travelers, while a revamped layout offers easier navigation, according to CWT.

The Travel Essentials enhancements come amid what CWT called increased use of the platform in recent months, an indication that corporate travel activity is beginning to resume in the wake of the pandemic. The number of daily searches on the Travel Essentials platform has increased by 28 percent since the beginning of 2021, according to CWT. ■

Traveling While LGBTQ+

she also wondered whether turning it down would hurt her standing in the company or opportunities for future assignments abroad. To supplement the limited information her employer had provided, she took it upon herself to reach out to other female travelers, including two out lesbians in her company who had worked in Algeria, and they were able to answer her questions and ultimately give her the confidence to accept the assignment.

Navigating the Map

Martinez was one of several LGBTQ+ travelers to share their experiences at a BTN Group virtual symposium last month, part of an ongoing series on diversity, equity and inclusion. As her example illustrated, some challenges faced specifically by LGBTQ+ travelers are literally about life and death. Consensual sexual activity between individuals of the same sex remains illegal in 69 countries, in some cases punishable by death, according to LGBTQ+ rights monitor Equaldex. One hundred and four countries offer no legal protection from discrimination to LGBTQ+ individuals at all, and many other countries offer an inconsistent patchwork of protections. In the United States, for example, the Supreme Court held in a narrow 2020 ruling that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act provides protections against firing an employee based on sexual orientation or gender identity, but there remains no blanket law offering LGBTQ+ individuals protection from discrimination throughout the United States—and some states seem eager to move in the opposite direction.

“We’ve made progress, but we still have a long way to go, especially at that state level,” said Emilie Kopp, director of strategic partnerships for Deem. “Legislators are pulling out every trick in the book to chip away at what few protections we have as well as make advancements on making it legal to treat LGBTQ people unfairly, and particularly around trans people—and, even more tragically, around trans youth.”

The recent suspected homophobic attack and beating death of 24-year-old nursing assistant Samuel Luiz in A Coruña in Spain—a country where same-sex marriage has been legal since 2005 and that is considered one of the most LGBTQ+ friendly in the world—also was a sobering reminder that LGBTQ+ individuals still can face violence anywhere.

Emma Cusdin, who advocates for trans and non-binary issues in the corporate world through the organization Global Butterflies and is a frequent business traveler as people director with S&P Global, said she always goes through a mental checklist on those issues when traveling.

“Will I be safe? Will I be outed? Am I traveling to one of the jurisdictions around the world that criminalizes me as a trans woman? How will I be accepted?” Cusdin said. “So, there’s a lot of stress and angst for traveling.”



**“Will I be safe?
Am I traveling
to one of the
jurisdictions
that criminalizes
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woman?”**

—S&P GLOBAL'S EMMA CUSDIN



Sometimes that comes down to not traveling at all. Cusdin said she has told her line manager that she will not travel to Dubai due to its strict anti-trans laws. Martinez said she once turned down an assignment in Saudi Arabia.

“It was a tricky thing for me,” Martinez said. “I love to travel, and I love to see the world, and this would have been a great opportunity. I thought by saying, ‘No,’ that I had closed that door forever, but two weeks later, I got an opportunity to go to Australia. So, it opened the door to another opportunity.”

Cusdin said her current employer is understanding of her wishes not to travel to certain destinations, though she could not say the same for all her previous employers. She sees bringing those issues to management, however, as an opportunity in itself, such as when she rejected the opportunity for a promotion that would have required her to live in one of the more conservative U.S. states.

“I turned it down, because I said, ‘Why should I reduce my legal support?’ It actually turned out to be a very good conversation with my line manager, who didn’t know what they’d been asking,” she said. “I’m a huge believer in the power of conversation.”

Handling the Burden of Research

Travelers speaking at the symposium said they were appreciative of any company efforts to inform them more fully of potential risks posed to them as LGBTQ+ travelers.

Grant Caplan, president of Procurigence, said he was a fan of the GeoSure tool, which breaks down safety data to a neighborhood level, including information specific to LGBTQ+ travelers. It proved useful in several recent trips to Istanbul, he said.


“I think it’s kind of cool that you can see the different types of grades that they get for the different types of threats that could be against you as a traveler,” Caplan said.

Martinez’s wife, Austin Ayers, also is a frequent business traveler, and her work with a financial services company requires mostly domestic U.S. travel. She’s also been working with her company on its own DE&I initiatives and would like to see destination-specific information provided.

“Although my company’s incredibly inclusive, the burden of the research for my safety does tend to fall on me,” Ayers said.

Of course, many companies likely are not fully aware of their LGBTQ+ traveling populations, as those employees might not be out at work. About 95 percent of LGBTQ+ travelers in an SAP Concur-sponsored survey last year of nearly 8,000 total business travelers indicated that they have hidden their sexual orientation while on a business trip. Martinez said during an assignment in West Papua, Indonesia, she “learned very quickly to jump back into the closet” when working onsite alongside 10,000 workers, among whom she was the only Western female.

“To say I was a minority would be a huge understatement. I was a unicorn,” Martinez said. “To the credit of a few female coworkers back home, they recognized the situation that I’d be walking into and discussed my safety with a [cisgender] male coworker who was also going to site. He would be my constant companion and help divert any unwanted or harmful attention away from me.”



Kopp said that when traveling with her wife, both domestically and internationally, there frequently are moments when they are harassed or feel unsafe, and hiding their relationship is the natural reaction.

“It’s just when you feel that people are noticing you, and then that’s when you get goosebumps or that spidey-sense that, hey, it’s not OK to be your authentic self right now,” she said. “You are taking a part of your identity and choosing, and there’s a mental burden that goes with that.”

The travelers in general were supportive of having the option of identifying themselves as LGBTQ+ in company travel profiles, so their travel managers would have access to that information.

“For me as a traveler, having the opportunity on my travel profile to say I’m LGBTQ+ is helpful for you and for me, because then ultimately having information sent to me about LGBTQ+ issues and safety is really important,” Cusdin said. “Even just saying that your policy is LGBTQ+ friendly and making a statement about it is a really good first step, because I’ve often seen travel policies that don’t even say that.”

For Ayers, providing that information in her profile is not currently an option, though she said she would be slightly uneasy about all suppliers having that information.

