

BTN

BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS

August 15, 2022

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT EVOLVES

Business travel managers reveal how their jobs have changed—for better and for worse—since 2020.

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AS MORE STRATEGIC

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Sunny Side Up

Business Travel News' Salary Survey is always one of our most anticipated features of the year. This year, it's couched in an extended issue—"Travel Management Evolution"—because, let's face it, a few things have changed with the travel management profession in the last couple of years.

One of the most significant, according to our survey, is how much focus has diverted from straight-up cost savings to other concerns: traveler safety and wellness, of course, but also to improving technology platforms, more strategic data analysis and, for some companies, sustainability efforts.

We fielded and completed the survey in July, as inflationary pressures were rising, so it's not surprising that cost control remained the single most common measure of travel management performance. That said, it's clear that there has been a reckoning across the corporate landscape that the travel management practice reaches far beyond travel itself. And for those looking to advance their careers, strong alignment and a demonstrated contribution to organizational strategy is not only possible but is now more tangible than ever.

But that's not to say every company is able to look at travel management that way.

The travel industry took a beating over the last two years, and along with our colleagues at travel suppliers and trav-

el management companies, travel managers suffered from executives not understanding their value, furloughs, layoffs and some extended unemployment. In job searches, some came to feel their career trajectories had been "too narrow," despite the fact that travel management touches so many divisions and, as our survey demonstrates, so many adjacent skill sets.

The good news for this subset is that among the dissatisfied buyers who spoke to BTN, none are content to fade away into roles that don't fit their skill sets. They are interviewing, and earning, advancement in new opportunities with companies that want to tap into their more strategic vision.

Good luck out there to all—and good job!



Enjoy the issue,

Elizabeth West

Editorial Director, BTN Group

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ELIZABETH KOESSER

Travel Manager Salaries Rise as Roles Expand

NAVIGATING COVID, UPHEAVAL AND RECOVERY FINALLY GETS RECOGNIZED

BY LORRAINE SILEO

Considering the events of the past two years, perhaps no occupation has been more impacted than that of the travel manager. From overseeing permissions and approvals, keeping travelers safe and informed, re-negotiating supplier contracts and rewriting policy, travel managers have been on quite a ride. As business travel slowly rebuilt itself after the Covid-induced 2020 shutdown, so have travel managers. Determining where travel was allowed at any given time and which trips were essential or optional often fell on their shoulders. And there is no time to rest, since managing the recovery might be even more challenging.

For some, Covid-19 was a time of reckoning, an opportunity for travel managers to show their value to the organization not just operationally but also strategically. For others, it became a burden to take on more and more responsibility as colleagues were furloughed, dismissed or resigned. Overall, corporations have learned to value their contribution—at least monetarily. BTN's 39th annual Travel Manager Survey attests to the growing need for companies to recognize—and retain—their travel managers.

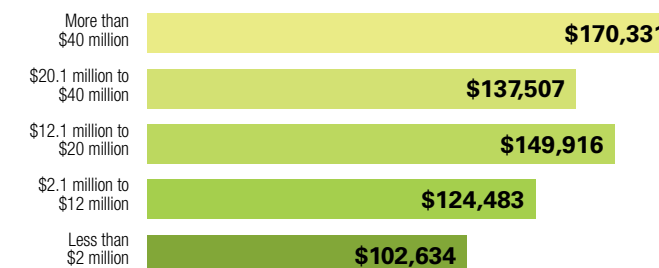
At an overall average of \$128,439—including salary, bonuses, and incentives—travel manager compensation is at an all-time high in 2022. Average compensation for the 263 respondents in this year's base rose 11 percent over the previous year's respondents and 12 percent over respondents in 2019. Clearly, companies have had to up the ante to keep travel managers happy. In some cases, increases recognized new responsibilities as positions were consolidated. For others, it was the reward for a job well done and acknowledgment of their strategic role in shaping company policy. Of course, inflation (9 percent as of July) will take a bite out of that 11 percent annual increase, but travel managers still should come out ahead compared to previous years.

Not surprisingly, the higher the travel spend, the higher the salary, for the most part. Companies with U.S.-booked air spend volume of over \$40 million pay their travel managers \$170,331 on average, while those with spend of \$2.1 million to \$12 million are paid far less (\$124,483).

Years in service also count, but to a point. Those with less than four years in service make \$115,539

Travel Manager Salary by Program Air Spend Volume

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



Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 251 corporate travel managers

Travel Manager Salary by Years in Practice

Generally, surveyed travel buyers' average compensation increased in line with their industry experience.



Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 251 corporate travel managers

on average while those with at least 21 years bring in more than \$140,000. For those lifers, however, hanging onto one job may not bring enough reward. The difference in average compensation between those with 21 to 30 years of experience and those with over 30 years was just \$919.

Overall, there still is a big salary discrepancy between the sexes. Although most respondents identified themselves as female (67 percent), the average salary for those who identified as male was 19 percent higher—\$121,254 for women to \$144,088 for men. There has been some improvement in the salary gap, but not much. For every dollar a man made, a woman made 84 cents, but that was up from 81 cents in 2019.

Looking closer at the survey data, seniority level is a key driver of the gender-based salary discrepancy. Most notably, every survey respondent who reported

The Other 18 Percent

BY ELIZABETH WEST

BTN's 2022 Salary Survey showed a rising year-over-year salary trajectory for more than three-quarters of respondents. Some of those increases were large and some seemed vanishingly small, but still, the direction pushed this year's overall average travel manager salary to more than \$128,000. Not everyone enjoyed that same compensation boost, however. Nearly 15 percent listed their salaries the same as 2021; and a handful at 3 percent saw their salaries actually fall. Combined, this group represents about 18 percent of the survey respondent base, and their experiences are worth acknowledgement as the other side of the coin since the Covid-19 downturn.

A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Furloughs and layoffs were not limited to travel management companies and travel suppliers. Plenty of companies—and plenty of survey

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Look for more Salary Survey online @

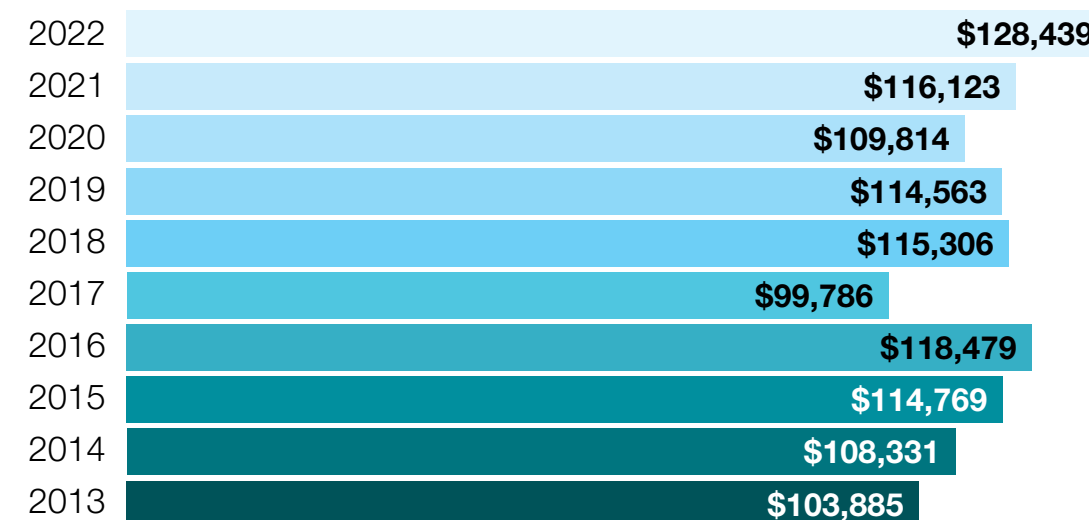
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METHODOLOGY

