

BTN

BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS



MAVENS

Meetings management consultant Betsy Bondurant and the Meetings Mavens panel address the new and evolving realities of live events.

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INNOVATE

Jack Dow's Grapevine and Chris Moss' Psngr1 capture the big awards at The BTN Group's 8th annual Innovate conference in New York.

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VOICES

Climate change—not Covid-19—will pose the primary risk to business travelers in 2022, argues Riskline's Emanuele Scansani.

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TOP STORY



BY ELIZABETH WEST

BTN'S TRAVEL MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Dery Takes 2021 Honors

Driving strategic vision through a crisis, S&P Global director of global travel and meetings **Ann Dery** elevated the role of the travel manager and positioned herself not just to restart travel, but to reinvent it. She also helped many travel managers map the path forward. For her efforts, BTN named Dery the 2021 Travel Manager of the Year.

BTN also named three Best Practitioners of 2021:

- Fidelity International director of global travel, meetings and ground transportation **Carol Fergus**
- Cisco Systems global leader of strategic meetings management and digital events **Carolyn Pund**
- Ford Motor Co. EMEA and APAC travel manager **Stephen Swift**

FULL STORY ON PAGE 12

WILL VENUES HOLD BACK MEETING SPACE?

As Demand Climbs, Hotels' 2022 Confidence Grows

BY DONNA M. AIROLDI

U.S. hotel demand and average daily rate on a nominal basis will near full recovery of 2019 levels in 2022, while nominal revenue per available room will fully recover by 2023, according to the latest forecast from STR and Tourism Economics, released this month at the NYU International Hospitality Industry Investment Conference. The firms previously estimated a full RevPAR recovery by 2024.

When inflation is taken into consideration, however, real ADR and RevPAR won't recover until 2025, STR president Amanda Hite said. She added that inflation is at its highest rate since the early 1990s, and though she expects it to start to cool in the coming months, "it will be out there all of next year," and it is built into the new forecast.

Still, ADR potency was one of the drivers of the stronger forecast. "ADR growth has been so much stronger than anticipated," Hite said. "In my time at STR, 16 years now, August was the first time we ever revised an ADR forecast

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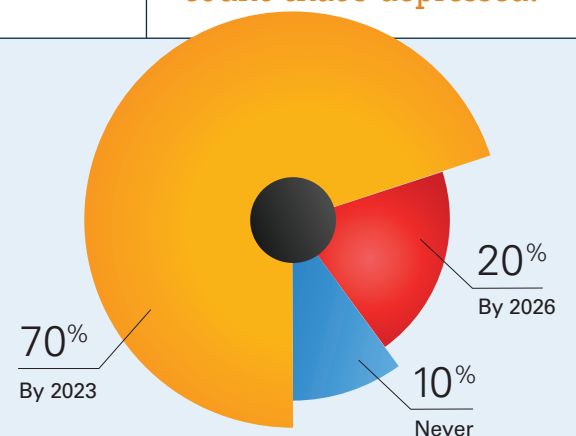
Southwest Airlines EVP and chief commercial officer **Andrew Watterson** discusses operations and recovery.

"[Small and medium-sized businesses] were first to get back out on the road, but we're seeing the supermajority of our accounts are active. It's the travelers per account that's depressed."

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Most Meeting Pros Forecast Volume Return

When will meetings volume return to 2019 levels?



Source: American Express Meetings & Events June-July survey of 500 meeting and event professionals



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Carriers Plan Transatlantic Growth As U.S. Reopens

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER & ANDY HOSKINS

In a long-awaited moment suppliers hope will breathe new life into the beleaguered industry and mark the beginning of a meaningful recovery for corporate travel, the United States on Nov. 8 reopened its borders to travelers from 33 countries who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19, including the European Union and United Kingdom. The move helped spur carriers on both sides of the Atlantic to plan to increase its service between the U.S. and Europe.

The U.S. is the U.K.'s largest trading partner, and in 2019 more than 22 million people and 900,000 tons of cargo flew between the two countries.

U.K. secretary of state for transport Grant Shapps said the reopening is a significant moment for the aviation sector: "Transatlantic travel has long been at the heart of U.K. aviation... these vitally important flight routes will help boost the economy, protect and create British jobs and through the work of the Jet Zero Council help to build back greener."

Visitors from the U.K., Ireland, the 26 countries that comprise the EU's Schengen Area, China, India, Iran, Brazil and South Africa, must provide proof of vaccination and produce a negative Covid-19 test result within 72 hours of departure, as well as provide contract tracing information, in order to enter the United States.

Carriers Ready Growth

Airlines reacted to the reopening with new transatlantic service announcements. United Airlines, for example, next spring will add five new destinations in Europe and the Middle East and new routes to five others as a part of the largest transatlantic expansion in the carrier's history.

The new destinations, largely leisure-focused, include three to which United will be the only carrier offering direct service from the United States, according to United SVP of international networks and alliances Patrick Quayle.

Service from Newark to Bergen, Norway, begins May 20, marking the only direct service to Bergen from the U.S. and the only U.S. carrier serving Norway. Service from Newark to Palma de Mallorca in Spain's Balearic Islands begins June 2, followed by service from Newark to Tenerife in Spain's Canary Islands on June 9, also the only direct service between the U.S. and either destination.

In addition, United will start new service between Washington, D.C., and Amman, Jordan, on May 5, the only flight by a North American carrier to Amman, Quayle said. Service from Newark to Ponta Delgada in Portugal's Azores begins May 13, which will be the only direct service from the New York area to the Azores and will make United the largest North American carrier to Portugal, he said.

New routes to United's current destinations for the spring include daily flights between Denver and Mu-



United Airlines will add five new destinations as part of the largest transatlantic expansion in the carrier's history.

nich, Chicago and Milan and Washington, D.C., and Berlin, as well as an additional daily flight between Newark and each Dublin and Rome.

United in the spring also will start seven previously announced routes that had been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Those include service to Tokyo's Haneda airport from each Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and Newark by March 26; daily flights between Chicago and Zurich starting April 23; a second daily flight between Newark and Frankfurt starting April 23; daily flights between Newark and Nice, France, starting April 29; and daily flights between San Francisco and Bengaluru starting May 26.

Delta Air Lines, meanwhile, plans for summer 2022 to nearly double its transatlantic capacity year over year, flying 73 daily flights to 25 destinations, the carrier announced.

Delta's schedule includes two new routes from Boston, to Athens and Tel Aviv, starting Memorial Day weekend in 2022. From Boston, Delta also will restore service to Rome on May 1 and to Edinburgh on May 27 and upgauge aircraft on its routes to Amsterdam, Dublin and Paris.

New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport will be Delta's largest transatlantic hub next summer, with 29 daily flights to 23 destinations. Delta is restoring service to Frankfurt, which it has not operated since the early days of Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, on Dec. 13, and that service will increase to daily by the summer. Other restored routes include to Zurich on Feb. 6, to Brussels on March 26, to Edinburgh on May 1 and to both Copenhagen and Prague on May 26. Delta also will increase frequencies to Amsterdam, London, Milan and Rome to twice-daily by the summer and upgauge aircraft on service to Dublin and Lisbon.

From Atlanta, Delta plans to operate 18 daily flights to 14 transatlantic destinations next summer. Service to Munich will restart Dec. 13 and increase to daily by the summer, and service to Milan, which Delta has not operated since the summer of 2019, will restart May 1. In addition, Delta is increasing service from Atlanta to Amsterdam to three times daily and to both Rome and London to twice daily, as well as upgauging aircraft to Dublin.

Other returning transatlantic routes include Portland, Ore., to Amsterdam on May 3 and from both Cincinnati and Raleigh-Durham, N.C., to Paris in early August.

British Airways is set to fly to 23 U.S. airports this winter with up to 246 flights a week. Its growing network will include eight daily flights to New York by December; double-daily services to Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, Dallas and Miami; and daily services to Philadelphia, Phoenix, Seattle, Atlanta, Denver and Houston.

In October it restarted services to Austin, Orlando, Tampa, San Diego, Las Vegas and Baltimore, and in December will begin flying again to Nashville and New Orleans.

Virgin Atlantic, meanwhile, on Nov. 8 restarted service from London Heathrow to Orlando and Las Vegas as well as service from Manchester to Orlando and New York.

The airline has also been "steadily ramping up flying" to destinations including Boston, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. ■



Southwest Eyes ‘Clear, Steady’ Upward Demand

Southwest Airlines this month celebrated the 15th anniversary of its launch of operations in Denver, which since has grown into one of the largest centers of business for the carrier. Southwest EVP and chief commercial officer Andrew Watterson spoke with BTN transportation editor Michael B. Baker during the event about the effect Southwest’s growth in Denver has had on corporate travel, the carrier’s strategy to recover from recent operational challenges and his outlook for corporate travel recovery.

AIRLINE EXECUTIVES GENERALLY HAVE SAID THEY EXPECT SLOWER BUSINESS TRAVEL GROWTH THIS YEAR AND THEN ACCELERATION NEXT YEAR. IS THAT WHAT YOU EXPECT?

That’s the current supposition, though predictions for business travel return have been erroneous for a year and a half now, but it’s a clear, steady, upward trend that we’re seeing. [Small and medium-sized businesses] were first to get back out on the road, but we’re seeing the supermajority of our accounts are active. It’s the travelers per account that’s really depressed, but for the travelers who are traveling, their rate of travel is down only about 10 percent.

A year or so ago, people would say conventions and internal travel are not coming back, but we’re seeing a lot of meetings and convention business, because those are open. People are traveling on business to Las Vegas or Orlando to have a convention or meeting and interact with others, and we’re seeing a lot of companies, especially professional services companies, getting together in their offices. They can’t go to a client site, so they’ll fly their teams to a centralized office, work there a couple of days a week and then go back to their home office. That has been a surprise, because if you’d asked anybody 12 to 15 months ago, they’d say those would be the last things to come back, but they’ve been the first things.

WILL IT ULTIMATELY RETURN TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS?

A lot of times people get overly focused on whether we’ll get to 100 percent of travel demand. The business travel community just being back to 80 percent or 85 percent is material. There will be different types of business travel. While I don’t minimize that, it’s true with every recession. If you go back to the Great Recession or 9/11, those changed the nature of business travel, so it’s common for an economic downturn to result in a change of business travel perception. After 9/11, we had the security hassle, which put a damper on short-haul flying. During the Great Recession, a lot of the big conventions were vilified, and so there was a stigma on conventions that lasted a few years.

AFTER YOUR RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPACITY ADJUSTMENTS, ARE YOU CONFIDENT THAT SOUTHWEST WILL BE READY FOR THE UPCOMING HOLIDAY DEMAND?