“I’d be open to it, but it probably wouldn’t be something that I’d be as open to as other people on this call,” she said. “Then again, I travel to a lot of red states, so I’m just a little gun-shy with some past experiences.”

Balancing Stress with ‘Zen’

Challenges faced by LGBTQ+ business travelers are more than the overarching safety and security issues, the travelers said. The airport journey can be especially stressful for transgender travelers, Cusdin said.

“How will I be received through passport control and security?” Cusdin said. “What about the pat-down, and if I get patted down, how do I feel about that?”

In Cusdin’s case, the gender specified in her travel documents matches her actual gender, but that is not always the case for transgender travelers, which can cause additional stress at checkpoints, she said. What’s more, security processes around the world are not always set up with transgender and nonbinary travelers in mind.

Carlos Rios, a human resources professional, experienced this firsthand on a recent trip to visit family in the Dominican Republic. There, passport control was split into separate lines for male and female travelers, and Rios, who is nonbinary, had to make the decision to go to the “male” line.

“I’m not trying to have a protracted conversation with a security officer in another country around my gender identity and how it does not align with what I was assigned at birth,” Rios said. “I had to make a choice that felt as safe as possible for me, but it still doesn’t feel right.”

This likely will be a growing issue in the business travel world as more Generation Z employees enter the workforce, Cusdin said. Surveys have shown that as high as 15 to 20 percent of U.S. Gen Z members identify as trans or nonbinary and



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—DEEM’S EMILIE KOPP



“definitely see gender as a spectrum,” she said. The U.S. State Department this month implemented the ability for U.S. citizens to choose either “male” or “female” gender association on their passports, rather than having it assigned according to their birth certificate. Soon, the department announced, it would also add a nonbinary option, but the start date was not clear. Even so, such declarations may not be recognized outside the U.S. and it is a question how nonbinary individuals would choose to represent themselves should they need to travel to locations where nonconforming gender identification is criminalized.

Security checkpoints can be a stress point for LGBTQ+ travelers for other reasons too. Those who are using prescribed medications for HIV or HIV prevention can encounter problems as well, Caplan said. Despite decades of education and advances around HIV, some people still consider it a “gay disease,” and when security officials in some countries see the medication, it essentially outs the travelers, he said. There have even been instances of the medications being seized at borders, according to Caplan.

Microaggressions in business travel can add up, too, the travelers said. Both Kopp as well as Ayers and Martinez said they have had uncomfortable conversations with well-meaning front desk employees at hotels who, when they are traveling as a couple, insist upon changing their pre-arranged king bed reservation into two queen beds, assuming they are doing a favor for two female friends traveling together. For Kopp, one trip in China with her wife required a conversation with four clerks to get the king-sized suite they reserved. Ayers said while it’s understandable that an employee would want to double-check room preferences, it sometimes is done in an indelicate manner, with the employee asking, “Are you sure you just want one king bed?”

“It’s in the lobby of a hotel, and their voice carries, so there’s that embarrassment,” Ayers said.

For Cusdin, there’s also the constant possibility of being misgendered, such as being called “sir” by an airport ticket agent, taxi driver or hotel desk staff. As such, there’s one extra item she always makes sure to bring with her while traveling.

“I have a little saying as I’m going through the airport: I’ve packed my bag, but I’ve packed my Zen as well,” she said. “I just have to chill out and roll with things, and if I get misgendered, it’s not the end of the world, and I’m continuing my journey.”

Panelists agreed that being able to discuss these issues with their companies was an important step in the right direction. Being a part of her company’s DE&I team and the related monthly meetings, has been helpful for Ayers, as it fosters an environment where she would be comfortable raising issues that arise while traveling, she said.

“Making it more human and having my direct leader start bringing up challenging subjects has made me more open to sharing my experiences, more than it just being a policy,” Ayers said. She encouraged businesses and managers to start talking about these issues more openly as a way to support to LGBTQ+ individuals should they encounter problems while traveling on business. “I’m starting to see [that],” she said, “and that’s exciting.” ■



AA Sues Sabre Over New Storefront

BY JAY BOEHMER

American Airlines last month filed a lawsuit against Sabre in a Texas court seeking a temporary restraining order and injunction on the global distribution system operator's rollout of its New Airline Storefront. American claimed Sabre's new display, which is being rolled out as the default in its Sabre Red 360 agent desktop, breaches its contract with American, biases against the airline in displays and favors rival Delta Air Lines.

Sabre declined to comment on American's lawsuit.

"This is a suit to prevent significant and irreparable harm to American's business and goodwill due to knowing actions by Sabre, its long-time ticket distribution vendor," according to American's complaint, filed in Tarrant County on June 29. "Sabre recently announced that it will make a full rollout of its 'New Airline Storefront' display product by or beginning July 1, 2021. As American repeatedly has complained, and Sabre is fully aware, Sabre's new format does and will disadvantage American by providing inaccurate and misleading displays of American's travel information, including its products, services, fares, schedules, and inventory, to travel agents who subscribe to Sabre's distribution services. In addition, Sabre told American that it intends to pay added incentives to travel agencies who book higher-end tickets on Delta under a new value-based booking fee model. This would cause travel agents to book critical business travelers on other airlines over American."

Delta and Sabre in May announced a new multiyear "value-based" distribution agreement that envisioned higher compensation for agencies that drive higher-value sales through Sabre, while at the same time promoting how Delta wished to be displayed in third-party channels.

American's filing stated the carrier "repeatedly raised its serious concerns and asked Sabre to pause its rollout of the New Airline Storefront, but Sabre has refused."

American and Sabre remain entangled in a separate, long-running federal antitrust case.

"Despite the fact that American is Sabre's largest client, Sabre did not consult with American on the Storefront development or design, and only recently provided American with sufficient access to Storefront in Sabre Red 360 for American to review how its travel information is being displayed," according to the complaint.

American's complaint includes several screenshots of Sabre Red 360 that it says demonstrate how Sabre biases its results against American in the new display.

"In its review, American discovered numerous instances of the Storefront favoring Delta products over those of American, including displays that omit, hide, or misrepresent certain American products," according to American's complaint.

American indicated it continues to "discover issues about the Storefront's display of its products," including "misclassified, incorrect, and missing fares."

According to American, "Due to the limited informa-

tion Sabre has provided on how Storefront operates, American cannot identify all the issues that may arise. Sabre still has not provided the algorithm or methodology that it uses to fit products into certain shelves."