Business Travel News fielded the 2022 Salary Survey from July 8-26 to a select group of the total BTN Group audience, with a return of more than 450 respondents which were vetted down to 263 qualified respondents with core travel management remit. BTN editors follow up with in-depth interviews, both on and off the record, to produce the 2022 Salary Survey & Report.

Travel Manager Salaries: Through the Decade

BTN has tracked travel manager salaries since 1984. Here are average salaries for the past 10.



Source: BTN's annual Salary & Attitudes Surveys; varying numbers of travel buyer respondents

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4Sight

What are companies looking for in travel managers today? We hear a lot about increased strategic opportunity and innovation. Where are companies finding those people, and how can travel managers position themselves to be ready for career advancements?

Increasing Tech Focus

“We’ve seen a lot of brain drain in travel management and lost a lot of talent to other industries. If a travel manager has not left their company, then they ARE in a different role. They need to look at how their roles have become more connected with IT and obtain more tech and data skills: understand APIs, learn Tableau, Power BI. Travel managers may be asked to make these changes as part of bringing outsourced program elements in house—and they should step up to that challenge.”

PAT BATRA
Executive Director Global
Strategy, T&E
Olympus Corp.



Seeking Complex Sets of Skills

“Travel managers more than ever need to apply skills across procurement (renegotiating contracts, supply/demand rates up and down and managing suppliers) and operations (day-to-day program logistics, few companies stopped travel altogether and the restrictions were hard to navigate). At the same time companies now expect them to liaise with security, risk, administration and strategic executives. Travel has become more complex after Covid, and companies are seeing how travel touches so many stakeholders in addition to travelers themselves.”

MARIA CHEVALIER
Founder
CTME Search Party



Finding a Cultural Fit

“Post-Covid, a lot of companies are struggling to hire the right people. But whether they hire for an internal position or outsource for that flexible resource, they are looking for strategic people to come in and challenge what’s gone before [so they can] take travel programs to the next level. The other thing we’re hearing is that companies don’t just want a skill set, they want a great cultural match and someone who is going to keep up to date with industry trends.”



LOUISE KILGANNON
Consultant
Festive Road

They Want Expertise, So They Say

“I was hired as the subject matter expert managing two full-time employees, neither of which were in place. I was supposed to hire them. My remit was travel, expense and corporate card. I decided to put up the travel role first. Once the job description went through HR and they defined the salary range for it, the position ended up paying more than mine as the manager. That wasn’t a good feeling. In my eyes, companies want tons of expertise, but they don’t necessarily value it or want to pay for it. I left that job ASAP.”



TRAVEL BUYER
Numerous companies

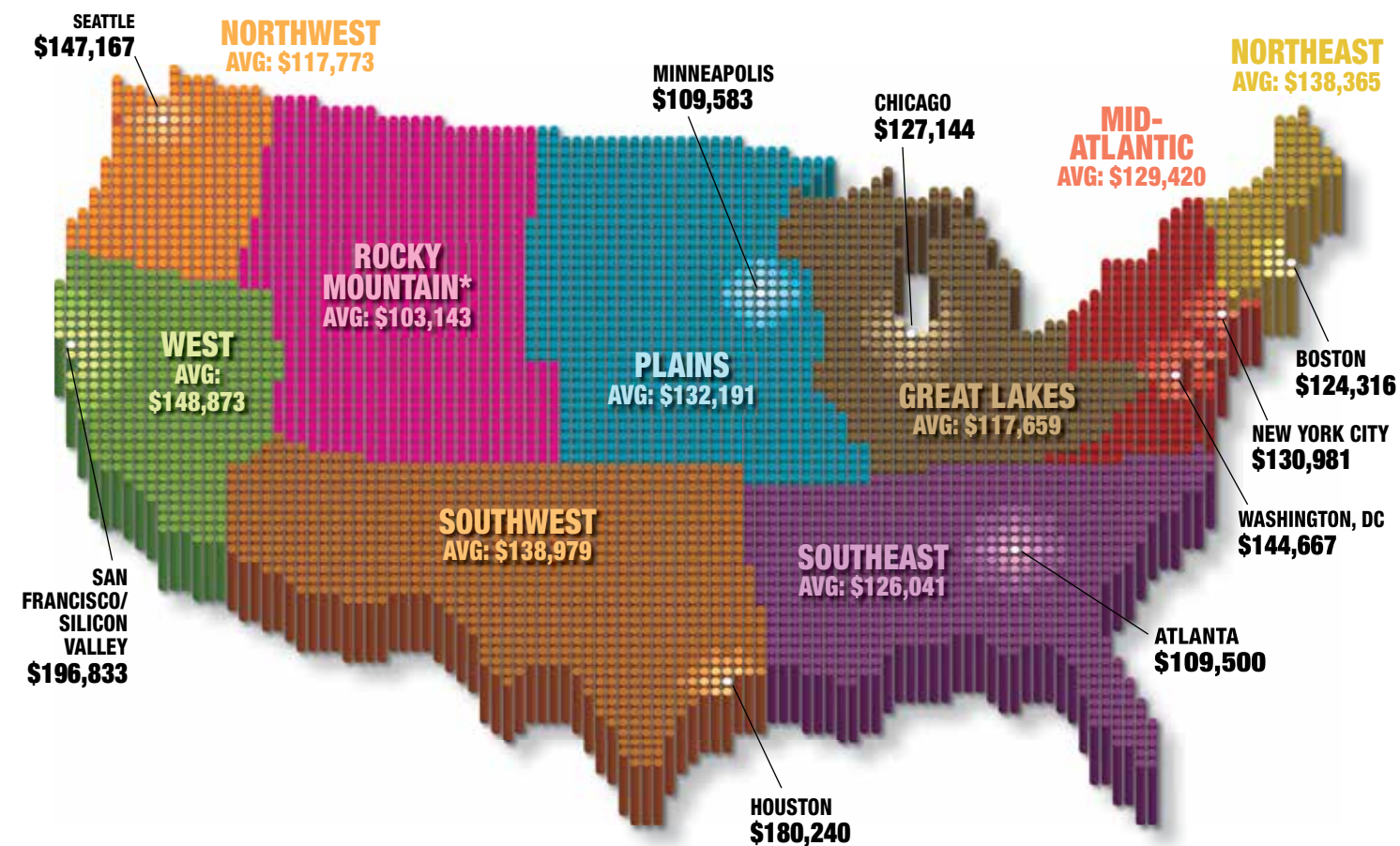
DATA HUB

Regional Salary Differences

Working in a major city where the cost of living is higher doesn’t always translate into a higher salary. The average compensation in large cities in the Northeast, Southwest and Great Plains regions were slightly behind the averages of their overall respective regions.