Southwest’s Andrew Watterson discusses:

- A surprise rebound in convention and meeting business
- Channel shift from Southwest’s GDS strategy
- Getting operations beyond “acceptable” levels

“We won’t be back to the same levels we were this summer until the earliest March or perhaps later on, so that gives us more time to ramp up the hiring we need.”

You never know what the weather is going to be like. What we’re seeing is that with summertime, we had ramped up our capacity, and we didn’t lay anybody off or furlough anybody, but we did have people on extended leave. We were calling them back, and then we were hiring more people, and just like the rest of the economy, we found out we couldn’t hire people as fast as we used to be able to hire, and some people who came back from leave for whatever reason would turn around and ask for unpaid leave. A combination of coming up short in hiring goals and unpaid leaves meant staffing wasn’t right this summer. So, we immediately adjusted for capacity and brought down our capacity. We won’t be back to the same levels we were this summer until the earliest March or perhaps later on, so that gives us more time to ramp up the hiring we need. There will be less flights this holiday season versus the summer, and more people we’ve been hiring, which puts us in a good position.

OUTSIDE OF THAT ONE WEEKEND, HOW HAS SOUTHWEST’S OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE BEEN IN RECENT MONTHS?

Since we did the immediate reduction we started in September and beyond, we’ve had acceptable on-time performance. We’d like to do better than that, but it’s good enough.

WHAT FEEDBACK HAVE YOU GOTTEN FROM CORPORATE CUSTOMERS REGARDING THE NEW DESTINATIONS SOUTHWEST HAS ADDED?

A good portion of them are leisure, and for business travelers, they like that, because they can use the points they earn on business to fly leisure. The ones that have a direct business benefit are the bigger city airports, like Chicago O’Hare, [Houston] Bush Intercontinental and Miami, but we also have medium-sized city airports like Colorado Springs, Fresno and Bozeman, Mont., where there’s business going on there as well and corporations located there or that send people there are happy. We see in big metro areas, where we’re in multiple airports, that gives people choices. Denver is a big focus for us. It’s our largest airport. We entered 15 years ago in a modest fashion and then, as we’ve seen an increasingly robust response, we’ve ramped up to be what we are now. We are getting 16 more gates as they finish our concourse, which is a total of 40 flights, so we’ll have ample opportunity to fly to new destinations and add more frequencies.

NOW THAT YOU ARE LIVE WITH ALL THE MAJOR GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM SUPPLIERS, HAVE YOU SEEN MUCH CHANNEL SHIFT?

We’re seeing definitely incremental business from being in the three GDSs with full functionality. We know there’s some shift, and when we did the business case and plan for doing this, we counted on the big shift. What we are seeing now is that corporations will still use multiple channels for different purposes. There may be a senior group that gets high-touch support from the travel management company and goes through the GDS, and there may be a self-service, stand-alone business unit that uses Swabiz. Something in between might use a direct connect. The ultimate channel shift will depend on what the travel purpose is for each of those segments. ■



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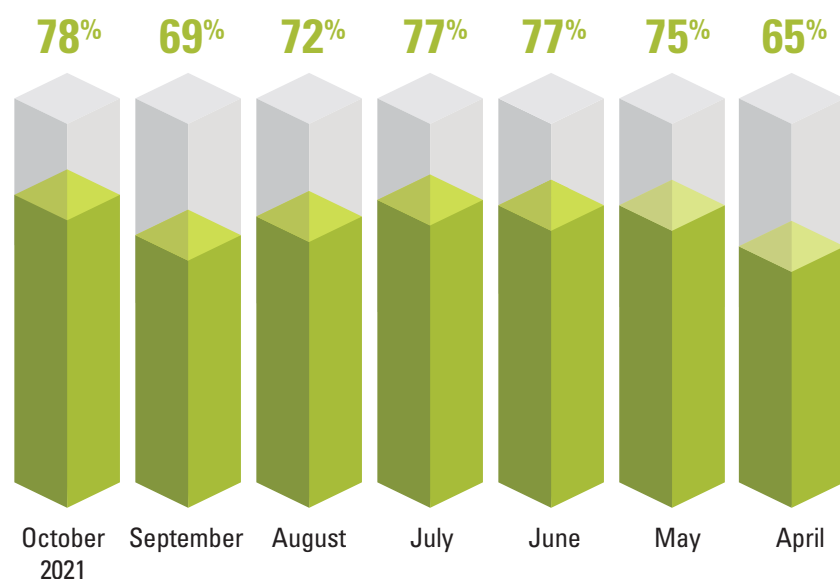


As Industry Recovery Quickens, Hotels Projected to Hike Rates

As new U.S. Covid-19 cases settle after an August and September surge and vaccination rates increase—helped along by some corporate and federal mandates—it seems that employees are considering the possibility of business travel: willingness appears to be rising, meeting professionals forecast recovery and corporate air sales are rebounding. But rising demand equals rising costs, and hotels are projected to increase 2022 corporate rates as occupancy levels climb.

BUYERS: BUSINESS TRAVEL WILLINGNESS UP

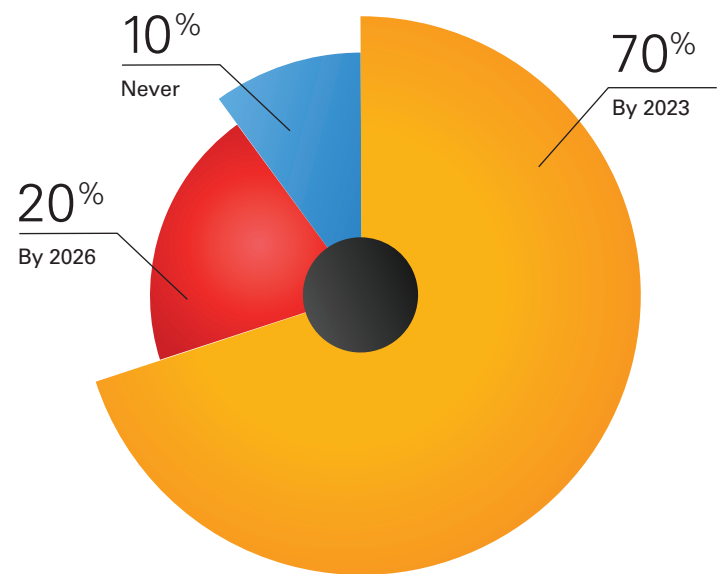
Respondents who indicate their travelers are “very” or “somewhat” willing to travel for business



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

MOST MEETING PROS FORECAST VOLUME RETURN

When will meetings volume return to 2019 levels?



Source: American Express Meetings & Events June-July survey of 500 meeting and event professionals

10-15%
PROJECTED 2022 AVERAGE YEAR-OVER-YEAR INCREASE IN NEGOTIATED CORPORATE HOTEL RATE, ACCORDING TO NEW YORK UNIVERSITY'S BJORN HANSON.

PROJECTED U.S. HOTEL KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

	2020	2021*	2022*
Occupancy	44%	57.1%	63.4%
ADR	\$103	\$123	\$130
RevPAR	\$45	\$70	\$82

* Forecas Sources: STR, Tourism Economics

ARC: U.S. CORPORATE AIR SALES ACCELERATE

7-Day Period Ending	Agency type vs. same week in 2019		
	Corporate	Online	Leisure/Other
Oct. 17	-54.3%	-8.7%	-31.9%
Oct. 24	-53.1%	-6.4%	-27.6%
Oct. 31	-50.3%	-4.7%	-25.3%
Nov. 7	-51.7%	-7.3%	-17.2%
52-week average*	-71.7%	-28.1%	-51.2%

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



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.

WRESTLING WITH THE NEW REALITIES OF IN-PERSON MEETINGS

BTN throughout 2021 has followed a group of meeting practitioners on the recovery's progress as companies return to face-to-face events. Participants in the third of the three-part series include Zurich-based **Nadja Haag**, global meetings and events manager for Takeda Pharmaceuticals; ZS Associates meetings and travel manager **Suzanne Boyan**; Anthem director of travel and events **Cindy Heston**; and industry consultant **Betsy Bondurant**. They spoke with BTN senior editor Donna M. Airoidi in late October and early November about how the issues facing meeting and event departments had evolved in the past few months. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

HOW HAVE YOU RESUMED IN-PERSON MEETINGS, AND WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

SUZANNE BOYAN: It was an adventure. The largest required the most coordination. We invited 297 [people] and did a lot of things we had not done in the past. We had to consider [National Interest Exception] waivers to get people into the country for non-U.S. citizens. We worked closely with the global mobility team to get international participants who wanted to come in. They had to test before they arrived. To be equitable and for everyone's peace of mind, we required PCR tests for domestic attendees, too. We shipped 250 tests to domestic attendees [to] get results 72 hours prior to the event, and on-site we had rapid testing available. PCR tests were available for those who wanted or needed to take one to return home after the meeting. It was hybrid, and we worked with a production company to make it a successful hybrid meeting. We had 216 in person and 75 over the platform.

I can now say I am a Covid PCR test expert. I know every question to ask. I think that will be the norm for at least a year. ... We are still working with a very compressed market, in terms of labor shortages. One thing to take away is really communicating not just with the sales team but on-site staff and saying, 'What can we do to partner closely together to

make sure our meeting is a priority?' I did feel like a lot of meetings were taking place during our meeting. They were at capacity, and they weren't prepared.

NADJA HAAG: We are in the middle of two virtual meetings and haven't gone fully live again. We are still mindful that [some] people are not ready to travel. I have a colleague [who planned] a face-to-face, but [they] included a hybrid option because some people felt more safe virtually. Also, it is still complex to get people into other countries, depending on where they come from. Guidelines change every other day, at least in Europe. You need to know what is currently going on and try to keep up to date.

CINDY HESTON: We are doing some in-person events with very tight protocols around requiring vaccinations, but also testing pre- and post-event for all participants. We now have the ability to request [test kits] through the event team, both for business travel and meetings and events.

On hotels, I agree, hotel staffing is a bit reduced. We are asking questions in the [requests for proposals] along the lines of, 'Do you have other groups in-house?' [If capacity is] at 200 percent, that's a big red flag in our world. We don't want crowding. ... For the most part, we are not asking what type of group—just

please let us know so we can inform our client what is happening, then they can make the call. It could happen after we contract. If they sign another group, we want to inform our client. That's been in place for a year now, at least. Another thing which has been helpful is asking in the RFP if hotels are willing to have vaccinated staff. Are they willing to be tested pre- and post-[event]? We were asking a week before arriving: "No way. The staff is set." But if it's in the RFP, we get a very positive response.