American argued that the new display "violates the parties' contract." The suit asked for a court-ordered injunction to bar Sabre "from using Storefront and further rolling out Storefront to travel agencies through its Sabre Red 360 product, or to corporate customers through its GetThere product, or any other product."

As Delta and Sabre collaborated on the Storefront display, according to American's complaint, Delta last year also suspended development of New Distribution Capability-based APIs.

ATPCO had worked with airlines to advance Next Generation Storefront displays, but abandoned "prescriptive" displays as it was unable to achieve consensus among participants. Sabre earlier this year unveiled the New Airline Storefront, in which flight search results are arranged in columns of "shelves" of comparable but competing airline offers.

A longtime adopter and proponent of NDC, American argued Sabre's New Airline Storefront "does not currently enable direct access to airlines, does not allow for new or different content, and does not represent significant technological innovation. It is merely a display format that appears to favor a carrier preferred by Sabre over other airlines, including American, which has a right to a fair, accurate, and neutral display in the Sabre GDS."

According to American: "Sabre is aware that its Storefront hides, omits, and incorrectly displays American products and services, and associated fares, schedules and inventory data. American repeatedly flagged the issues in meetings and emails over the past weeks, and Sabre admitted the problems. But Sabre refused to commit to correcting the biased and inaccurate displays before rolling out Storefront to subscribers of Sabre Red 360 starting in July 2021."

As part of Sabre's new agreement with Delta, "Sabre will need to pay travel agents higher incentives for higher-value Delta bookings," according to American.

"Sabre has said that it intends to offer financial incentives to motivate travel agents to sell higher-priced Delta flight and fare products," according to American's complaint. "These actions would violate American's contract."

American asked the court to bar Sabre from rolling out its New Airline Storefront, from biasing against American in displays and from incentivizing agencies to book Delta "and not American." American noted in its filing that it "is entitled to the issuance of a temporary injunction to protect and preserve the status quo pending a full trial on the merits."

Asked for comment, American stated: "We filed this lawsuit to ensure that the travel agencies that sell our products are receiving complete, accurate and unbiased information, and are not otherwise induced by Sabre financial incentives to not sell our products. American is committed to ensuring that travel sellers can access our broad range of products through the channels that are most convenient to them. American further assures our customers that we will not make any changes that will impact their ability to access our content through their preferred distribution partners. American has a long relationship with Sabre, and we hope that we can resolve these disputes quickly." ■



The Beat



Emirates Dark In Sabre, Travelport Inks Waiver Deal

BY JAY BOEHMER & MICHAEL B. BAKER

Sabre and Emirates failed to reach a new global distribution system arrangement upon the July 1 expiration of their prior deal, and the airline's content "will not be available in Sabre," the GDS operator confirmed.

During the prior month, the airline and Sabre remained in discussions on a path forward as the clock ticked down, though Emirates warned agencies it was prepared to let the deal expire. Sabre in late June stated it was "disappointed" that a new deal was not reached, but added, "we hope to reach an agreement in the future that meets the needs of all stakeholders."

At the same time, Travelport on July 1 announced a new commercial agreement with Emirates in which Travelport subscribers could access the airline's content without incurring the carrier's new surcharge on GDS bookings, which took effect on July 1.

"Travelport's global network of travel agency partners will automatically be upgraded to a dedicated channel that provides access to un-surcharged content," Travelport announced. Travelport declined to comment on how long this channel would be supported or whether it included content commitments from the airline.

"For Travelport agency customers, there is no additional cost and no change to current subscriber agreement," Travelport noted.

Emirates also announced an agreement to offer agencies eventual access to the airline's NDC connection through Travelport, provided they reach new commercial deals with both the airline and GDS operator. Travelport declined to comment on commercial terms for agency subscribers regarding this NDC program. Emirates officials, meanwhile, have not replied to multiple requests to discuss its commercial strategy.

Meanwhile, Amadeus' GDS bookings now would be subject to Emirates' new surcharge, based on messaging from the carrier earlier this year. The carrier in February announced it would begin levying a surcharge on bookings made through traditional GDS connections, effective July 1, as part of its drive toward NDC connectivity with the travel trade.

The per-ticket GDS surcharge communicated by Emirates ranges from \$14 to \$25, "depending on sector length," and is applied to what the carrier called "legacy" EDIFACT connections supported by GDSs.

Earlier this year, Amadeus said it "respects" freedom of choice in airline business strategies, but added, "we do not believe that penalizing one channel or technology, such as having a surcharge on EDIFACT bookings, is ever in the best interests of the traveler."

Amadeus and Emirates are "in active discussions on expanding our partnership," Amadeus offered on July 1, noting discussions include "NDC-sourced content via the Amadeus Travel Platform."

A 'Disappointing' Turn

Meanwhile, American Express Global Business Travel vice president of content and strategic sourcing John

Sabre in late June stated it was "disappointed" that a new deal was not reached, but added, "we hope to reach an agreement in the future that meets the needs of all stakeholders."

Bukowski in a statement called Emirates exit from Sabre "disappointing."

"Effectively, it means Emirates will no longer be an option available to many of our customers," he said.

He added: "At a time when business travel volumes are starting to return, other airlines value the ease of access and broad distribution from being in the GDSs, and this will provide them opportunity for which Emirates will not enjoy via the Sabre system."

He noted it "is surprising that Emirates and Sabre have not found a solution to ensure Emirates content remains available to our clients—and that Emirates have decided to add a surcharge on bookings made via another GDS."

Bukowski projected Emirates' departure from Sabre "likely" would "result in customers choosing alternative carriers to meet their needs. That said, it is our understanding that talks are ongoing, and GBT is supportive of and hopeful for a successful outcome."

Emirates in October launched "a suite of connectivity options" for agencies to access its NDC-piped content and in February announced a commercial program that includes its GDS surcharge.

Access to the carrier's NDC program, Emirates Gateway, requires a new commercial agreement with the airline. Options for access have included direct connections as well as technology partners and aggregators, Emirates announced in February. Emirates works with Accelya's Farelogix technology for its NDC-compatible API.

Travelport is the first major GDS operator to announce a path forward with Emirates on NDC connections. Its arrangement to waive the airline's surcharge for subscribers in the meantime echoes "private channel" frameworks popularized by Air France-KLM and International Airlines Group.