The San Francisco/Silicon Valley area commanded the highest salary at an average \$196,833, but it’s followed closely by the much more affordable Houston area, with an average salary of \$180,240. Despite its size and wealth, New York ranked fifth among cities in terms of pay (\$130,981). East Coast-based travel managers would do better in Washington, D.C. (\$144,667).

In the Southeast, salaries were also lower (\$126,041) with Atlanta ranking last among the cities polled (\$109,500). But compensations in the Northwest region were even lower (\$117,773), even though Seattle paid among the highest compensation (\$147,167), indicating a big fall-off once out of the city.



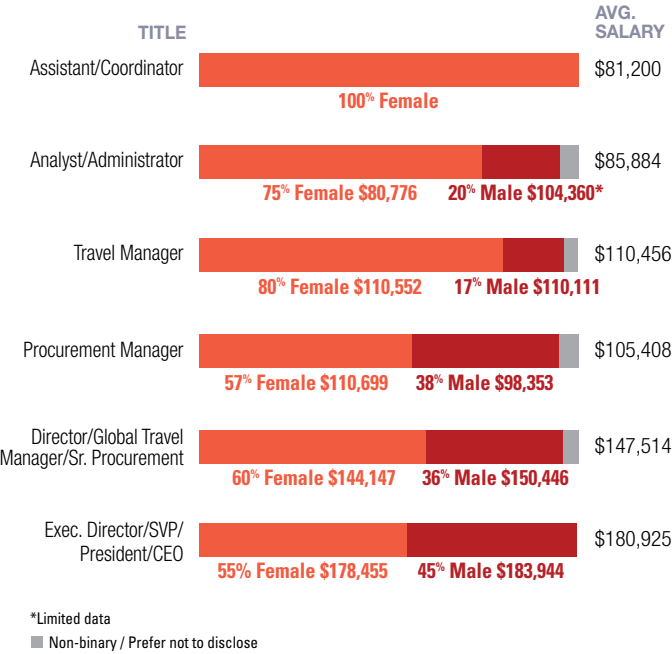
* Limited data
Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 243 corporate travel managers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

having an assistant- or coordinator-level role in travel management was a woman. Yes, you read that right. There was not a single male assistant or coordinator in the survey. As the travel role becomes more senior, the more likely it is to be held by a man. Still, in an industry that is dominated by female workers, 55 percent of the most senior travel management roles listed in our survey were held by women. That was not enough, however, to offset the salaries of the number of women in junior roles making the least.

Salaries by Title & Gender

When viewed by organizational seniority, the male-female salary divide doesn't appear particularly biased, but there are far more women at the bottom of the hierarchy.

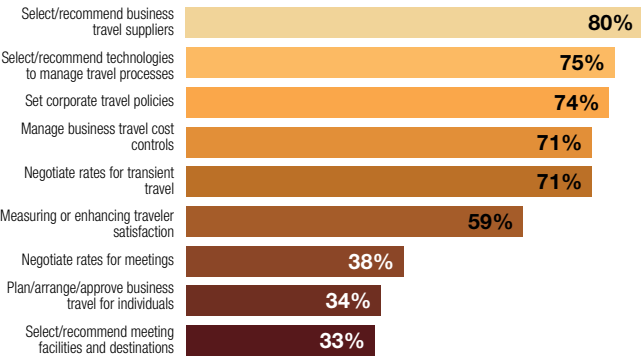


LONG LIST OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Travel managers have myriad responsibilities, and the list just gets longer, but making decisions regarding supplier relationships and user technologies remains on top. The largest percentage, eight in 10, said their current responsibilities include selecting or recommending business travel suppliers, and three-quarters cited selecting or recommending technologies to manage travel. More than seven in 10 set corporate policies, negotiate rates (for transient travel) and manage business travel costs. Only about a third plan, arrange or approve business travel for individuals or select or recommend meeting facilities and destinations.

Travel Managers' Current Responsibilities

The traditional functionsa of travel management fall under the purview of a large majority of respondents, and a notable minority have meetings responsibilities.



Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 255 corporate travel managers

A SHIFT IN FOCUS

The pandemic shifted some companies' primary travel management focus from reducing cost to more traveler-centric measures, such as satisfaction and security. In these cases, responsibility to the individual rose in importance compared to obligation to the budget. Employee health, safety, efficiency, and satisfaction took precedence, especially since there were fewer trips to manage, and each trip required more scrutiny. More than six in 10 respondents cited a shift in focus toward traveler wellness, safety, and security management over the past year.

Aligning travel expense with corporate goals, negotiating rates, assessing risk and measuring traveler satisfaction are just some travel manager responsibilities that require expertise in technology. To stay updated, one-half of travel managers have sharpened their focus on program innovation and new travel technology and services. And as travel managers continue to play a more strategic role in the organization, roughly four in 10 have placed increased emphasis on travel data analysis and reporting alongside travel program communications, like marketing, social media, intranet and other avenues.

THE VIRTUES OF COMMUNICATION

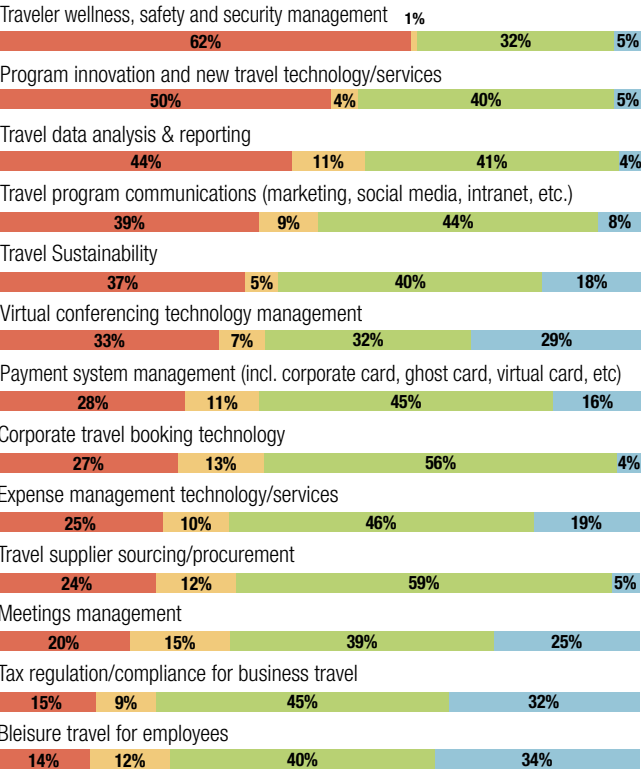
Effective communication has become vital for a safe and effective travel program, and nearly four in 10 have prioritized travel program communications. There are policy, expense and approval changes happening internally, and constant travel alerts externally. Travel managers have had to maneuver around many obstacles during Covid, such as testing, quarantines, and other government restrictions on top of limited inventory,

travel management company turnover and supplier shutdowns. Now they must manage an overstressed travel ecosystem: airline cancellations and delays, misinformation regarding testing requirements, missed meetings and subpar service levels.