HAAG: It's the same, we have stricter protocols than most venues. Even when we do production with a studio, we have tighter health and safety protocols internally and ask them to comply with us.

BOYAN: We did tell them ahead what our expectations were. We wanted all hotel employees masked when servicing our group. They put caveats in—they didn't know they had to be masked when outside. That would have been a good question to ask if not sure, and they knew we were having a lot of meals outside. Though we gave them a two-month heads-up, they were unclear on what the expectations were. Don't assume that because it's clear to you, that means it's clear to them.

BETSY BONDURANT: A client said as



Betsy Bondurant



Suzanne Boyan



Nadja Haag



Cindy Heston

much. They want to go back to face-to-face—it's a somewhat conservative company—and they are reserving the right in 30 days to revert to virtual depending on what is happening in the location. It's [figuring out] how to be fair to hotel partners and be fair to the companies. The future is still so uncertain.

WHAT CURRENT MEETING TRENDS ARE YOU EXPERIENCING?

BOYAN: I'm seeing a push away from hybrid. It was important for this past meeting, because it was global. But now, heading into regional meetings, people are less excited about hybrid. When it comes to regional meetings, they do tend to be larger. It might be part cost consideration. People think hybrid should be less expensive, and it's just not if you want it done well and engaging for both groups. As always, we are ready to pivot.

HESTON: 2022 looks good. From a strategy standpoint, it's all systems go. Since the beginning of September, there's been a huge project initiative to automate as much as possible, to retrain and reeducate event planners on high-level event engagement stakeholder protocols and principles. We are much more open but cautious. We definitely see testing continue, especially being a health-care company. But we also see the desire not only for customer-facing [events] but also in the two years, a lot of our department leaders have hired new people. Teams are new but have never gotten together. A lot are incoming to our office facilities. Internal for us is still very facility-driven, but for sales and high-level meetings, we are sourcing and seeing tight compression for 2022. For meetings we know are normally on the books, we are talking to [internal] leaders and saying, 'We know this is gray for you, and we don't know what will happen in [the future]. Let's see if we can negotiate for protection if things change.' We want to make sure we are not behind. ... Worst case, we know what to do in the virtual world. But we don't want to be in a position where in Q1 they start to look and everything in the marketplace is gone.

HAAG: We've had some in-person for smaller events. And more also [domestic] rather than international. We are looking at events next year, and I find it's very hard. We already experienced this with one I'm searching for in November 2022. I have some offers, but the [venues] I wanted are already booked. I'm

trying to follow what the stakeholders are looking for, to get the best negotiated terms needed. It's hard to know what 2022 will bring.

BONDURANT: There is an appetite to get back to face-to-face, [especially] for those companies less risk-averse. ... I hadn't heard what Cindy and Nadja said about looking to their partners to really step up. But the partnership between the hoteliers and the AV companies and everybody who's helping to produce these face-to-face meetings certainly is an evolving dynamic.

There's also the trend of the advent of digital meetings technology leaking into face-to-face meetings. And people in many cases are trying to avoid the hybrid scenario. But going back to face-to-face, they're trying to be more creative about attendee engagement. ... It used to be that mentions on Twitter measured engagement. Now, it's a lot more interactive conversation. People don't want to be preached at; they want to talk to colleagues at a table. People will spend a lot more time curating content in the face-to-face environment. The in-person meetings I've attended, there are more options. If you want to be in the general session, great. If not, there's the trade show. Before it used to be that the general session was prime time, and everything else was locked down. The session offerings are a lot shorter. People determined they have short attention spans for educational sessions. I'm seeing the timing change from 60 to 90 minutes to 30 to 50 minutes.

ARE YOU SEEING ANY DELAYS OR RESISTANCE FOR FINALIZING SPACE FOR 2022 EVENTS? HILTON'S CEO SAID ON THE COMPANY'S Q3 EARNINGS CALL THAT IT WAS A 'BALANCING ACT' REGARDING COMMITMENTS FOR 2022 SPACE BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEY WILL HAVE PRICING POWER.

BOYAN: It's frustrating. It is really hard to find properties that will meet whatever standards our stakeholders want. Hilton is not a small independent brand. They are a humongous player in the game. That doesn't sit well with me.

HESTON: I see where that would be a tactic they use. But again, we need to work as partners, as we have been doing the past couple years. I would hope we come out of this wiser and better prepared to move forward in a more civil way of partnerships with travel suppliers. We are willing

to pay market pricing. There are ways to put it in the contract to protect both.

BONDURANT: That is startling, especially if you are a small company trying to hold meetings. ... [If you have a strategic meetings management program] and are recognized as a good customer chain-wide or brandwide, you'll have much more ability to demonstrate why you should be getting this meeting space at this time and relative price versus people who can't demonstrate that. It could be a feeding frenzy out there. On the flip side, you can't blame hotels. So many have been either temporarily or shut down completely. It's been a terrible time for owners. There need to be a lot of good conversations. ... We are all experiencing inflation. I would counsel the hoteliers to make sure they are open and honest with their clients and explain why the pricing is changing. It could be challenging for internal meeting planners to explain that they were at the hotel two years ago and now it's 25 percent more.

HOW ABOUT CONTRACT TERMS?

HESTON: We have a standard contract with major chain partners, and those terms have been accepted universally. We did carve out caveats for Covid-19. [For example,] if you give us a rate and the market rate is lower, we have the right to lower the rate to the market rate. If we are contracting for next September, we have no clue what the market will be. The hotel is asking for higher prices than rates showing today. We understand, the market is high. But let us put a clause in there, because we don't want to walk in with 30 percent over what you are selling on brand-dot-com.

BONDURANT: That's a real challenge because the clients were looking for more favorable and flexible terms. But booking further out, hotels are not going to be willing to be as flexible with rebookings and cancellation clauses [as they have been]. Attrition, possibly. In general, I don't think people are looking to make wholesale changes to contract clauses. ... That said, as far as who is responsible for your participants' health and safety, I have seen that being called out. You, the hotel, are responsible for my clients when they are enjoying your hotel in non-meeting related activities. Sleeping rooms need to be cleaned properly. As the meeting planner, don't tell me I'm responsible. I have seen stipulations around that begin to be added to contracts. ■



2021 Innovator of the Year: Grapevine



Grapevine CEO Jack Dow (left) and Psngr1 CEO Chris Moss

Grapevine CEO Jack Dow is coming off a one-two win for the company's concierge-style automation and in-destination recommendation engines tweaked for corporate travel. First, it was Business Travel Show Europe's Innovation Faceoff, and now the in the United States, Grapevine walked away

as the judges' 2021 Innovator of the Year at The BTN Group's annual Innovate conference.

Grapevine crunches travel management company booking data to understand revenue opportunities for intermediaries. Attachment rates for hotels? Check. But what about rental car or airport parking bookings? Grapevine circles in a number of common a la carte business trip purchases and automates them through TMC partners to drive additional revenue, while providing travelers relevant solutions to their needs. And, according to Dow, the offers tread carefully with policy, further enhancing the TMC's value to the client.

"We're building our messaging right now to the TMC community, emphasizing how much money they are leaving on the table," he said. "We know that even business-as-usual is aspirational for a lot of TMCs now, but we want to enable them to think beyond that."

The Innovate judges' panel gave the app full-throated praise.

"The platform [Grapevine is] building around the right information at the right time in the right channel is very impactful," said judge Steve Clagg, travel technology manager for Microsoft. "It's something we have often looked for ... a coherent solution on the journey from end to end." He noted the artificial intelligence capabilities built into the tool to drive traveler productivity and "the overall experience" of business travel. "We are excited about where this could go," he said.

Grapevine beat out perennially innovative competitors like Bizly, HRS and Tripbam to capture the win. There were plenty of new names in the competitive mix as well, like Hubli (formerly Meetings-

Booker.com), Psngr1 and TravelBank.

"The caliber of the startups and other businesses was outstanding," said Dow. "The caliber of the conversation... you knew there were with a bunch of smart people working to push the industry forward."

Grapevine is gaining traction as business travel begins in earnest after the Covid-19 shutdown. The startup already had signed with Gray Dawes in the U.K. before the pandemic. With more business travel on the books, the company is seeing the fruits of its efforts to bring business travelers together with right-time products and services.

"For a time, we were working without the data, but we can start to see all of that coming in now, so the artificial intelligence can work," Dow said. "We will continue to perfect [the functionality] around core ancillary products for business travelers like hotel, parking and fast security lanes. We want to improve timing and messaging channels before rolling out 10 new products." Currently, Grapevine notifies users via email. By early next year, the platform will notify via Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp as well.

"We are hoping to do lots more work in the U.S.," Dow said after the win. He later told BTN, "When you receive this kind of recognition, it opens doors for you to talk to a lot of people" and noted the company was making headway with another U.S.-based TMC.

Grapevine currently is working on en route and in-destination enhancements that would identify real-time context for active itineraries, such as lengthy flight delays or cancellations, to offer lounge access or a local hotel for an overnight stay. A longer-tail goal for travelers in locations will be concierge-type restaurant suggestions or even entertainment. "You have to gain trust with core ancillaries first, before pursuing those longer-tail items," said Dow.

The one area where judges wanted revisions for Grapevine was to have the company consider working directly with corporates and cut out the middleman. Or, at least create more nuanced messaging.

"We want to hear more about the value proposition geared and aimed at us, the corporate travel buyer. Because our interest is not just to line the pockets of our TMCs but to increase our values," said Clagg.

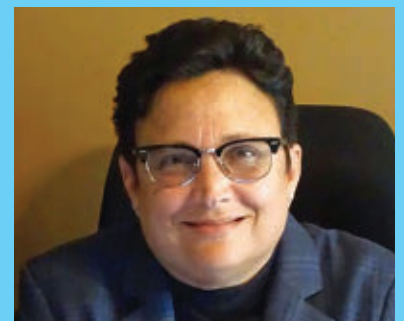
THE JUDGES



STEVE CLAGG
Travel technology manager at Microsoft



SUSAN HOPLEY
CEO of The Data Exchange



SUSAN LICHTENSTEIN
Managing partner of DigiTravel Consulting



JENNIFER STEINKE
Global head of travel for PPD

PEOPLE'S CHOICE: PSNGR1

Conference attendees' People's Choice award-winner was Psngr1, a source-agnostic booking tool. In addition to displaying disparate content sources—including New Distribution Capability content—in a single next-generation storefront compatible with ATPCO requirements, the booking platform offers collaborative trip planning that allows users to duplicate bookings and add events with individual travel records that are serviced separately by the TMC. The platform also features contract performance tracking, with features that allow suppliers to offer high-performing clients to access what Psngr1 CEO Chris Moss called "microdeals," which could kick in programmatically.