Travelport did not provide a timeline for when Emirates' NDC access would be available to its agency customers, as they are "now in the process of developing enhanced features and functionality that will, when complete, be gradually rolled out."

NDC Market Moves

Also on July 1, travel industry content aggregator and IT provider TPConnects announced that it had launched a new subscription-based marketplace in which airlines and agencies can buy and sell content using the New Distribution Capability standard. The Dubai-based company said its NDCMarketplace.com could connect dozens of NDC-certified full-service carriers and low-cost carriers along with GDS content to subscribers regardless of what schema or version they are using. Agents connect using their own credentials, so they can avoid GDS surcharges from Emirates and other carriers that impose them while keeping their GDS incentives.

The marketplace is meant to solve the challenge of agents having to connect with multiple airline NDC portals and various APIs, which has slowed NDC adoption by agencies, according to TPConnects CEO Rajendran Vellapalath.

"Agents have to switch between the screens to search and compare the best offers or end up paying additional surcharges for NDC bookings made through traditional channels or soon will end up paying a distribution fee," he said in a statement. "NDCMarketplace.com is bringing content from both the traditional channel as well as the NDC and LCC channels in to one screen, combined with rich content from Routehappy." ■

BTN'S ANNUAL SALARY SURVEY & REPORT

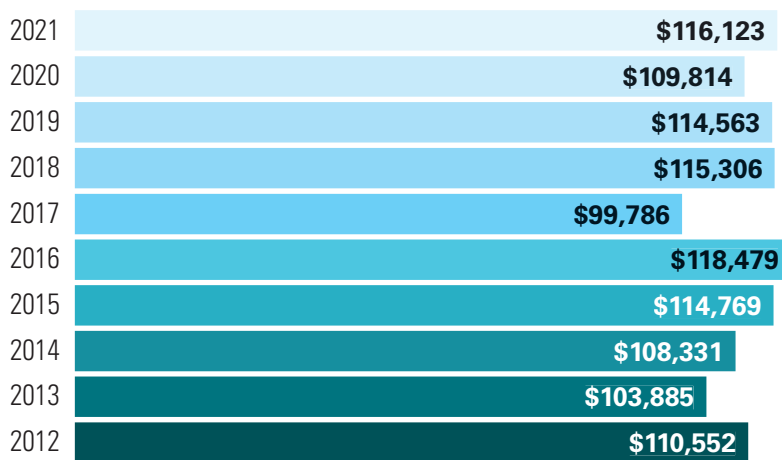
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\$116,123. That was up \$2,000 from 2019 and up \$7,000 from 2020—though the 2020 average salary number should be viewed with caution. BTN forewent its detailed salary survey during the height of the Covid-19 crisis and instead asked a brief, optional poll question as part of its State of the Industry research last year. Many opted not to respond to that poll, so the scope of salary data was limited and its methodology different.

BTN's more robust annual survey, reinstated this year, includes several contributing factors to travel manager salary levels, including travel pro-

TRAVEL MANAGER SALARIES: THROUGH THE DECADE

BTN has tracked travel manager salaries since 1984. The chart below shows salaries for the last 10 years.



Source: BTN Salary & Attitudes Surveys 2012 to 2021; number of buyers surveyed varied per year

gram size as well as the individual's years of experience in the role and the location of their company. BTN from June 18 to July 6 surveyed 152 respondents, 97 percent of whom were based in the United States.

In the U.S., BTN found travel manager salaries on the rise. Two-thirds of travel managers responding to the survey said their salaries had increased compared with compensation in 2020. Among those with salary increases, individuals gained an average of nearly 7 percent over their previous year's salary. Twenty percent of travel managers queried in 2021 had no change to their salaries year over year. Among the 14 percent of respondents who experienced salary decreases in 2021, the average erosion was 13 percent from the previous year—a significant drop.

Travel Managers for Larger Midsize Programs Gain Most Ground

As in years past, salary levels for travel managers often increase in direct proportion to the overall dollar volume they are responsible for managing within their programs. In programs that annually spend less than \$2 million in air, the average travel manager salary didn't quite break into

TRAVEL MANAGER SALARY BY PROGRAM AIR SPEND VOLUME

The size of a travel program clearly has an effect on salaries achieved, but other factors come into play as well. Our survey roughly showed that the higher the air volume, the more the travel manager is paid.



Source: BTN 2021 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 152 buyers

six-digit territory, landing instead just under \$96,000. For those managing the largest enterprise programs of more than \$40 million in annual air volume, BTN pegged an average salary of more than \$131,000.

Compared to the survey cohort from 2019, the group that experienced the largest salary jump were individuals managing programs between \$12 million and \$20 million in 2019 air spend. 2019 is the most recent year that BTN could target reliable volume data for programs and, therefore, will continue to be the benchmark until the industry re-establishes equilibrium—perhaps in 2022. Travel managers of programs in this tier reported average salaries of \$128,559 in 2021, which is a 16 percent increase over the respondents managing similar-sized programs in 2019.

That was no surprise to Maria Chevalier, who since 2010 has run CTME Search Party, an industry job search and career mentoring group. "We saw the biggest increase in job posts for travel manager positions than we've seen in 15 years," she said, noting that particularly in the midmarket, program managers finally have been getting recognized and compensated correctly. "We used to see job postings with huge scope and lower pay, but now we consistently see that pay going up and a better understanding of the skill sets and value that a bona fide travel manager brings to the table. We're seeing people not just getting jobs but getting great jobs."

Even with that promising outlook, several respondents to open-ended questions in this year's survey reported job losses or team furloughs. Among those with job losses, results were somewhat mixed in terms of regaining employment. Some reported new jobs at bigger companies and higher salaries, while one remained without a position and another took a job with higher responsibility but lesser pay—a disheartening result in profession that continues to become more complex, not less. Others did not lose their jobs, but may have taken on more responsibility due to furloughed team members, without a pay increase. Another remained concerned for job stability as travel remains at very low levels in the company.