"I spend a lot of time explaining to people how to manage their anxiety. I feel like a corporate therapist," wrote one manager. "Managing expectations while navigating a chaotic travel supplier landscape," has become a bigger part of the job, said another. One travel manager spoke of the challenge of "managing the explosive return to travel and in-person events and hiring additional teammates to support it."

Changes in Travel Managers' Focus in 2022

The pandemic's effect on travel management is clearly demonstrated here, with a majority of respondents increasing focus on traveler wellness and half considering innovation.



Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 241 corporate travel managers

For some travel managers, 2022 was like waking up to a strange new world. Many old faces, reliable contacts and long-time colleagues had moved on, leaving

them with new responsibilities to tackle on their own. Many have had to adjust to new bosses as they merged into other departments, such as procurement, human resources or meetings and events. Others have had to onboard groups of new, fresh-faced employees, some who never used a travel agency before.

"I am reeducating travelers how to travel," said one. Some younger travelers, used to booking personal travel directly with suppliers or online travel agencies, also need an education on what their travel program (and travel management company) can offer. "Due to attrition, a new, younger employee base needs to understand a managed travel program," explained another respondent.

What else has gained travel managers' attention? Considering corporations' sharpened focus on the environment, 37 percent of travel managers have put more emphasis on sustainability. And as Zoom, Teams and other tools for some have proved acceptable replacements for certain types of meetings, one-third of travel managers have increased their focus on virtual conferencing technology management.

HOW AM I DOING?

Perhaps one of the biggest differences since past studies is the way that travel manager performance is evaluated. Despite their strategic significance to the company, six in 10 travel managers still cited savings and cost avoidance as the No. 1 criterion as it relates to their performance measurement. But while that benchmark ranked at the top, it was down significantly in importance from the 2019 survey, when savings was chosen by 73 percent of respondents, indicating that there's more to success than just cost-cutting. How else then are managers evaluated?

Nearly half (48 percent) said performance is measured by the travel department's strategic contribution to the organization, intimating they are valued more for their participation in overall corporate decision-making, especially during times of crisis.

"I am being viewed as a more strategic partner within the organization, and having a voice outside my immediate manager," wrote one respondent. Another said a recent positive outcome is "Having leadership understand what my role is and the value I contribute to the organization." Travel management expert Maria Chevalier, who runs industry career growth group CTME Search Party, agreed that travel managers are getting their due. "The complexity of their jobs surfaced since Covid, and it became more apparent to management to how difficult it was," she said.

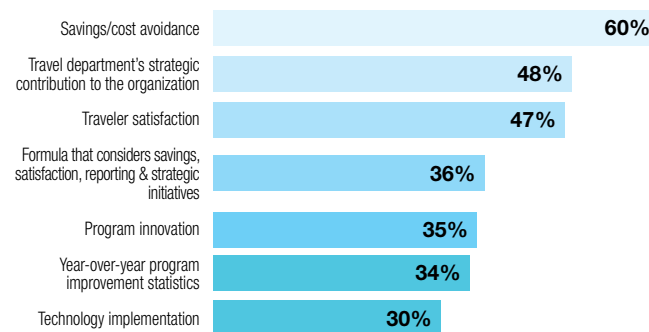
Also in the top three performance criteria is traveler satisfaction, chosen by 47 percent of respondents. After two years of overseeing traveler health and safety, and considering the overall talent shortage, it is not surpris-

ing that keeping employees' happy is high on the list.

With fewer bodies and more dependency on data, technology prowess also rose in importance. Roughly one-third called out program innovation as a key performance metric, and three in 10 selected technology implementation as an important factor in how their performance is evaluated.

How Travel Managers' Performance is Measured

The metrics used to assess respondents' performance vary, with only savings used for a majority.

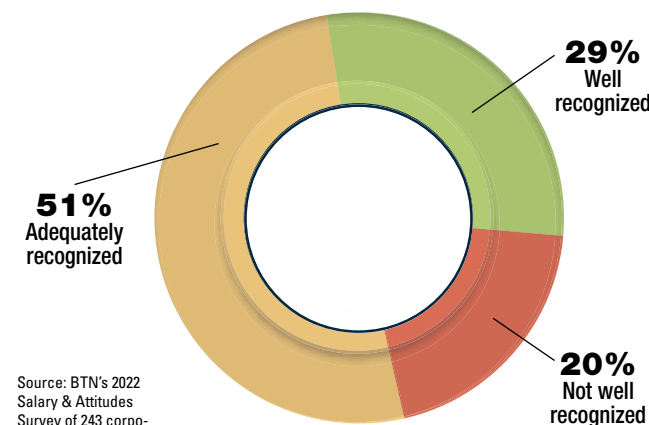


Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 254 corporate travel managers

JOB SATISFACTION STAYS HIGH

Despite the expanding workload, most survey respondents generally were satisfied with their careers. Eight in 10 feel recognized by their organization and six in

How do you feel about your recognition within your organization?



Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 243 corporate travel managers

10 are satisfied with their salary relative to responsibilities. Still, that leaves four in 10 who are dissatisfied with their compensation.

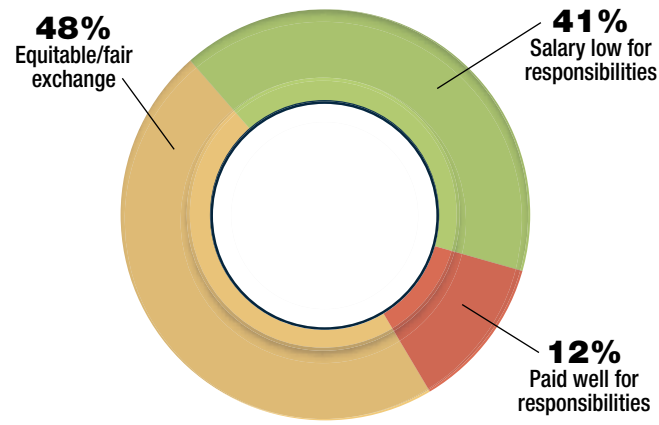
Respondents' dissatisfaction with compensation is mostly related to expanded job function. "I am working dual roles, and working in areas outside of my normal responsibilities, and on special projects. Working wherever needed," said one. "I'm taking on other functions not travel-related, more responsibility—no increase in pay," said another.