THE COMPETITION

BIZLY



Meetings sourcing and management firm Bizly unveiled its enhanced platform, which allows users to pair booking tools for internal conference rooms as well as external meeting space. Bizly also has extended its vendor management solution to cover virtual and hybrid meetings, according to CEO Ron Shah, and upgraded its corporate front-end, adding capabilities to incorporate remote conferencing tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Bizly also has enhanced its global data management capabilities. "Our API feeds into whatever warehouse you use, and we want to ... enable you to look at meetings and travel data right in the same frame," Shah said.

BLACKLANE



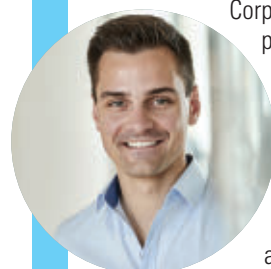
Chauffeured ride-hailing provider Blacklane appeared at Innovate to detail its new service, in which it offers intercity rides between nearby major metropolitan areas at flat, all-inclusive rates. Global head of corporate sales Gordon Millner said the new offering was made possible by a market analysis that predicted demand at a lower price point and a new dispatch algorithm that allowed Blacklane to match chauffeurs with bidirectional trips. "This is more of a business innovation than a technological innovation, but it's something we're really excited about," he said.

FCM



Travel management company FCM demonstrated its FCM travel technology platform, which includes an online booking tool, incorporates third-party tech functionality, communications and approval mechanisms and the ability to incorporate internal corporate data feeds. Chief experience officer John Morhous said the FCM Platform "is meant to be the single go-to place for everything travel for FCM" and noted the company has "cross-pollinated" the platform with its recent investments and acquisitions, including chatbot Sam and booking technology specialist WhereTo.

HRS



Corporate lodging platform HRS appeared at the conference to tout its Green Stay Initiative, a solution that allows corporate travel managers and travelers to select hotels based on sustainability scores, which HRS calculates using a proprietary formula taking various inputs into account. Chief product officer Martin Biermann announced that global hotel company Accor would participate in the initiative. (Marriott in November agreed to as well.) "There is a quite wide range of emissions per room night incurred by the various suppliers in the industry, and here we can enable smarter choices," he said.

HUBLI



Formerly known as MeetingsBooker.com, meetings technology company Hubli CEO Ciaran Delaney demonstrated the firm's self-serve booking portal for simple meetings and group stays and can incorporate internal and external space. Hubli provides access to more than 185,000 meeting and workspaces worldwide, he said, and allows users to incorporate policies and budgetary controls, among others, in the meeting planning process. "Hubli is designed to let companies give their employees space to succeed without sacrificing safety or control," he said. Afterward, Hubli in November announced a partnership with Travelport.

PREDICTX



Corporate analytics software provider PredictX demonstrated at Innovate its Scenario Builder allows, a tool that allows travel manager users to calculate and assess future business travel volumes and merge those projections with real-time airfare and hotel rate data. The tool allows users to remove outdated info and assess the impact of potential moves the travel could make. "It is an entire universe for travel managers and IT stakeholders to simulate and forecast their own decisions and their travelers' behavior and decisions," said U.S. sales director Jason Kramer.

TRIPBAM



Tripbam took home the main award at BTN's inaugural Innovate conference in 2014, and the hotel reshopping firm was back this year with a demonstration of its upcoming air solution. As in its hotel practice, Tripbam for Air can search for and automatically rebook less-expensive flights, and the tool also can audit air contracts to ensure clients are receiving negotiated discounts. Beta clients have seen savings not only from reshopping but also from new program intelligence, said Air Solutions VP Tim Nichols. "This is changing the way program management conversations happen," he said.

U.S. BANK/TRAVELBANK



TravelBank co-founder and CEO Duke Chung (right) and U.S. Bank VP of partnerships and new product development for commercial payments Tory Parsons teamed up for a presentation that promised up to a 4 percent rebate in travel spend for joint clients. "It's never been done before, but I will tell you that for the first time you can take your travel program from a cost center to a profit center," Chung said. Afterward, U.S. Bank's parent company on Nov. 16 announced it would acquire TravelBank.



Ann Dery Is BTN's 2021 Travel Manager of the Year

Driving strategic vision through a crisis, Ann Dery elevated the role of the travel manager and positioned herself not just to restart travel, but to reinvent it. She helped many travel managers map the path forward. **By Elizabeth West**



PHOTO BY STEVE HOCKSTEIN / HARVARD STUDIO

“The pandemic really made me realize that my role couldn’t continue if I only thought about my goal as ‘return-to-travel.’ I realized that I needed to reinvent travel at S&P Global and pivot my role to become a much more strategic stakeholder within the organization.”

Those are the words of BTN’s 2021 Travel Manager of Year, Ann Dery, director of global travel and meetings for S&P Global. That they could have come from almost any travel manager during the Covid-19 pandemic that completely reshaped the global business travel industry in 2020 and 2021 does not dampen the effectiveness of Dery’s leadership by example.

Dery has appeared in countless webinars and virtual industry panels since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 and she sharpened her strategic mindset from the get-go. As a result, she has inspired her own internal leadership team to view travel more strategically going forward, her suppliers to partner with each other to provide transformational solutions for the industry and her travel management peers to push their own strategic value within their organizations and to create opportunities for themselves to make a difference.

“I am lucky,” said Dery, who sits within S&P Global’s procurement team and reports to head of procurement Oliver Gall. She said Gall gave her entrée to the

executive team early in her tenure at S&P Global, but that the pandemic allowed her to lean into that strategic role and grow her immediate stakeholder team beyond the traditional and chief financial officer and human resources executive—or, ‘people’ officer at S&P Global.

“The environment gave me exposure to other executive stakeholders like facilities and site managers who have become critical to reinventing travel for S&P Global, since they are the ones who control entry to our office buildings and understand the differences and regulations in play in their own regions. But what I realized during the pandemic was that not everyone has had the opportunity to make these connections within their own organizations, and whatever I could do to support others in that journey and whenever I could add value to a dialogue that would inspire travel managers to show their strategic value, I wanted to do that. Because if ever there was a time for travel managers to show their worth, it’s now.”

Moving First & Fast on Return to Travel Frameworks

“Ann took the bull by the horns and was in the war room with executives like once a week during the early parts of the pandemic,” said Festive Road co-founder and managing partner Caroline Strachan. “She was seen as an equal versus very senior people in her organization, and she just took the elevation of the role. It happened very quickly, and she kept up really quickly—based on the materials that she was sharing back with us.”

That ‘material’ helped Festive Road shape its seminal “Permissible Travel Framework,” the creation and free sharing of which in 2020 landed Strachan on the annual list of BTN’s 25 Most Influential people in the business travel industry.

“She’d come back to us and say, ‘This is how I’m using it,’ and we would talk through it. Ann didn’t really have many others to compare notes with ... and no one had ever done it before. So when she would come back and ask, ‘What do you think?’ it really helped us to adjust certain aspects of the framework and contributed to improving it for the thousands of others who used it after her.”

“There are so many more strategic ways that travel can align with the organization. Covid-19 revealed that, and travel managers can meet those challenges with meaningful solutions and programs.”

– S&P Global’s Ann Dery

Strachan said what really stood out to her about Dery’s business acumen was how well she was able to step away from the masses of information coming toward travel managers during the pandemic and filter through the information that mattered most to her program and to the businesses her program needed to support. Also, how to say ‘no’ when executives suggested program direction that Dery knew was not right.

“Managing all those stakeholders and not saying ‘yes’ to everything they wanted... she showed commitment to her program,” said Strachan. “But Ann wouldn’t just say no, she would offer a better recommendation and was able to defend those recommendations. I haven’t seen many travel managers do that at that level.”

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THE PROTECTOR

Carolyn Pund

Cisco Systems global leader of strategic meetings management and digital events

Cisco Systems’ Carolyn Pund recognized that the best way to return to meetings during and after the pandemic was to protect attendee health and well-being. Her global strategic meetings management team implemented a new consultancy and services program at Cisco involving a safety advisory team for all meetings and events. More than 30 members of her global team have been certified as event health and safety advisors, and all meeting requests with an in-person component must go through a consultation.

What prompted you to create the new consultancy?

Carolyn Pund: We asked, ‘What do we need to do to return to events safely and let people be comfortable with returning?’ It was driven by the fact that we knew our 2019 volume of events before the pandemic was 12,000-plus registered in our global meetings portal. We do not expect to be back at that volume anytime soon, but we know that for any size and type of events that come back, we want attendees to feel safe.

How many people are certified advisors, and what is the certification process?

Pund: The team is global, and there are varying numbers in each region. We have over 30 that are Covid-officer certified advisors. The process involved multi-day or multi-week training, depending on the region. But it was quite extensive training as well as proctored exams. These are the frontline consultants for our services.

Was the certification process created externally?

Pund: Yes, it was offered by medical organizations providing that type of certification. Some were for the production industry, like theater and movies, and the others were for meetings and events.

How does the consultancy process work?

Pund: At Cisco, when doing any type of event, it is required to be registered in our global meeting portal. That is a natural gateway that was already in place. The consultancy service becomes part of a multi-step approval process, and at the end of that consultation, a meeting ID is issued. This allows meeting owners to move forward with their event. There are two parts: One is advising [event owners] on all their new post-Covid responsibilities to run an event. In addition to general planning, there is now the health and safety component. The other function our team provides is the planning and on-site services to support meetings from a health and safety perspective. Once we go through that full list of actions an event owner is now responsible for, they have the option of employing our team services, or they sign off to be fully accountable for health and safety as well as documentation and record keeping. If it’s a small meeting of 10 to 15 attendees, they probably will opt to do it themselves. If [larger], most opt to have us do that for them.

Has it increased your team’s involvement in planning events for the company?

Pund: Yes, 40 percent of the teams’ time is consulting on upcoming events. There are some countries that are back to events, and some regions and countries that are still completely closed down. We have a regular cadence of communicating when the regions will open up. That decision is made by Cisco’s security and global medical teams.

Any recommendations for meetings managers looking to do something similar?

Pund: This service conveniently was built into the already in-place global strategic meeting management operations. If we hadn’t had an embedded SMMP, I don’t know if it would be feasible to try to get buy-in. Because of the strong meetings policy and SMM already established as the way Cisco does meetings and events, it became another step in that gatekeeping to assure that this new aspect of meetings and events was included. For established SMMs, it may be the perfect opportunity to get stronger adoption. It depends on the size of the company and the influence of the organization that runs the SMMP.