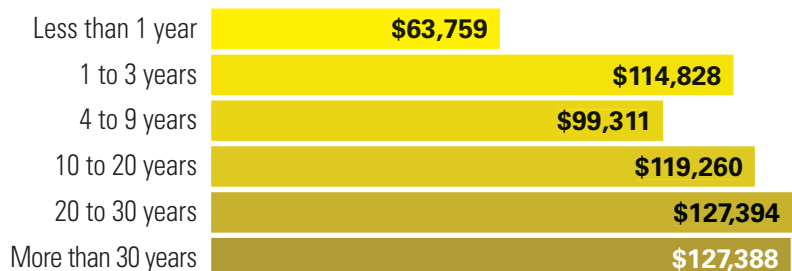
Experience Counts

Of course, landing a great salary depends at least partially on an individual's experience level and a track record of success. Travel managers with less than a year of experience reported making about \$64,000 annually, and none received bonus pay. Among this year's survey respondents, those with one to three years of travel management experience reported making significantly more than those with four to nine years of experience, which may simply be an anomaly in this respondent set. Generally speaking, getting more travel management experience under the belt resulted in better-paying positions for survey respondents. But longevity may only go so far. Travel managers with 20 to 30 years' experience in travel management made nearly the same average salaries as those with more than 30 years.

Job title and advancement correlated to travel management salary levels as well. And pushing for that advancement appeared to be key to driving compensation levels among survey respondents. Even for those with 10 to 20 years of travel management experience, job titles that included words like 'analyst' 'assistant,' 'coordinator' or 'specialist' had salaries that languished far below average salaries of titled travel managers—even those who might have fewer years of experience.

YEARS IN PRACTICE

Longevity was less an indicator than program size when determining travel manager salary



Source: BTN 2021 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 152 buyers

Job titles among survey respondents indicated broader responsibilities brought increased pay, whether that scope came from managing multiple geographies or from taking on management responsibilities for categories adjacent to travel, such as card, expense or meetings and events, or even fleet. ‘Global T&E manager’ and ‘Americas manager of travel and expense’ or ‘global category manager of travel and meetings’ were among the titles that began to break the six-digit threshold. It should be noted, however, that they also indicate programs of significant size—the companies are global in nature and may have large enough volume to divide management of the travel program among different regions.

Twenty percent of survey respondents reported annual salaries of \$150,000 or more. Titles in this cohort indicated scope and seniority, with titles like ‘vice president of global travel’ or ‘senior manager of global travel operations.’ They also indicated roles that are larger than travel management, like ‘treasurer’ or ‘sourcing director,’ which have broader responsibility in finance and procurement.

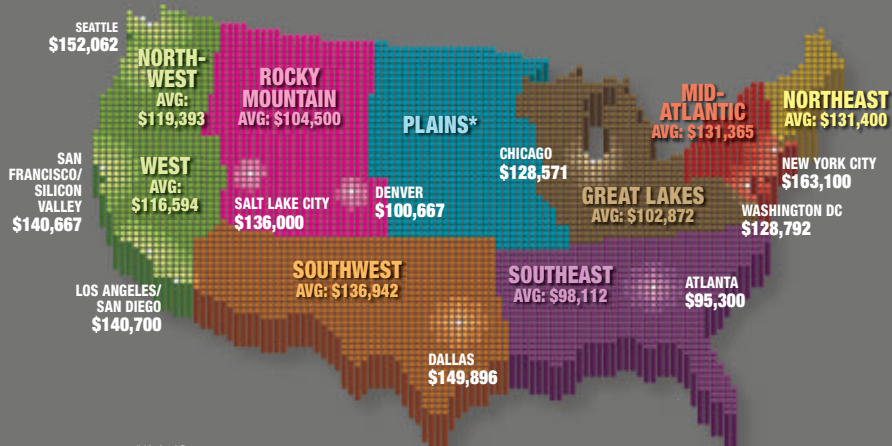
Urban Centers Pay More

Location plays a large role in travel manager salary, and the BTN survey noted significant regional U.S. variations in salary levels. Salaries in the Northeast averaged more than \$131,000. Average salaries in the Southeast came in at just over \$98,000, lowest among regions for which BTN gathered sufficient data. Travel managers in the Plains reported lower salaries, but too few respondents from the region prevented BTN from making realistic estimates about salary levels there. The Great Lakes region overall reported average salaries at just over \$102,000, but as with most regions, metropolitan areas reported the highest salary averages.

Chicago, for example, reported average salaries over \$128,000. The nearly \$137,000 average salary in the Southwest region was led by a strong

A REGIONAL LOOK

Travel managers’ salaries varied by geographic location within the U.S. Major metropolitan areas usually—but not always—offered higher pay rates than the overall survey average.



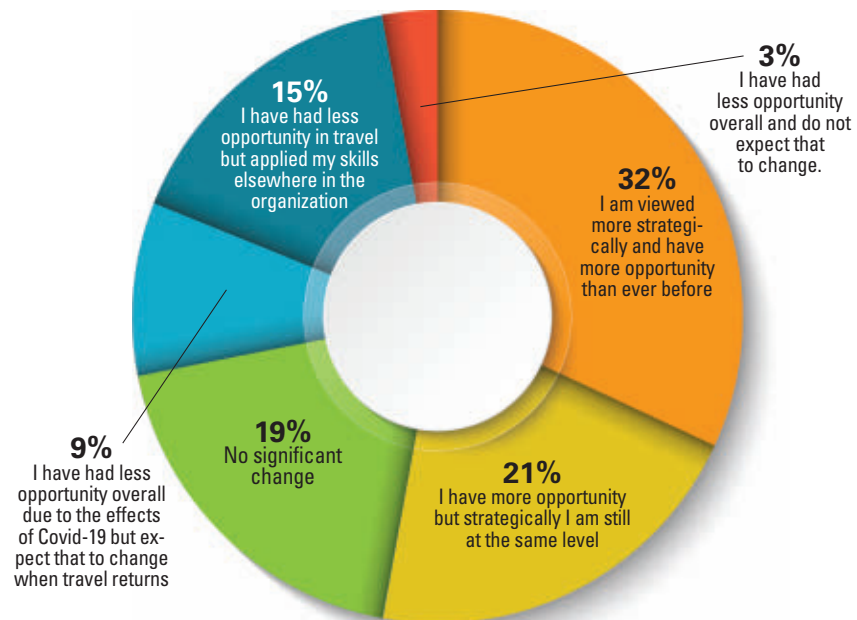
showing in Dallas, where the average salary among respondents was more than \$149,000. Seattle’s average travel manager salary of \$152,000 drove the overall Northwest regional average to more than \$119,000. San Francisco and Los Angeles reported salaries around \$140,000, which supported \$116,000-plus regional averages in the West. New York City drove the highest travel management salaries among all urban centers, with travel managers raking in more than \$163,000 on average, though the range within that city was substantial. The overall average for the mid-Atlantic region, which includes New York and Washington, D.C., landed at just over \$131,000.