Looking at respondents overall, the "Great Resignation" doesn't seem to have hit the travel manager profession especially hard—or perhaps more likely, the ones who left did so already, and, therefore, didn't respond to the survey.

Among current respondents, many aren't seeking much change in their career paths over the next two years, perhaps because of limited opportunities in their organization. Nearly four in 10 (38 percent) see themselves working for their current employer, in the same position, while three in 10 expect to have the same employer, but a more advanced position.

Travel managers shouldn't be taken for granted though, as some will seek new opportunities elsewhere. Nearly one-fifth see themselves in the same or a new position with a different employer, and considering the continued talent shortage, those are realistic goals. There are also those who prefer to work remotely and resent the move back to an office. "I would prefer to be fully remote, so I have no intention to go into the office three days a week," said one travel manager. "This could become a performance issue which means I don't know how long I'll be in

How do you feel about your salary relative to your responsibilities?

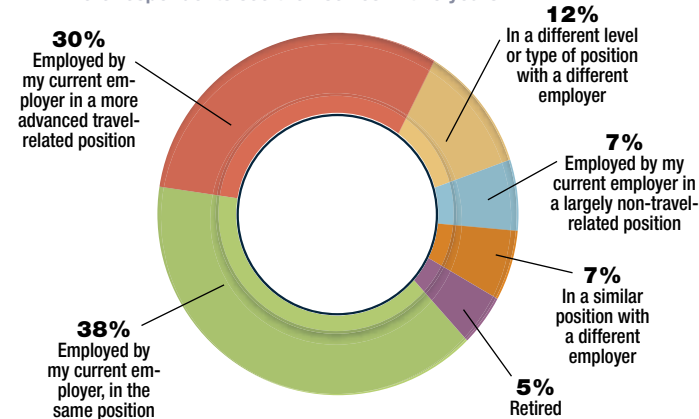


this company."

Understandably, travel managers who are not satisfied with their salary levels are more restless with their current situations. More than two-thirds said they would be looking to advance in the next 24 months, via a few routes. Thirty-one percent said they saw themselves working for the same employer but in a more senior travel position. Seven percent said they would stick with their employer if they could find a role outside of travel. Twenty-nine percent said they would leave their employer to advance their career, either within travel management or in another role.

What's Next for Travel Managers?

Where respondents see themselves in two years

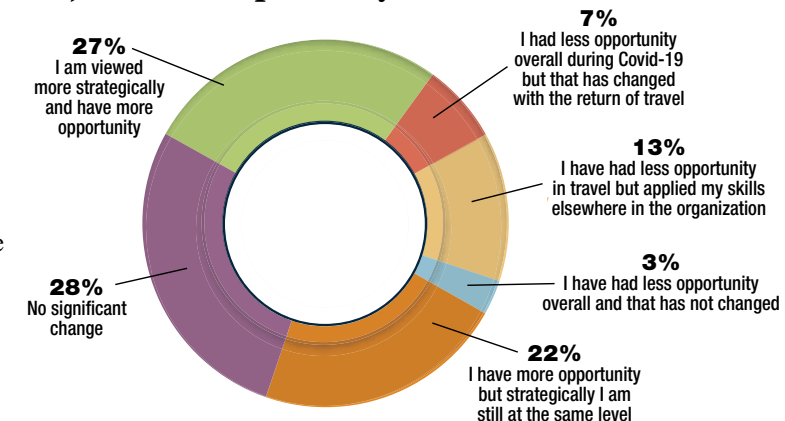


Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 243 corporate travel managers

COVID LEAVES ITS MARK

The overall increase in compensation for respondents, however, indicates that many travel managers are being recognized for their contributions. And they are happy to be more involved in overall corporate decision-making, as travel itself comes under closer scrutiny for its value (and risks) for the organization. Though the largest percentage of travel managers (28 percent) said the Covid-19 crisis did not change their job over the past two and half years, 27 percent said they are viewed more strategically and have more opportunities. "I am working with cross-functional teams on more strategic implementations which has been welcomed," said one respondent. For others, however, the pandemic meant more work without added satisfaction, as more than one-fifth admitted they have more opportunity but strategically they are still in the same place.

How has the Covid-19 crisis changed your job over the past 2.5 years?



Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 243 corporate travel managers

WORKPLACE CHALLENGES

Several other themes emerged from travel managers' comments. These include changing to a remote or a hybrid work environment, the challenges of recruitment, working with temporary labor and educating new staff members. All these changes came quickly, as travel managers shifted from an office environment with familiar faces to a home-based workplace with new colleagues to educate. "Switching from in-person to virtual, and now moving back to in-person," has been a chore, explained one. Learning to work with a lot of new faces has also been tough. As one travel manager put it: "There is more stress overall, and working with new people in hospitality where the previous director of sales left or was laid off... delayed answers, emails, incomplete details, etc."

WHAT'S NEXT?

What will be the next big challenge for travel managers? "Recovery," said Chevalier. "The pace is unpredictable." With technology playing a greater part, travel managers shouldn't take their renewed recognition by senior management for granted, advised Olympus Corp. executive director for global travel and expense strategy Pat Batra. Travel managers need to stay savvy and current, able to assess API integrations and various payment and expense systems, and use analytical software to improve decision-making. "They need to have a better ability to manage change, to divide their attention into multiple regions and more diverse needs ... they need to know a bit of everything," he said. Indeed, travel managers have their work cut out for them as business travel continues its comeback, while looking quite different from 2019 in so many ways. ■

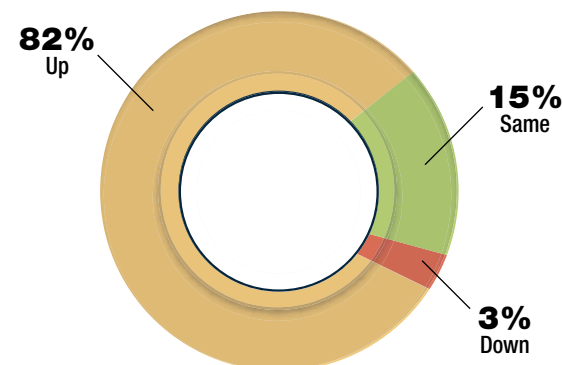
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respondents—noted the loss of travel and travel procurement colleagues during the pandemic. James Thalman, a travel management veteran at training firm FranklinCovey told BTN that he mourned the loss of his experienced colleagues.

“The hard part for me is, in the last two years I’ve seen such a loss of great talent—people who worked in the airline industry, the car rental industry, the hotel industry, but especially my own peers and all the small focus groups where you can really share and glean a lot of information. I went to a luncheon for travel managers in Salt Lake City a few weeks ago, and out of the entire group of 25 participants I didn’t know a single one,” he said. “That was very surprising.”

2022 Travel Manager Salary Vs. 2021

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they received an increase in compensation this year.