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THE EQUITY BUILDER

Carol Fergus

Fidelity International director of global travel, meetings and ground transportation

Fergus is a founding member of the diversity, equity and inclusion committees for both the Travel & Meetings Society and the Global Business Travel Association. She created documentation on how to begin conversations within corporate travel around DE&I and has led by example in implementing more inclusive travel programs. She created with her travel management company partner BCD Travel an apprenticeship program that can serve as a model for how TMC-client partnerships can bring more diversity into the managed travel space.

How did you get involved with the GBTA and TAMS DE&I committees?

Carol Fergus: I was already on the European advisory board, and there was a discussion around setting up DE&I as a global venture for GBTA. I [got] engaged in one of the strands, which is race and culture. TAMS is a similar thing. It was a no-brainer. DE&I is a real passion for me. I feel that as many platforms that I can have to bang that drum, the better.

What did you find lacking in your own company's DE&I program?

Fergus: I think the company has done a hell of a lot, so I don't think that it's lacking. I would ask, 'Is [the communication] still getting to the right people we are meant to be championing, and is it resonating in the right way?'

What would your answer be?

Fergus: We are not there yet, but it is a long journey. People still have that fear factor and that uncomfortable feeling of talking about certain subjects, especially when it comes to things like race, mental health, etc. A lot has changed. The conversations have started, but we have a long way to go. We need to find ways to get people to open up more, and to demonstrate more that differences are being made as opposed to talking about it.

What was your motivation for the apprenticeship?

Fergus: It falls in line with the stop talking and [more] doing. It was easy to do and was a small thing that had massive impact. It was giving opportunity to minority groups that weren't graduates. But we have to show the possibilities. By working with our supply chain, it was an opportunity for them to give roles, tasks, education and development in their organizations [while we] give them the funding and support to allow them to do that, to identify people applying from minority groups and give them the career path that they wouldn't necessarily believe they could do by themselves.

The program is new, but have you thought about how to evolve it?

Fergus: I'd like to work with people in the industry, show them the structure, how it works and have them replicate it, so when they have discussions with their clients and other businesses, instead of just talking about the resources they need to bring in to support that client, also include this DE&I apprenticeship piece. Say, 'Have you considered having something whereby you are giving development, learning and training to a young adult from a minority group?' They should build it into the discussions. When they go out to tender a [request for proposal], put that in as a request.

What advice do you have for others who want to follow your lead?

Fergus: A, speak to me about the structure. It's very simple, and I'm happy to share. B, if they don't want to do that, the method is very easy. Follow it and have the conversations with your suppliers. Look at their career path, their development, do they have a DE&I ethos. [They each] will be able to give opportunity to a young adult from a minority group. [Tell them,] 'We already have an apprenticeship scheme in place, we'd like to work with you with regards to bringing those people in so that they can be part of your team.' Start those conversations.

Strategic Partnerships to Push the Industry Forward

Since that time, Dery has moved on from the concept of permissible travel to take a 'people, profit and planet' approach to reinventing the S&P Global travel program. Her 'Restart to Travel Strategy' playbook that replaced the first framework aligned with the firm's regional office reopenings and was commended by S&P Global's operations committee with an equity award of stock options.

Viewing her program through the 'three P' lens, however, made it clear how much transformation would be required for the program. She has been proactive about driving the right solutions, and willing to push her supplier set toward new partnerships to get the job done on a global basis.

“[Ann] was seen as an equal versus very senior people in her organization, and she just took the elevation of the role. It happened very quickly, and she kept up really quickly.”

– Festive Road's Caroline Strachan

Prior to the pandemic, Dery implemented PredictX as the single source of travel intelligence for the S&P Global travel program. Through that tool, she also introduced automated reports that highlighted key performance indicators and offered nuanced analysis to a number of stakeholder groups within the company.

“As an army of one,” she told BTN, “I do look for automated solutions and I want to engage innovative suppliers that I know will deliver intelligence and efficiencies to my program.”

Knowing that sustainability was on the agenda for travel moving into 2021—S&P Global established Science Based Targets in February 2021 to achieve net-zero emissions by 2040—Dery was ahead of the game, working with sustainable travel startup Thrust Carbon not only to create proposals for her company but also to connect the newcomers with PredictX so she could bring enhanced travel sustainability intelligence through established data channels that serve her businesses.

She's been cognizant, however, that startup companies require quick sales cycles to stay competitive—and has advocated for a steady implementation timeline to serve the S&P Global travel restart while also serving the strategic sustainability goals for the overall organization.

“She's been incredibly vocal internally to almost be our advocate [at S&P Global] and sort of mentioned not just to her colleagues but to her superiors as well that it's not good to take two weeks to come to a decision and then say we need to change [something] tomorrow and expect us to manage both expectations,” said Thrust Carbon head of partnerships Glenn Thorsen. “She's knows those challenges [of working with startups] and has been very supportive against those types of situations.”

Dery also introduced European ground transportation provider Gett—which just completed an initial public offering as part of their entrance strategy for the U.S. market—to ground transportation marketplace platform GroundSpan. Realizing that the two providers could complement each others' work to serve her travel program globally, Dery worked to forge a partnership that now is positioned to serve other global programs, according to those companies' executives.

“Ann had a lot to do with bringing us together,” said GroundSpan founder and president Tony Bonanno. “She saw the high-level value between both of us and recognized that putting both companies together with a strategic partnership would accomplish her goals of allowing her travelers to book through [numerous] channels globally.” Plus, he added, Dery wants the whole program to match her vision, and ground transportation was just as important as air, hotel and car rental. “That’s not the case for every travel manager; Ann is at the forefront of the change happening with global corporates managing ground transportation globally resulting in a complete, strategic program.”

Gett managing director of ground transportation management marketplace Matteo de Renzi added similar praise for Dery. “Not only was she a very strong facilitator for our relationship, but she is also a source of inspiration for what can be done when you truly think strategically. We are now building this global transportation grid with the support of GroundSpan in the U.S. and in the rest of the world.”

Moving Into 2022

Dery laid much of the groundwork for her 2021 strategies and accomplishments in the years leading up to pandemic. What she didn’t do was deviate from her goals to be a strategic player for her organization, and when crisis hit, she didn’t shy away.

“I realized I had an opportunity that a lot of other travel managers don’t have,” she said, citing the support of her direct manager for her independent work ethic and full immersion in the industry dialogue about reinventing travel. “While there was a lot of fear at the beginning of the pandemic that the core of the travel managers’ job had disappeared, it didn’t take very long to realize that what was happening instead could make this moment the most exciting time to be a travel manager.

“I love travel, and I became a travel manager because there was always something new to learn—there’s the sourcing, the communications, the technology solutions and implementations. But now there are so many more strategic ways that travel can align with the orga-

“Not only was she a very strong facilitator for our relationship, but she is also a source of inspiration for what can be done when you truly think strategically. We are now building this global transportation grid with the support of GroundSpan in the U.S. and in the rest of the world.”

– Gett’s Matteo de Renzi

nization. Covid-19 revealed that, and travel managers can meet those challenges with meaningful solutions and programs.”

Gall, Dery’s direct manager, may have said it best in an email message he sent to her upon getting a confidential heads up that Dery would be BTN’s 2021 Travel Manager of the Year.

He wrote: “For you to have taken on what must have been one of the most challenging periods of your career and generate the opportunity, new strategy and perspective that you have embraced and converted into market-leading thinking is extremely impressive. Your tenacity and thought leadership is personally very motivating for me and a wonderful example to so many members of our team.”

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THE MOBILIZER

Stephen Swift

Ford Motor Co. EMEA and APAC
travel manager

Reporting into HR, Swift recognized impending risk issues for business travel given new and newly enforced municipal and country-based tax, visa and work-permit regulations. In response, he reshaped travel approval with tax compliance as an integrated process. Though he took the reins of compliance through his role in travel, he found he needed providers outside of the traditional travel management universe to deliver the solution he was looking for.

What prompted you to take hold of visa/immigration/tax compliance issues, and what risks have emerged for companies around them?

Stephen Swift: I managed relocation and travel for five years in the EMEA region and was involved in immigration and tax compliance. We became aware of compliance challenges around working patterns in Europe and realized we did not have a formal policy or process in place from a business travel perspective and needed to create one. We also realized we needed better support for employees on vehicle launch activity in other countries. This included immigration and tax support to obtain the right documentation for the individual. I took it to our HR leadership and got complete [buy-in]. What clinched it was briefly reporting to the head of the general counsel office. He said to make it a priority.

The risks of noncompliance are significant. There is reputational damage should noncompliance be highlighted by authorities in the form of fines and any potential media coverage of that. [You also] put employees at risk.

The U.K. and EU is where visa and immigration issues were more prevalent. But is this a global concern for companies?

Swift: Since the pandemic, we have noticed it has become more challenging to obtain work permits in many countries. There are staff shortages at many embassies around the world, which is leading to longer processing times. At many consulates there is greater scrutiny on some applications in certain regions, which is also leading to delays.

You’ve noted your biggest challenge was connecting the mobility compliance process you built to the OBT or TMC. How are you dealing with that?

Swift: We are using technology from our relocation partner Weichert Workforce Mobility to build a new global pre-trip approval system that will replace our existing tools. The tool will contain immigration and tax compliance logic and will initiate support for our employees when their travel patterns trigger the need for it. Weichert and our tax provider Deloitte will then obtain the relevant support. This is a huge project that has multiple work streams. We plan to have it available in the second quarter of 2022. In our experience, TMCs are still not interested enough in this area to offer a solution.

What do you recommend to travel managers getting started putting together a pre-trip process that enables simplified compliance?

Swift: Work with your relocation team and ask about the challenges they see. Also, if your company retains a tax consultancy, they are usually happy to present on this topic. Then highlight it to leadership and obtain support to take this forward. This can be the biggest challenge, as determining who owns this area is something a lot of companies struggle with. Then find a technology. There are many options. The technology will help you steer employees to a place where their travel can be assessed and any compliance requirements actioned through the system.

Do you see business travel getting more involved in mobility or coming together with that function?

Swift: As ex-pat assignments reduce in number, companies are sending more people as a ‘business traveler,’ so we will need to create more flexible policies that meet the business need and combine all the elements of travel and relocation. Are businesses willing to merge these two departments? Perhaps not yet, but I can see a future where travel and relocation merge in some companies.



Bans on Unvaccinated Employee Travel Are Here. Now What?

BY CHRIS DAVIS

U.S. companies of all sizes in recent months have wrestled with developing policies governing employees' return to their offices and normal work procedures. Senior executives and corporate boards have debated mandating Covid-19 vaccines for all employees, requiring regular tests for the unvaccinated, and limiting in-person office attendance to the vaccinated.