Measuring Contribution & Recognizing Value

More than half of travel managers queried in BTN’s 2021 survey said they had more opportunity at their companies than ever before, since

TRAVEL MANAGERS’ STRATEGIC VALUE SINCE COVID

53% of travel managers said they have more opportunity now than ever; 32% said they are viewed more strategically than prior to the pandemic.



Source: BTN 2021 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 152 buyers

the Covid-19 pandemic upturned the industry. Several travel managers interviewed for this story said they had more access to CEOs and executive leadership, and that they had been tapped for strategic initiatives like return-to-the-workplace planning groups that are shaping the future of how employees will interface with their physical offices and coworkers.

But beyond those extra-travel responsibilities, many travel managers said their core work has been more recognized for its business enablement and the richness of the data and reporting travel managers can provide to CEOs, risk managers and business leads.

“I continued to provide reporting to my senior leadership throughout the pandemic,” said Salt Lake City-based Franklin Covey travel director James Thalman, who long has had access to the CEO and CFO at his organization because of the intrinsic role travel plays in the success of the leadership training firm. “Travel has always been among the leading indicators of Franklin Covey’s business performance; how that situation changes going forward is hard to say and will largely be determined by our clients’ preference for whether they want virtual or in-person programs,” he said.

Either way, Thalman said he feels his job remains valuable to his company, especially given the complexities introduced during the pandemic. The firm had zero travel for six weeks following the World Health Organization’s pandemic declaration in March 2020, but since has partially resumed travel. “Understanding the situation on the ground in the locations where we travel has become a much more important part of my job,” said Thalman, who runs Franklin Covey’s ARC-accredited Corporate Travel Department. “We need to provide so much more information now,” he said, “and anticipate what traveler concerns might be, and how we can help travelers and the business make more informed choices.”

Like Thalman, many travel managers have seen their responsibilities shift in new ways. Nearly two-thirds of travel managers say their focus on traveler safety, health and well-being has increased in the past year and 46 percent said their work in implementing new technologies and driving innovation has been an important development in their responsibility set. Other areas have seen increased focus as well, but not quite at the same rate: focus on virtual meetings and collaboration technologies is higher for 36 percent of survey respondents, and 32 percent reported their work on program communication efforts had increased. Thirty percent are focusing more on developing sustainable travel practices for their organizations.

It’s inevitable that travel managers experienced shifts in their responsibilities during a global pandemic that halted a huge percentage of business travel. Whether those shifts will pass as the pandemic lifts, however,

BTN'S ANNUAL SALARY SURVEY & REPORT

is another question. The consensus among travel managers is that their new priorities will linger—and potentially become permanent best practices. Nearly three-quarters of travel managers said their current mix of priorities would stick around for the long term, while only 11 percent thought the shift was temporary and 16 percent wouldn't wager a guess on what the future holds for travel management priorities.

If these responsibilities do hold up, the way organizations measure and reward travel management job performance may need to catch up. Only 34 percent of travel managers said they were measured on program innovation and 27 percent said they were measured on technology implementations—but 46 percent said both of those were an important shift in their roles during and post-Covid. A handful of travel managers provided write-in answers about their risk avoidance performance, but no one mentioned traveler health. With this renewed and important focus for travel

managers, organizations would do well to create specific goals and job performance metrics for it, and reward accordingly.

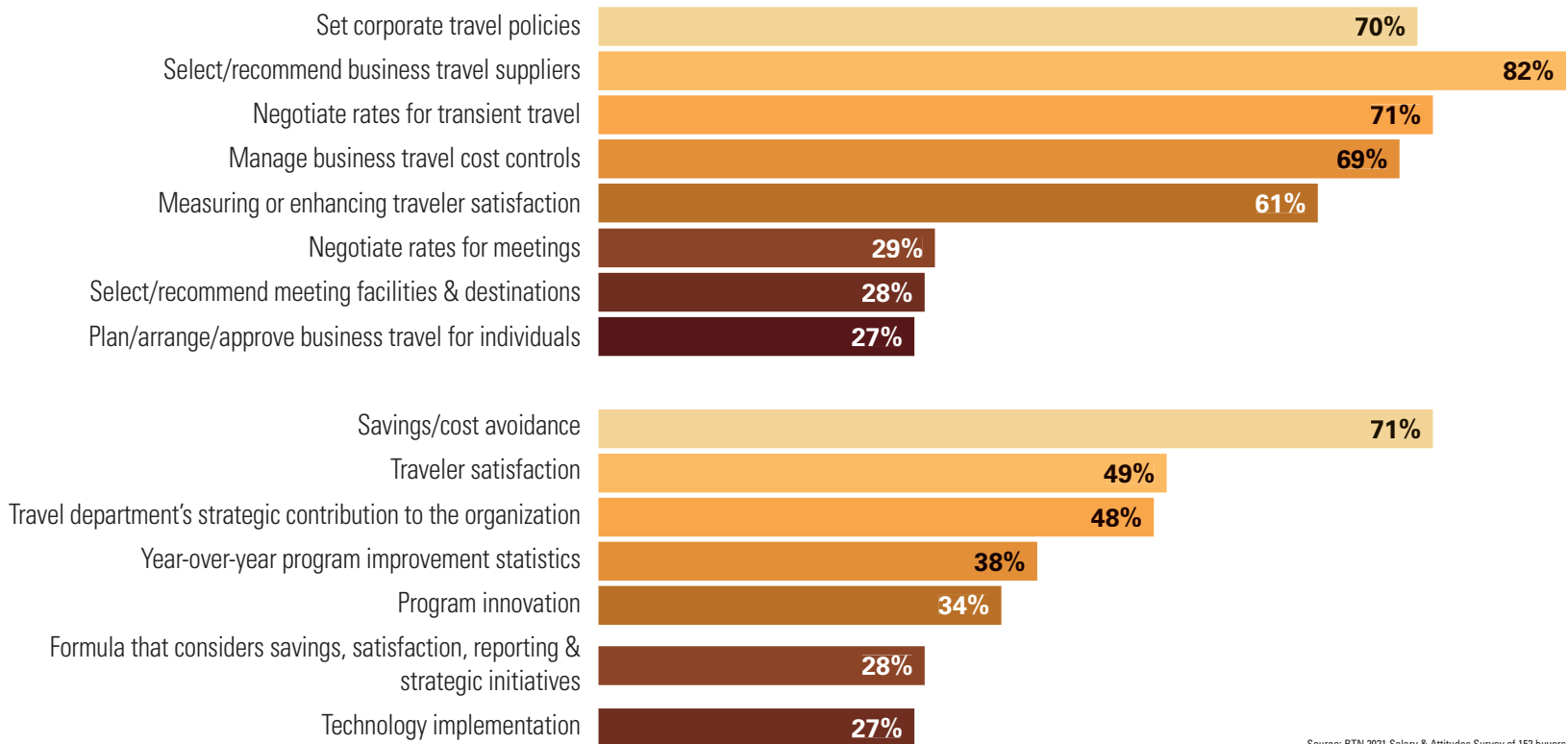
What's Next?