Source: BTN's 2022 Salary & Attitudes Survey of 236 corporate travel managers

Those who have left the industry, of course, would not have taken the BTN survey—so we can’t know how they’ve fared. We do know that some of those missing in action have found it hard to find new positions in companies that value their work. One such buyer, who has worked at a number of different companies in the past three years, was prepared for a layoff at their “former, former” company, though it took their boss by surprise.

“I’m not sure how she didn’t see it coming, but she didn’t,” said the buyer, whose boss was also laid off in the process.

That said, this travel management pro, who like other buyers in this report requested anonymity to speak openly, landed several interviews during the job search. But they told BTN the process at a number of companies was pretty demoralizing. One example, was a job the buyer ultimately accepted:

“After a long interview process, I finally got this call from the hiring manager asking me if they offered me the position ‘anywhere in this salary range’ would I accept,” they said. “I told him that I probably would, but that conversation definitely didn’t make me feel valued. When the company offered me the rock-bottom figure

in that range, maybe I shouldn’t have been surprised. I actually asked them if they were sure they wanted me in the role.”

The buyer’s tenure at the company was short-lived. “The final note on this is that before I left, I helped backfill the role, and the poor gal who took it was getting paid even less.”

This buyer said the attitude telegraphed by that company wasn’t unusual. “I’ve built a number of travel programs for different companies. And these smaller companies, you know, they all of a sudden realize they need to have something in place, but they just don’t really understand the value of travel management and what needs to happen. A lot of times you can teach them and they are willing to learn, but sometimes they aren’t.”

NOT JUST AT SMALL COMPANIES

The lack of education isn’t just an issue at small companies. Another former corporate travel manager turned TMC account manager who was furloughed, took a job at a sizable Midwest-based company with more than \$25 million in travel spend prior to the pandemic. They took a \$30,000 pay cut to take the role.

“I had never been unemployed in my life,” they told BTN, and said they had struggled to find employment that matched their “very narrow-focused career.” Even though they had transferrable skills for finance and other roles that travel management touches, the buyer wasn’t getting interest from employers in those adjacent roles.

So the manager accepted a procurement role at a former client company. “Travel had always been tucked into a larger procurement role held by my boss as one piece of their responsibilities, and they never had time for it,” the travel manager said. As a TMC account manager, this industry veteran had taken over that de facto role for the company. “They always wanted a travel manager but had never wanted to pay for a full-time resource,” the buyer said. Even today, as travel recovers “like wildfire,” according to the buyer, they aren’t investing. The open position was designated for more general procurement, with travel as a piece of it.

“Procurement isn’t something I’ve done,” said the travel manager. “So I was eager to learn and grateful to have a position. But it’s never anyone’s goal to lose \$30,000 in their annual compensation.” The buyer said this company had always been cost-conscious, but with the Covid downturn, which also negatively affected its business, the cost-focused measures had become extreme. Plus, much of the work that could be automated is set to be performed manually. “

I’m calling people to change their airline tickets because I get a daily report of those who didn’t book the lowest fare,” the manager said. “It’s one thing to do manual calls when travel volumes are low, but we’re not at that place anymore. And my skills could be put to better use.”

FLIGHT RISKS

Our first displaced travel buyer has landed in a larger program as part of a team that manages travel. They told BTN the position

is fine; the remit is narrow, which is right for the pay level, but less than this travel manager’s qualifications should command. The buyer has limited visibility into strategic conversations and sometimes is bypassed with requests or business decisions because the buyer’s boss also has some travel background “so decisions are made without me. That can be frustrating.” The company also has hinted a return-to-office mandate will be forthcoming, however, and that may be the final tipping point for the buyer whose personal plans do not include that return. “My time here could be limited by that.”

Other buyers, who have been in their roles without experiencing layoffs, have experienced internal frustrations, which are pushing them to seek other opportunities.

One innovation-minded travel manager who knows their company’s travel program needs better data and at least some semblance of duty of care “that doesn’t cost much,” prepared a business case for the CEO and has presented to their boss several innovation ideas stemming from best practices they’ve gleaned from industry workshopping teams and conference content. They’ve seen all the suggested improvements fall on deaf ears,

even after the pandemic when many companies put more resources into these critical areas.

“I have told the CEO I can get him any data he wants. I have asked what would be useful for him and made suggestions about the types of data that would be informative. We were even talking once, when he asked me something about personal travel, and I saw the perfect opportunity to shift the conversation to business travel. I explained some of the things I’d like to do [with the program]. I worded it very carefully, of course, not saying ‘roadblocks’ or ‘people are not being supportive.’

“He just looked at me with some surprise and said, ‘I didn’t know you were so knowledgeable. I thought you were just a travel agent, and I never understood why we paid you so much.’ That pretty much tells you everything you need to know,” said the buyer, who is pursuing employment at another company and is close to landing the position.

“This other company asked me as the final question in the interview, what I saw as the future of our industry,” the buyer said. “I answered that, of course. I was very excited someone was asking me that question.”

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**SURVEY SAYS:
COMPANIES SEE TRAVEL
AS MORE STRATEGIC**

New Priorities Changed Focus, But Not Goals

C-SUITE NOW PUSHES COMPLIANCE; COST CONTROL STILL CRITICAL



WHO: Tetyana Carten, global travel manager

WHERE: TTEC

WHAT: Moving from a pricing role to manage travel just prior to the pandemic threw a number of new priorities at this travel manager: understanding the value of travel beyond cost and prioritizing that value while also managing demand.

WHAT CHANGED THE MOST, FROM PRE-PANDEMIC TO NOW, IN YOUR ROLE?

I've been with TTEC for more than eight years. I was in finance in a pricing role previously, and the year I took over the travel manager role, the pandemic started. I had not managed travel prior to the pandemic.

For managing travel, it was mostly like the company was managing resources, making sure that we don't overspend, managing spend, managing safety. Now [travel management] shifted to being a priority. So we are not as concerned about the volumes of travel, and we're not as concerned about traveler satisfaction. We're more concerned about how safe they are and that they are compliant, so we can track spend we can make sure that everything's going [well]. This has become a No. 1 goal in my world at least.

IS THIS INCREASED LEVEL OF ENFORCEMENT COMING FROM THE TOP?

Yes. It comes from the C-suite. And the other part of it is that during the pandemic when travel stopped they realized how much money they were saving by people not traveling. So that was like very sweet candy, nobody wants to give that up. They do realize that face-to-face interaction is very important, but they still push this trade-off. Like, "how many people [do you] think need to travel?"

HOW ARE THE TRAVELERS THEMSELVES REACTING TO THIS?

It depends on their personality. Some people are like, OK, I haven't traveled, so I don't have to I don't need to, but some people are so eager to travel. They are pushing for face-to-face interaction, and this is how they know how to do business. So you can't really tell them to do it differently.

HAS TTEC'S STRUCTURE AROUND TRAVEL CHANGED? YOUR DEPARTMENT REPORTS TO PROCUREMENT, RIGHT?

Yes, it has changed. The TTEC travel department was part of procurement previously, then at some point it became a self-standing department reporting to legal counsel. Then from legal counsel, it [moved to] enterprise services.