Some U.S. companies, apparently including JP Morgan Chase & Co., have hit on another option: allowing only vaccinated employees to travel for business. The financial services company, one of the largest U.S. spenders on corporate travel, also has restricted meeting attendance to the vaccinated, according to Reuters.

JP Morgan isn't alone. About 18 percent of respondents to a July Global Business Travel Association poll of member travel buyers and procurement executives indicated their companies would require a vaccine before traveling for company business, and 40 percent of such respondents to another GBTA poll this month indicated their companies would limit business travel "and/or" meeting clients face to face to the vaccinated.

The decision of how to approach the vaccines, travel and return to work often are being discussed and made at the highest levels of an organization, and not always with the travel manager's input. Still, any corporation that implements a business travel ban for the unvaccinated will need procedures and mechanisms to deploy and enforce that mandate, and that's where the travel manager comes in.

Developing and executing a strategy to limit business travel to vaccinated employees could be a complicated endeavor, and several travel executives suggested staying in close contact with senior management to fully grasp the aims of such a mandate. Pre-trip authorization technology and travel profile management strategy also could be valuable tools in bolstering a travel mandate.

TMCs: Maybe Not Us

Travel management company partners, however, might not be eager to help design and enforce business travel bans. Several TMCs declined comment for this report, and sources indicated reluctance on TMCs' part to serve in any sort of enforcement capacity for a vaccine-related travel ban.

"Most TMCs aren't touching Covid-related travel policies, or travel enforcements as it relates to Covid within an organization, with a 10-foot pole, just because they view it as an HR issue," said Brandon Strauss, co-founder and partner of business travel consultancy KesselRun Corporate Travel Solutions.

"It's not the TMC's job to police the policy. That's the travel manager's job," said Jim Wilkins, SVP of corporate buyer solutions at business travel consultancy Partnership Travel Consulting and formerly senior director of global travel at WarnerMedia.

Still, there are steps travel managers can take to enact measures to keep unvaccinated employees from traveling, of varying degrees of complexity. Among the blunter methods they could use would be to simply remove from travel platforms the profiles of travelers who wouldn't demonstrate their vaccinated status, Strauss said.

"If he tries to travel, there's no login, and there's no recognition of him when he calls into a travel counselor," Strauss said.

Profiling the Situation

Travel profiles could be used in other ways to enforce such a mandate. Tammy Krings, founder and CEO of travel management company ATG, said the ATG profile management system includes a field for travelers' health information that could be used to log vaccination status with supporting information.



"We are seeing a significant increase in people putting their vaccination information in their profile, even if their company doesn't mandate that they're vaccinated."

—ATG'S TAMMY KRINGS

"When we created ours, we had had many, many instances where people had gotten sick on the road or something had happened while they were traveling, and we needed to know more about them," Krings said. "We're treating Covid the exact same way that we treated the other illnesses, except for the fact that in some cases it's mandated. We are seeing a significant increase in people putting their vaccination information in their profile, even if their company doesn't mandate that they're vaccinated."

For those that do, bookings are only allowed to go forward online or via a live agent if that profile field includes vaccination information, she said. "We treat it as if it's a normal policy. So if anybody's breaking any other policy, it's the same level of treatment," she said.

Wilkins suggested that human resources management software also could be adapted to include vaccination information on employee profiles, which then could integrate with travel technology.

"One thing that we've been talking about is some type of mechanism that is incorporated into the HR feed that can populate a profile," Wilkins said, noting that at WarnerMedia, "I worked with our programmers constantly to make sure I could identify traveler levels—from executives, what their entitlements were, versus the rank-and-file employee. Those things can be done. You just have to get with the right group to make sure that they're pulling that field in, and it's up to HR to help the travel group solve that problem."

Pre-Trip Tactics

Beyond profile management, travel managers could lean on pre-trip authorization processes and technology to help flag would-be unvaccinated travelers.

"There could be a pre-trip authorization component of it, but this is under the assumption that the company has pre-trip technology, which most don't," Strauss said. "Or, they don't in any hard-stop automation kind of way."

Krings said one ATG client requires two levels of managerial approval for an unvaccinated employee to travel for business, with the approval request automatically routed to one manager, then the second if approved by the first.

"A lot of them do get denied," Krings said. "Unlike a lot of other approval processes, these aren't getting approved. My guess is it's right around 60 percent getting approved and 40 percent getting declined."



Survey: Most Project Pre-Pandemic Meeting Levels By 2023

About two-thirds of surveyed meeting and event professionals expect in-person meeting levels to return to their pre-pandemic numbers within two years, according to a new survey from American Express Meetings & Events, a division of American Express Global Business Travel.

“While we are all eager to see the pent-up demand for meetings and events fully realized, we recognize that the recovery will not be in a straight line, and we can’t get there by simply repeating what we’ve done in the past,” said GBT senior vice president of value development and Amex M&E general manager Gerardo Tejado in a statement. “As we look to 2022, we expect the optimism, resourcefulness and innovation we’ve seen in the sector over the past two years lead to a new era of thoughtful, tech-forward, responsible M&E strategies.”

Amex M&E’s 2022 Meetings and Events Forecast, released this month, is based on a survey of 500 meeting and event professionals from 31 countries conducted in June and July 2021, interviews with industry experts, proprietary American Express Meetings & Events data sources, licensed third-party data and industry information.

Most respondents also noted that the most important factors to resume in-person events are confidence in duty-of-care components for attendee health and safety (58 percent of respondents) and supplier flexibility (55 percent).

Still, virtual meetings or components for hybrid events are not going away. Respondents expect nearly one in five meetings (19 percent) to be virtual-only for 2022, with another 39 percent planned as hybrid events. The remaining 42 percent are anticipated to be only in-person. Relatedly, 73 percent of respondents indicated they are very optimistic about their ability to use technology to enhance the meeting experience, compared with only 61 percent from last year’s report.

Internal team or training meetings and simple meetings, whether in-person, virtual or hybrid, are expected to account for almost half (47 percent) of all meetings next year. The meeting types with the largest projected year-over-year growth in 2022 are internal team meetings or trainings, small and simple meetings and customer advisory board meetings.

Amex M&E expects attendance at in-person events to increase in 2022 for every meeting type by 3.5 percent to 4.3 percent from 2021 levels. And despite “Zoom fatigue,” attendance for virtual and hybrid events is expected to increase by 2.8 percent to 3.4 percent. Average meeting length for in-person events is anticipated to be longer than this year, with the shortest of 1.7 days for small and simple meetings and the longest of 3.1 days for incentives and special events.

In addition, many respondents reported that meeting management policies are becoming more explicit, with 65 percent reporting specific language around safety and security, 47 percent for virtual and/or hybrid meetings and 44 percent for health and wellness. Further, many meeting policies now include sustainability requirements, and 83 percent of respondents said their organizations take sustainability into account when planning meetings and events. Diversity, equity and inclusion increasingly also is becoming more important, with more than 80 percent of respondents indicating their organizations work to incorporate it in the planning process.

MEETING COSTS SEEN RISING

Overall 2022 meeting spend is predicted to increase by 3.1 percent year over year on average, though 20 percent of North American respondents said they expect their budgets to increase by 11 percent or more. Amex M&E predicted the cost per attendee (excluding air) per day for all meeting types in all formats to increase by 2 percent globally. The projected 2022 cost per attendee per day for in-person meetings ranges from \$484 for small and simple meetings to \$851 for incentives and special events. For virtual and hybrid meetings, it ranges from \$501 for small and simple meetings to \$776 for incentives and special events.

Most respondents expect hotel group rates to increase in 2022, although amounts differ by region. Globally, respondents anticipate a 2.3 percent rate hike. In North America the expectation is for a 5.1 percent rate jump. Asia-Pacific reported the lowest anticipated increase at 1 percent.

Though both hotel room and meeting space availability are expected to increase, respondents noted that demand for appropriate space could make sourcing more difficult. The top factors influencing meeting location selection were “size of space to accommodate distancing” (35 percent of respondents) and “ability to host hybrid meetings” (25 percent).

Respondents expect air rates, too, to rise in 2022. Global air suppliers predict that rates will increase 5.3 percent. Survey responses varied by region. North American respondents expect a 5.1 percent increase in rates, followed by Central and South America at 3.3 percent, Europe at 2.4 percent and Asia-Pacific at 1.6 percent. ■

Full In-Person Meetings Return By 2023?

Respondent location	% Yes
Central/South America	81%
North America	70%
Asia/Pacific	62%
Europe	57%
Total	67%

Source: American Express Meetings & Events June-July survey of 500 meeting and event professionals

Things Change, Sometimes Quickly

The late-summer spread of the delta variant of Covid-19, and the sharp rise in case counts, pushed many companies to quickly and drastically change the return-to-office plans developed weeks earlier. Office reunions were delayed, travel plans postponed, and in some cases, new regulations for unvaccinated employees were developed. Will those plans change again, now that new Covid-19 case counts are on the decline, at least in the United States? It’s possible that some companies that have adopted travel bans for unvaccinated employees could have a change of heart. (Southwest Airlines, for one, has backtracked on similar plans.)

Even if those bans are permanent, that doesn’t mean companies won’t find cause for exceptions, Strauss noted.

“If you have an employee who is marginally important and they don’t want to get vaccinated and they need to travel, they probably won’t be working there very long,” Strauss said. “But I think the bigger prob-

lem is, what do you do in the event where you’ve got a highly productive employee who needs to travel, and the employee says, ‘I’m not getting vaccinated?’ ”

Strauss suggested some companies would bend their own rule in that situation. “As a practical matter, if you’ve got an unvaccinated employee who is an important employee and the business unit has a goal, they’re going to tell that employee, ‘just go do what you need to do.’ ”

On the other hand, Krings suggested the difficulties of unvaccinated travel could spur companies’ interest in ensuring travelers’ vaccination.

“They’re going to find that travel is going to be almost impossible if they’re not vaccinated,” Krings said. I’ve been to Romania, the Netherlands and Germany, and every single restaurant has asked for my vaccination card, and every single hotel I’ve stayed in has asked for my vaccination card. [These companies] are looking at setting their people up for success while they travel and not to have to subject [them] to constant PCR testing.” ■



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Hotels Ponder '22 Meetings

up,” referring to STR’s previous forecast.

Sustained demand also played a factor in the revised forecast. Hite said there was concern there might be a decline in demand after summer. “But demand stayed strong,” she said. “It’s been really positive to see room demand average about 93 percent of our 2019 levels.”