For now most travel managers surveyed in 2021 seem satisfied with their current roles—or at least with the idea of advancing in their current travel management career track, even staying with their current employers.

Seventy-eight percent said they were well or adequately recognized by their employers and 65 percent said they were either well-paid or there was a fair exchange for the value they brought to the table. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents said they saw themselves in two years with their current employer in the same position or with their current employer, but in a more advanced travel role. Just over nine percent said they saw themselves with their current employer, but largely in a role outside of travel management.

WHAT TRAVEL MANAGERS DO & HOW THEY ARE MEASURED IN 2021

Core travel management responsibilities continue for travel managers, but how performance is measured now may not be keeping up with emerging priorities in the practice, like traveler health and safety.

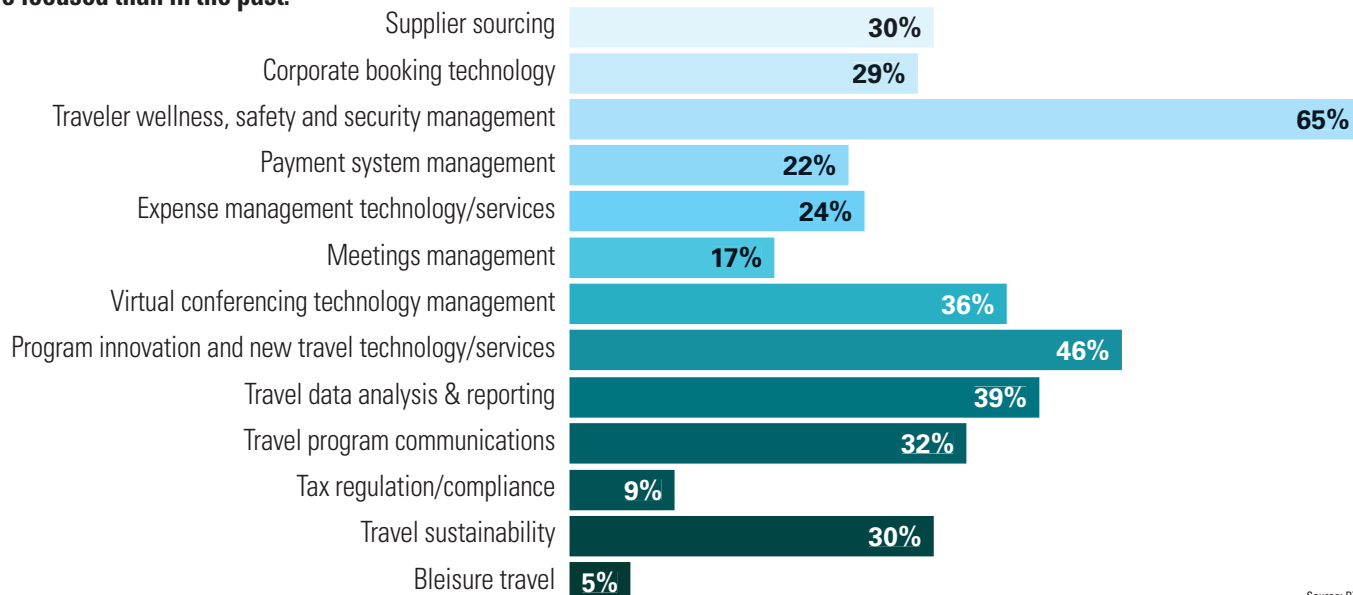


Source: BTN 2021 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 152 buyers

WHAT'S NEW?

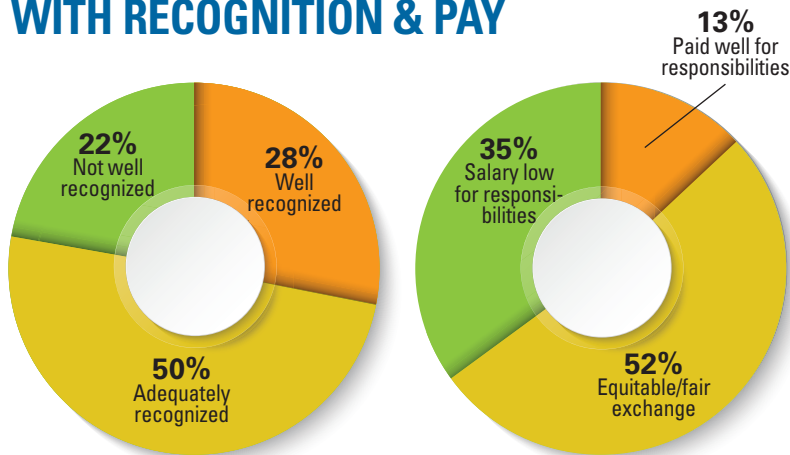
Traveler safety, program innovation and interest in new technologies have emerged as areas of focus during the pandemic. Will these trends last? 73% of travel managers surveyed said their current areas of focus were here to stay.