And now, we're back in procurement reporting directly to the CFO. It's been kind of thrown around a bit.

DOES THAT HAVE ANY EFFECT ON HOW YOU MANAGE THINGS, IN TERMS OF YOUR PLACE IN THE ORGANIZATION? ARE YOU GOING TO BE ASSESSED IN THE SAME WAY?

Not really. The goals are the same, but priorities can change, the focus can change, and there is kind of a different lens to look at things now, but other than that, no, all the goals are the same.

DO YOU FIND YOURSELF DEALING WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS MORE? ARE PEOPLE ACROSS TTEC LOOKING FOR OTHER THINGS FROM YOU?

People reach out for information, especially in the pandemic. Even the limited amount of people who were traveling would reach out for information, like what documentation they need. But now we have closer ties with the human resources department and with security and safety—the people who are looking at this companywide. Other than that, it's still the same.

WHAT ARE YOU KEEPING YOUR EYES ON IN TERMS OF POTENTIAL CHALLENGES OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

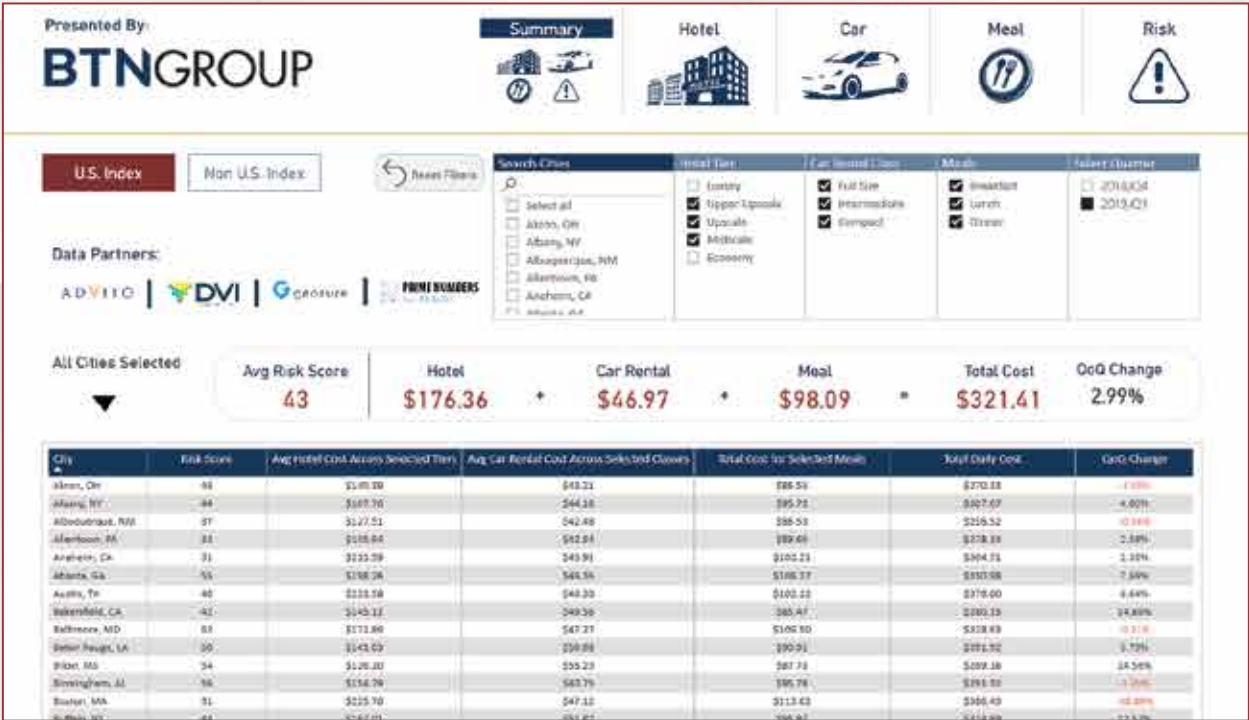
If the business is really going to go back to business as usual, and people come back to perform their roles as they'd been doing it previously, or if it's going to transform into something new because executives are pushing to cut costs on travel. At this point it's still uncertain and it's still kind of forming. There are many departments and different rules. I think for some departments it will completely transform to virtual interactions, and for other departments, it will stay as it was previously.

GIVEN THAT YOU CAME UP OUTSIDE TRAVEL AND THEN CAME INTO IT, IS THERE A POSSIBILITY IF TRAVEL CUTBACKS CONTINUE, THEY COULD REDEPLOY YOU INTO A DIFFERENT ASPECT OF THE ORGANIZATION?

It is possible. Coming from finance, from pricing, I'm well-equipped on the reporting side and data side as an analyst. So I was participating in all kinds of other projects and working with other departments before. If the company decides to outsource [travel management], it'll be fine. ■

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Acquisitions Spurred Program Consolidation Plus a Meetings Strategy

BECTON DICKINSON AND CO.'S GROWTH BY ACQUISITION BROUGHT FRAGMENTATION TO THE TRAVEL PROGRAM. THE DRIVE TO CONSOLIDATE, HOWEVER, ALSO OPENED THE DOOR TO A LONG-ADVOCATED MEETINGS MANAGEMENT EFFORT.



WHO: Jodi Woods, senior global category manager

WHERE: Becton Dickinson and Co.

WHAT: Global travel program in acquisition mode consolidated incoming travel programs and included a meetings management strategy in the process.

YOUR JOB MOVED TO 100 PERCENT REMOTE, WHICH WAS A BIG CHANGE, BUT

WHAT ELSE HAS CHANGED FOR YOU IN THE PAST 24 MONTHS?

With the acquisition of a new company, what had been my nice managed program went poof. The acquired company's travel program was highly fragmented, so we spent the pandemic consolidating from over 70 travel agencies to one.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY, AND HOW WILL YOU MAKE THE MOST OF IT?

I also have meetings, and after 10 years working to determine where the ownership should lie, I got a budget to put some meetings technology in place. So that is taking up a lot of my time as well. We see a great opportunity to manage meetings, because it's so highly fragmented.

WHERE ARE YOU STARTING WITH THE MEETINGS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, AND WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

We are starting with a meeting approval form and not a meeting request, as the program organization will stay in the hands of the meeting owners. Our goal is to get visibility into the various levels of activity. Understanding that volume will give us more negotiating leverage. Currently, we know the larger meetings are managed very well and have been for a long time. It's the smaller and simpler meetings, which we believe make up about 70 percent of our total meetings spend, that could really use our help. We want to offer sourcing and budgeting support to help organizers spend budgets effectively, but we have to do it without creating too many limitations for the meeting owners.

THAT CAN BE A CHALLENGE. DO YOU WORK WITH ANY OTHER COLLEAGUES DEDICATED TO TRAVEL OR MEETINGS?