STR and Tourism Economics now project 2021 occupancy will reach 57.1 percent compared with a 54.7 percent forecast in August. Anticipated ADR was bumped up from \$115.50 to \$123, while RevPAR is expected to end the year at \$70 compared with a previous estimate of \$63.16.

Hite added that, with leisure travel fueling the rebound, weekend demand is back at 2019 levels. Shoulder days—Sunday and Thursday—also are near 2019 levels. There is “still a ways to go on weekdays,” she said, citing STR’s index score for October weekday demand of 87—a score of 100 would equal 2019—“but in my book, that was really positive,” because the index for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday demand in September was only 82.

Another sign of returning group and business transient is from the upper-upscale tier, which more frequently caters to those travel segments than do most lower tiers. “Almost half of the hotels in the upper-upscale segment have occupancies of 60 percent or more,” Hite said. “This is the segment that has been lagging, so it is a really encouraging sign as we move forward to 2022. ... It’s a big piece of the puzzle for recovery.”

Further, group demand is at about 60 percent of 2019 levels. “It’s coming back,” Hite said. “That is the sign we were really hoping for and concerned about in October.” She explained that late September through October is conference season, but some large group meetings canceled after Labor Day because of the delta variant. “But group demand has remained consistent for the last four months at 60 percent, even with the cancellations from the delta variant.”

With higher demand across all segments, rising ADRs and the high rate of inflation, Hite said that the costs for hotels to operate continue to rise, meaning pricing will be tough for corporate travel managers and meetings managers.

“Hotel owners are still digging out of a hole, not just next year but for the next four years,” she said. “There is only upward pressure on rates. There are no deals at all, and it’s just a function of demand. There are people willing to pay, and the business is there. There is not any way to cut any deals with hotels.”

Hilton: ‘Balancing Act’

Some hotel executives in recent weeks noted the increasing demand in fact has affected their pricing strategy for 2022. Hilton Worldwide president and CEO Christopher Nassetta indicated the company could hold back on finalizing group agreements, particularly for the second through fourth quarters of 2022.

“We do believe there’s going to be a lot of group potential, particularly in the second, third and fourth quarters,” Nassetta said late last month during Hil-



“There’s a level of lack of desire on our part to commit too much space when we know that there’ll be a lot of pricing power. So it’s sort of a bit of a delicate balancing act.”

—HILTON WORLDWIDE’S CHRISTOPHER NASSETTA

ton’s third-quarter earnings call. “And we don’t want to commit. There’s a level of lack of desire on our part to commit too much space when we know that there’ll be a lot of pricing power. So it’s sort of a bit of a delicate balancing act.”

That tactic may motivate some meeting buyers to lock in agreements soon, especially since Nassetta added that the company already is pricing over 2019 levels because there is so much pent-up demand.

“There’s one segment that books well in advance, and there’s a limited amount of meeting space in the world and in the United States,” he said. “We happen to have a lot of it. I mean, there are a few of us that are very big players in that space. So the reality is, again, the laws of economics are alive and well. People want it. There’s not enough of it. So even though at the moment group revenues aren’t what they were, on a forward-looking basis there is a good amount of pricing power.”

For the third quarter of 2021, group revenue per available room was approximately 60 percent of 2019 levels, improving 21 percentage points from the second quarter, Nassetta added, though sports and social generated much of the group business that occurred in the quarter.

Hyatt Sees Boost

Hyatt Hotels Corp. reported that leisure continues to drive the recovery, but there is “progression of group and business transient demand.” Revenue from those two segments improved more than 40 percent from the prior quarter, according to the company.

“While [corporate transient and group] demand did not accelerate immediately following Labor Day due to the delta variant, the upward momentum has been steady throughout September and October,” said Hyatt president and CEO Mark Hoplamazian this month on a quarterly earnings call. “The rate of improvement in group during October has been particularly meaningful after seeing elevated levels of cancellations in August and early September due to the delta variant. Since that time, cancellations have receded while short-term group demand has strengthened.”

Marriott: Growth Returns

Marriott International’s corporate transient and group business continue to show improvement during the recovery, but the former took a bit more of a hit during the third quarter, said Marriott CEO Anthony Capuano this month on a quarterly earnings call.

“In the U.S. and Canada, special corporate was the segment most impacted by the delta variant during the quarter,” Capuano said, explaining that the company identifies special corporate as business transient customers who book at pre-negotiated rates. “The [segment] gives us the best indication of business demand trends. Special corporate bookings showed steady recovery each month this year until we saw a slight pullback in the back half of the third quarter.”

Capuano added that the segment’s upward trajectory returned in October with bookings versus 2019 growing each week during the month, especially for certain verticals. “Accounting and consulting grew 35 percent over what we saw last month, and technology business grew about 31 percent versus last month,” he said. Overall, “special corporate bookings are currently down less than 40 percent compared to the same time frame in 2019.” ■



Industry Cheers Passage of U.S. Infrastructure Bill

BY ELIZABETH WEST

The \$1.2 trillion U.S. infrastructure bill, passed this month, is set not only to overhaul elements from roads and bridges to airports and rail but also includes major investments in electric vehicle infrastructure and charging stations among other environment-focused moves.

The \$1.2 trillion bill is the largest investment in public works since Dwight D. Eisenhower introduced the Interstate Highway System; it represents \$550 billion in new spending.

President Joe Biden on Nov. 15 signed the bill into law.

In terms of travel, the bill pumps \$25 billion into airports to address repair and maintenance backlogs, reduce congestion and emissions near ports and airports and drive electrification and other low-carbon technologies. It also will push \$66 billion to Amtrak for track repairs and expansion. It is the largest investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak. It will devote \$110 billion to roads and bridges.

Amtrak CEO Bill Flynn in a statement called out improvement projects on the Northeast Corridor and cited the possibility of “bringing passenger rail to more people across the nation.” He underscored the administration’s will “to move quickly to advance these projects.”

Speaking to Axios on HBO this month, Flynn called the funding “absolutely transformational” and said it would spur the largest-ever expansion of Amtrak in the railroad’s history. Flynn cited new routes to Columbus, Ohio; Los Angeles to Las Vegas; Phoenix to Tucson; and service into Nashville as among the first projects on the roster.

The infrastructure bill also earmarks \$7.5 billion to expand the nation’s charging network for electric vehicles.

The U.S. currently supports 122,000 charging ports at 48,000 stations nationwide, according to the Department of Energy. The Biden administration aims through this funding to expand that network to 500,000 charging ports by 2030. The



official White House website called this aspect of the bill a “critical element” in the administration’s plan to accelerate the adoption of EVs to address the climate crisis.

As part of the companion Build Back Better bill, the administration may bake in significant rebates for EV purchases that could motivate car rental providers to transition their fleets. Such incentives would only kick in if Congress can muster the votes to pass the companion legislation.

The bill will also establish a formal chief travel and tourism officer as part of the Department of Transportation.

U.S. Travel Association CEO Roger Dow said in a statement upon the passage of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, “This bill will have a profound impact on how people travel for decades to come. By making historic investments in our transportation infrastructure now, we can emerge from the pandemic with stronger, more modern and efficient systems that can facilitate a resurgence in travel demand. ... The historic levels of travel infrastructure investment provided by this act—including for airports, railways, highways, electric vehicle charging stations and more—will accelerate the future of travel mobility.” He added that the new chief of travel and tourism role “will be vital for rebuilding our industry and preparing to welcome back visitors from around the world.”

Not all parties had unmitigated support for the bill, however.

AHLA CEO Chip Rogers, while acknowledging the need for U.S. travel infrastructure to remain globally competitive, was unhappy with how the bill would fund elements of the plan.

“Reliable and modern infrastructure is vital to the hotel industry because it facilitates travel, commerce and American competitiveness. This package would go a long way toward achieving those ends, but it comes at a steep cost,” Rogers said. “The bill would terminate the Employee Retention Tax Credit two months early. Many hotels and their employees are counting on this program—especially given lingering Covid-19 concerns and the negative economic impact they are having on hotels. While we strongly support investment in our nation’s infrastructure, struggling hotel employees and small businesses should not be forced to bear that cost, and AHLA will continue advocating to maintain programs that are helping hoteliers through the pandemic.”

AA Plans New Refundable Fare Option

BY MICHAEL B. BAKER

American Airlines next year will introduce a new “Main Select” fare targeting business travelers on its high-frequency business routes, the carrier announced this month.

The fare type will be refundable and will include priority boarding and check-in, access to all Main Cabin seats including Main

Cabin Extra and free same-day flight changes. Routes that will feature the fare include New York’s LaGuardia Airport to Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C.; LaGuardia to Chicago O’Hare; Boston to Reagan National; and Dallas/Fort Worth to Los Angeles. Main Select fares replace American’s Shuttle

product, which offered such benefits as dedicated check-in kiosks and boarding gates close to security checkpoints. The Shuttle product currently is available only on select routes in the Northeast, and American will retire the product with the introduction of Main Select fares.

American introduced the fare as part of its overall Northeast Alliance with JetBlue, and it is a counterpart to JetBlue’s Blue Extra fares, which also include priority boarding and free same-day changes. JetBlue offers those on its high-frequency routes, such as between LaGuardia and Boston.

American doesn’t yet have a planned rollout date for Main Select, according to a carrier spokesperson.



CWT Filings Illuminate Its Path In and Out of Chapter 11

BY JAY BOEHMER

A U.S. bankruptcy court judge this month approved travel management company CWT's plan to exit Chapter 11 bankruptcy, one day after the TMC filed a petition. The court's approval appears to set CWT on a course to complete the financial recapitalization process it announced in September, including the prepackaged Chapter 11 filing.

CWT in a statement said its plan had "the overwhelming support of CWT's financial stakeholders" and would eliminate about half of its debt. "We are pleased to have received prompt court approval of the agreement we reached with CWT's financial stakeholders, which positions the company for long-term success and provides significant financial resources to further grow and develop our business," CWT CEO Michelle McKinney Frymire said in the statement.

CWT had prepared the prepackaged Chapter 11 bankruptcy petition to accelerate the closing the restructuring and recapitalization deal, and filed it Nov. 9 in the U.S. bankruptcy court for the Southern District of Texas. A prepackaged process is one in which debtors and creditors agree to restructuring terms ahead of filing for Chapter 11.

The company in September said the recapitalization deal plan would replace CWT's existing \$1.5 billion debt burden with a new first lien debt of \$625 million and a new undrawn revolving credit facility.

CWT last month filed a disclosure statement, a plan of reorganization and other details related to the process.

The filings total hundreds of pages and review how CWT's best-ever year in 2019 made way for a reversal of fortune in pandemic-hit 2020, which prompted the company to seek new liquidity, restructure debt and explore acquisitions by others before it reached a recapitalization plan that will see Carlson Holdings shed its majority stake.