More focused than in the past:



Source: BTN 2021 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 145 buyers

TRAVEL MANAGERS LARGELY SATISFIED WITH RECOGNITION & PAY



Source: BTN 2021 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 145 buyers

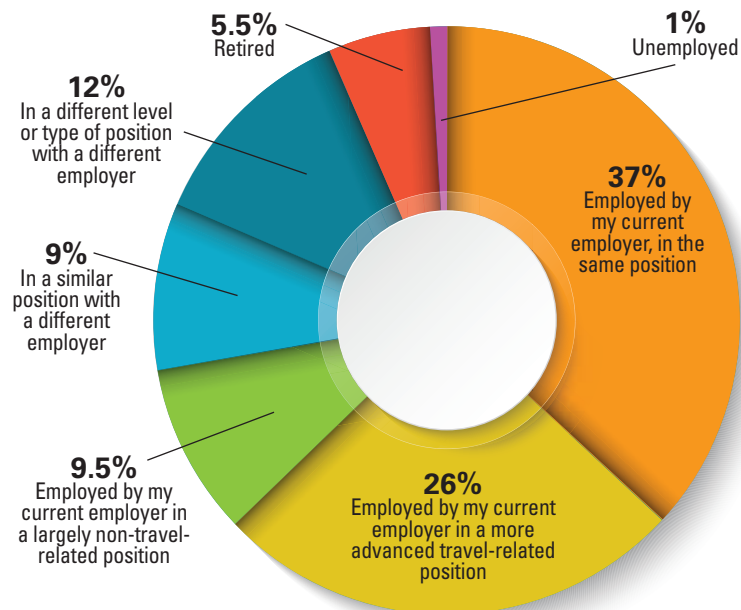
Twenty-one percent were looking for a different employer.

One global travel manager for a Fortune 500 company told BTN she had considered employment on the supplier side in recent years, given that she felt she had reached a seniority limit on the corporate side. “I wanted that VP title. I still do,” she said, bemoaning the fact that vice president roles are few and far between for corporate travel buyers. Instead, she took a new job on the corporate side. “I love my job,” she said about a role in which she built a global travel and meetings program from the ground up and through which she has proven herself a progressive leader in the industry. “I have more responsibility and opportunity than ever,” she said. “But I’ve checked all the boxes, and I’ve done all the ‘things.’ I’ve asked my boss what else I need to do to achieve that title.”

For that buyer, the answer is still forthcoming. For the travel manager

WHAT’S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

Most travel managers see themselves in different positions in the next two years, but the majority would stay with their current employers and in a travel-related position.



Source: BTN 2021 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 145 buyers

ment profession—perhaps the chances are looking up as more companies recognize the strategic value and business enablement acumen that travel managers continue to bring to the table. But one thing’s for sure, it won’t happen until travel managers consistently pursue it. Fewer than 20 percent of travel managers pursued a promotion in the last 12 months. ■

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Riding the Waves of Sustainability

BY PAUL TILSTONE



Paul Tilstone is managing partner of travel consultancy Festive Road.

We've been here before. Sustainability has previously dominated the discussion.

Back in 2006, when the first real wave started to happen, companies rushed to develop their latest sustainability rhetoric. This was the time of “greenwash” where noise attracted attention, visuals mattered (exhibition booths had green-grass carpets), and the carbon-offsetting Wild West was kick-started.

But it didn't last long. The global credit crisis of 2008 stopped sustainability in its tracks, favoring financial survival. Most of us understood. Money mattered more, that's just how it was.

Then, in the mid 2010s, sustainability started its comeback. Slowly and surely, as businesses and economies started to recover to their former glories, increased climate change and louder, more powerful voices (think: Greta Thunberg's unwavering style) started to drive deeper change and commitments. Climate change moved to climate crisis and even those who had previously denied its importance started to see. But the pace was still slow, and frustrating to those who believed that faster change must happen.

Then the pandemic hit.

The noise stopped, the flowers bloomed and the birds sang. The skies were clear. Whilst we looked up and longed to see those metal birds on their journeys to long-distance places, we

also knew things had changed, possibly forever, and that we couldn't go back.

Now, as we begin to return to the skies, the roads and the rooms, companies are committing to ever-more-challenging sustainability targets, and Scope 3 emissions (which includes travel) are in the line of fire. Leaders have seen what happens when you stop traveling, the good and the bad. Many sense that the 2019 will act as benchmark for over-consumption, that business travel as it returns must be different, must be more purposeful and thought through. They sense that the planet matters as much as their people, and that even if it matters less to them, it matters more to their customers.

Travel buyers are telling us in interviews that “zero up” makes all the difference to their corporations. It's far easier to control the release of travel than it was to dampen existing demand pre-pandemic. Sustainability is at the core of many of the present, more purposeful approaches to travel program demand.

Of course, we're likely to see some bounce-back to pre-pandemic levels as the floodgates open. People like travel, many want to travel and travel brings their businesses value. But in the mid to long term, buyers are aligning with their environmental, social governance (ESG) leads, considering the true “need versus the want” of travel and focusing on reducing demand, reducing emissions and balancing people, planet and profit more than ever before.

Recently, one bank's analyst told us that they monitor the amount of times environment is mentioned on company earnings calls. It was the highest it had ever been in 2019 and they are beginning to see the numbers reach total 2019 levels now—even just half-way through 2021.

The list of CEOs committing to net zero is getting bigger every day. It's becoming a must-have and even a competitive advantage as companies clamor to provide ever bigger commitments. This will set our travel management landscape. It already is.

Closer to home, our own research shows that 67 percent of buyers want to understand more about the sustainability approach of TMCs in the sourcing process and 89 percent of buyers are more interested in seeing sustainability services from their TMCs. The value chain needs to adjust.

This third wave will likely be the last, as our global carbon budgets are rapidly diminishing, and the impact to our industry deep and transformative. There's lots of great initiatives in play, from electric cars to sustainable aviation fuel. And a sector which becomes greener is good for us all. But if you thought change was happening fast before, you'll be shocked at how fast it will move from now on.

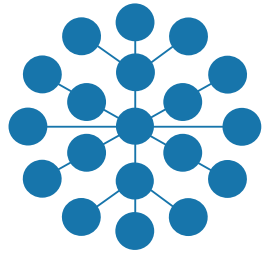
Get ready to ride the wave. ■

“But if you thought that change was happening fast before, you'll be shocked at how fast it will move from now on.”

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