"In 2019, CWT recorded its highest traffic, transactions, revenue, and EBITDA in the history of its business," disclosures noted.

In 2019, CWT handled \$23.1 billion in travel spend, generated \$1.5 billion in revenue and logged \$239 million in adjusted EBITDA. CWT in 2019 provided travel management services to around a third of all S&P 500 and Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index companies, its filings noted.

"CWT experienced a dramatic drop in business nearly overnight; CWT's revenue dropped 57 percent between February 2020 and March 2020, and 66 percent year over year," according to the filings.

An ensuing sustained slowdown prompted cost cuts that delivered "\$500 million in cash savings from April through December of 2020." Like other TMCs, CWT also tapped government relief programs.

CWT last year also engaged with lenders to secure additional liquidity and raised new capital and restructured debt—"recognizing that cost-cutting measures alone likely would not generate enough liquidity to adequately capitalize CWT's business during the Covid-19 pandemic."

At the beginning of 2021, "it looked as though CWT's out-of-court initiatives would be enough to 'weather the storm,'" filings recounted, as demand seemed poised to rise. "However, a spike in global cases in early 2021 caused travel volumes to fall to levels similar to those at the beginning of the pandemic," CWT noted.

By June, CWT skipped a debt payment to kick off a forbearance period and negotiate with financial sponsors on a path forward.

An Oct. 1 letter from McKinney Frymire stressed CWT "is not going out of business," but rather deploying the "prepackaged" Chapter 11 process to accelerate its recapitalization, "meaning that the company expects to have already sought and received the formal approvals it needs from its major financial partners by the time it files its cases."

CWT this year enlisted Houlihan Lokey to conduct a "market test" to explore if "third-party market participants" would be "interested in making a significant investment in CWT or purchasing all or substantially all of its assets.

The Beat

That formal voting process closed this month. "All of CWT's business around the world will continue to operate in the ordinary course, and all of our existing agreements with suppliers and customers will continue to be fulfilled as they were in the past," the letter noted

CWT Explored Alternatives

As part of deliberations on the company's future, CWT this year enlisted investment bank and financial services company Houlihan Lokey to conduct a "market test" to explore if "third-party market participants" would be "interested in making a significant investment in CWT or purchasing all or substantially all of its assets." A similar process was conducted last year, CWT noted.

Houlihan Lokey this year "contacted 50 interested parties," which included potential strategic acquirers in the travel industry as well as financial sponsors. This year, just over half of those 50 executed nondisclosure agreements, and 22 of them "received a copy of CWT's investor presentation and access to a data room with comprehensive information on CWT's business operations and financial position. CWT and Houlihan Lokey also held numerous diligence sessions with six parties."

Following further due diligence, discussions and follow-ups with would-be suitors, "Houlihan Lokey received one informal offer, in which the bidder indicated it was not willing to move forward on its proposal absent the support of CWT's creditors, which were not interested in supporting the bid." The filings did not name the bidder.

A Slow March Back

CWT does not expect annual revenue to return to 2019 levels during the next three years, but anticipates steady improvements across key financial metrics.

CWT projects total transaction volume to be \$9.3 billion in 2022, \$13.3 billion in 2023 and \$16 billion in 2024. That 2024 transaction value is 30 percent lower than 2019 levels.

CWT projects total revenue to be \$701 million, \$894 million and \$1.06 billion in 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively. It forecast 61 percent of its revenue to be derived from client fees next year, with the remainder coming from other sources, namely suppliers and global distribution systems. The client-derived revenue mix will fall to 54 percent in 2023, and to

52 percent in 2024, according to company forecasts.

CWT expects to achieve positive underlying EBITDA of \$122 million in 2023 and \$253 million in 2024.

Risk Factors, Common And Unique

CWT's disclosures outline risk factors in its business, many of which would apply to other TMCs. They include participating in a competitive market for travel management services as well as potential risks associated with supplier and GDS-based revenues.

Supplier consolidation and restructurings could result in "less competition among suppliers which could lead to higher air prices, fewer routes and less capacity," and agencies face ongoing efforts by suppliers to reduce commissions, on the one hand, or complicate GDS-based distribution on the other through surcharges, content withdrawal and traveler incentives to book directly.

On the client side, "The business travel management industry is highly competitive," CWT noted.

CWT reported its client mix is "highly diversified," that "no single client represents more than 4.5 percent of CWT's revenue" and its "average client retention rate is roughly 96 percent." Yet, 11 percent of its revenue came from contracts with the U.S. military and government.

CWT outlined some risks associated with such accounts. "A significant portion of the company's U.S. military and government business was put out for tender during 2020 and 2021. While the U.S. Government made awards under several tenders to an alternative travel management company, [CWT] successfully protested these awards."

This summer, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims sided with CWT in a suit against the federal government and blocked BCD Travel from going live as the U.S. Army's travel management company for the continental United States. This followed the awarding of the business to BCD Travel in a process that the court found did not adhere to federal

CWT reported its client mix is "highly diversified" and that "no single client represents more than 4.5 percent of CWT's revenue."

contracting standards.

"The contract has not yet been re-awarded," CWT noted in its filing.

CWT also revealed a similar protest "outside of the court process" for another award, this one for the U.S. Air Force's worldwide tender, which "combined several of [CWT's] current contracts into a single award."

That award went "to that same alternative travel management company," before the government "withdrew" that award. CWT stated that "no new award has been made," and CWT's option for now has been extended.

CWT stated it "believes the U.S. Government will issue new tenders and new award decisions in late 2021 and 2022, but there is no guarantee that [CWT] will be successful in that award process."

Broadly, CWT noted that "the U.S. military and government is seeking to consolidate its travel contracts into fewer but larger contracts that make them more attractive to competitors." As such, CWT anticipates "significant competition from other travel management companies' contracts put out for tender." ■

- Chris Davis contributed to this report.

BTNGROUP

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

EDITORIAL

Elizabeth West
Editorial Director
732.207.6318 • 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
Executive Editor
646.380.6250 • mbaker@thebtngroup.com

Donna M. Airoidi
Senior Editor, Lodging & Meetings
646.380.6264 • dairoidi@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

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

MARKETING

Max Bzdyk
Marketing Manager
646.346.5676 • mbzdyk@thebtngroup.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
Senior Director of Content Solutions and Conferences
717.460.1091 • jbankard@thebtngroup.com

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

Claire LaVelle
Event Manager
646.380.6271 • clavelle@thebtngroup.com

LIST RENTAL & Reprints

Danielle Zaborski
MeritDirect for list rental
914.368.1090 • dzaborski@meritdirect.com

Robbie Ray
Wright's Media for reprints
877.652.5295
northstar@wrightsmedia.com



Thomas L. Kemp
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Climate Change Will Top Travel Risks in 2022

BY EMANUELE SCANSANI



Having obliterated the travel world for nearly two years, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2022 no longer will be the primary risk to business travelers, nor the principal duty-of-care concern for travel managers.

While it's impossible to predict precisely what will happen next year, our worldwide network of risk intelligence specialists analyze information from trusted sources and use their deep understanding of repeated patterns of human behavior to interpret this and suggest what may happen. And in 2022 we expect Covid-19 to be among a raft of risk and duty of care concerns as business travelers get back on the road again.

Safety, security and sustainability will be the prime considerations in 2022. Covid-19 is sure to be in the top five travel risks again, but the impact of climate change in its broadest sense is likely to have the greatest influence.

Firstly, what travel managers are requesting from their suppliers has changed; they want detailed sustainability information as they must consider their company's carbon footprint. This is closely aligned with the rise of purposeful travel—thinking about the ROI of travel before

Safety, security and sustainability will be the prime considerations in 2022. Covid-19 is sure to be in the top five travel risks again, but the impact of climate change in its broadest sense is likely to have the greatest influence.



Emanuele Scansani is director of partnerships and strategic relations for travel risk management provider Riskline

booking, travelling directly by the most eco-friendly mode of transport possible, and taking into consideration any negative impact on communities along the way.

Equally of concern is how climate change is affecting weather patterns and the number of natural disasters we are seeing today. Storms, wildfires, extreme temperatures and monsoons continue to be more severe and to disrupt travel—so too volcanic eruptions.

One of the consequences of this extreme weather is large-scale forced migration which creates havoc on particular routes and at borders. What is happening between Belarus, Poland and Germany, and from North Africa to Italy and through Turkey are good examples.

Geopolitical changes will also add new tensions to the world order, potentially introducing new considerations for travelers and travel managers. The Biden administration's isolationist approach has left space for other countries like China, for instance, to increase their dominance in Hong Kong, and flex their muscles in Taiwan and the South China Sea, while in Europe there is set to be a change in the power balance following Angela Merkel's leadership in Germany.

Unfortunately, terrorism is likely to return as the level of hatred and anger increases, with not only Islamist attacks but also right-wing extremists continuing to be a potent threat. Travelers need to be more vigilant than ever about such threats and ensure that they have the best possible information sources and avoid local rumors.

In 2021 there have been several major cyberattacks such as the Colonial Pipeline breach and the ransomware attack on Brenntag. Without any new deterrents, further attacks are likely in 2022 as businesses, governments and organizations continue to migrate more business functions and operations to the digital world.

Of course, Covid-19 is still with us and remains a significant threat to travelers. Although many countries have rolled out vaccination programs, many lower income countries have not double-vaccinated more than half their populations—and some far less.

At the same time, the long-term efficacy of the vaccines is uncertain. The rising number of cases in the U.K. is partially due to the need to give a booster to those who were vaccinated early in the year. What's more, the possibility of new variants that are not suppressed by existing vaccines remains a threat. On top of this, anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown protests are likely to create scenarios in city centers that travelers should be informed to avoid.

Compared with the extensive disruptions in 2020 and 2021, travel in 2022 may be slightly easier and less uncertain, but trusted sources of up-to-date information about potential threats will remain vital. ■

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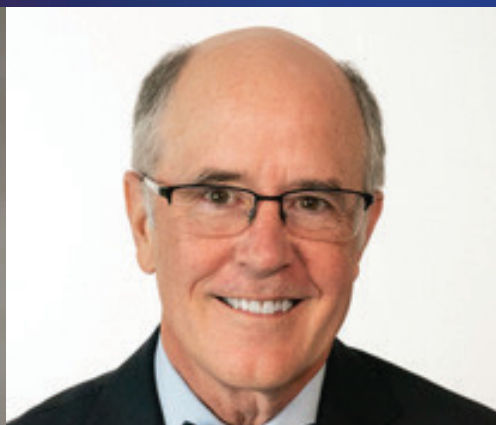
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