I sit in global procurement. We don't have a travel or a meetings department. For the size of our program, there are two full-time people on travel. It makes it quite challenging. Even though I'm part of procurement, I have strategy and operations,

where a lot of my counterparts just have strategy [while] the stakeholders and business own the supplier relationships. I get to do it all—but because of that, I'm not dealing with a whole other travel department that may see things a little differently. That said, I had more difficulty on the meetings side trying to convince the right people that it was the right investment.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU BECOME A GREATER RESOURCE TO YOUR COMPANY?

Travelers are excited to use new technology platforms [that came with the travel program consolidation]. On the management side, we now have all this consolidated data we couldn't produce before and can extend our discounts to a number folks in our global markets who never had access to them. There also are tools we want to roll out to our finance business partner so they can have access to the data. We want that to be more self-service and in greater detail.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST UPCOMING CHALLENGE?

It's managing the expectations of the travelers to the reality of how the world is today. It's digging deep and finding the patience to explain and remind people that a corporate travel program is no different than a leisure travel experience in the disruptions that are happening. ... Then that escalates up to management because they want to know why we have challenges in our program. And then my other greatest challenge is managing costs.

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO WORK THROUGH THOSE?

We are continuing to communicate and educate on the tools and resources available to the [travelers]. It's not always about picking up a phone and talking to an agent for 20 minutes.

Our CEO put out a communication at the end of May raising awareness about the cost piece. He highly suggested reducing nonessential internal travel. In May, we had a 26 percent increase over 2019 in volume and an even greater increase in costs. In June, we saw a 26 percent reduction in volume and about the same reduction spend over 2019. It was all that pent-up demand [coming out of the pandemic], and I know there were a lot of meetings going on in the company. That's been scaled back now.

HAVE YOU BEEN RECOGNIZED OR COMPENSATED FOR ALL THESE CHANGES? OR IS IT PART OF THE JOB?

It's part of the job. ■

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Procurement Pro Tackles High Cost, Low Service

PANDEMIC-ERA SCRUTINY SPURRED TRAVEL PROGRAM OPTIMIZATION. A DEEPER FOCUS ON DATA AS TRAVEL RETURNS BRINGS SOPHISTICATION TO NEW COST RECOVERY EFFORTS



WHO: Frank Colletti, sourcing manager
WHERE: ZimVie
WHAT: ZimVie spun off of a larger biomedical firm as of March 1, 2022; it is a leader in the dental and spine verticals; it employee approximately 2,600 people globally and is head-quartered in Colorado.

HAS THE PANDEMIC CHANGED HOW THE VALUE OF TRAVEL PURCHASING IS VIEWED IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

I think it is more strategic now. Everyone initially cut travel, and now they're trying to get back into travel. Your partners that have been there in a lot of cases are failing, whether they don't have the capacity at this point, a war on Ukraine, fuel prices, lack of pilots, whatever the case may be. Whereas in the past you used to shop around primarily on price and availability—most of these car rental guys are in the same airport you're going to—now you have to stop and say, who's really the right [supplier] who's not going to leave my people stranded.

HAS THERE BEEN ANY CHANGE IN TERMS OF HOW TRAVEL ITSELF IS VIEWED?

In the past, travel was just there. Everyone was trying to rack up points and find an excuse to go to Florida in the winter. Now it's viewed as actually costing us money, and why travel when you can do these conference calls or whatever? There is value to travel. I personally like that face-to-face interaction if I'm negotiating an agreement or contract. I think there is a lot of value to it. To keep it valued, we have to show the company that, hey, not only are we providing this service, but it's an affordable service when you start comparing it to what it looked like two or three years ago.

ARE THERE OTHER ROLES YOU'VE TAKEN ON IN THE PAST TWO YEARS?

It's maybe not so much in travel but how we process expense reports, that's getting a closer look. We want to get our hands around what

that expense report is really costing us, how much are we paying for food, cars, these frequent gasoline guys who don't refuel. It's a cost to the company, and it's not managed, so we want to get that under control.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING ON THE DATA SIDE TO ACHIEVE THAT?

We're doing a lot of new data projects. We're moving to the cloud on our ERP systems, we're also going after the value-added taxes our travelers are spending. There's a lot wrapped up in that data to allow us to get some money back in the organization, so we're doing a lot of that stuff now.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU BECOME A GREATER RESOURCE TO YOUR COMPANY?

Definitely on the contract and cost-savings side. These relationships prior to our spinoff were never really revisited—once you are a supplier, you're always a supplier—so I've been taking a look at those relationships, and some of them are definitely in need of change. Our goal from the procurement side of the house is to save this organization as much money as possible and get the same level of service. Now, with the inflation and everything else going on, it's a much more valuable resource in general, whether it's travel or not.

WHAT INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS HAVE YOU FORMED THAT HAVE SEEN THE MOST TRANSFORMATION IN RECENT YEARS?

The finance group has always been the finance group, and the only time they come to interact on the procurement side of the house is if there's a problem. In the past, they may not have been paying close attention to the amount of money that was going out the door for travel, but they're hearing these calls where I'm badgering these airline guys, so we definitely have a much closer working relationship, and it's spilling out to some beneficial results. Now, I have finance backing, and the magic words are, "I'm going to save you some money. Watch this." ■

Duty of Care Converts to Compliance

IN A NON-MANDATED UNIVERSITY SETTING, ED PHILLIPS OBSERVED TRAVELERS' DESIRE FOR BETTER DUTY-OF-CARE SUPPORT. IN DELIVERING IT, THE UNIVERSITY ALSO IMPROVED COMPLIANCE, FURTHERING ITS ABILITY TO SUPPORT TRAVELERS IN-TRIP.



WHO: Ed Phillips, university travel manager
WHERE: Michigan State University
WHAT: 13,000 employees; global travel, often for research, which did not stop during the pandemic

DID TRAVEL MANAGEMENT'S POSITION WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC?

The amount of communication with other departments around the university and business units around the university as well as some with higher leadership within the university became more frequent, because of the dynamic nature of the T&E environment that was being driven by so many outside circumstances.

We are a research-based university, so we have people engaged in research projects globally. A lot of those research projects didn't stop. So, there were entities around the university that were trying to decipher how we can continue to support research efforts and projects that were ongoing. Part of that increased the engagement with the travel department.

DID YOU SEE ANY CHANGES FROM YOUR TRAVELERS?

Michigan State University is not a mandated travel environment, and with higher education, generally speaking, you'll find larger institutions are not. [But] the interest in duty of care by the traveler grew. As a result of that, the travel department and the controller's office have continued to provide ever-improving tools—our online booking tool, our expense reconciliation tools, our support platform—[increasing our capacity to] communicate duty of care if you book through the preferred channels. The general travel population became more intent on having resources to lean on proactively. By communicating that booking through the preferred channels improved the duty-of-care platform ... we have seen a consistent improvement in adoption of the preferred booking channels.

Faculty tends to be very dynamic in their travels, so we're different from a corporation in that sense. Often grant funding is involved, so we have to abide by the grant rules, depending on who's providing that grant. Other than the very specific spending rules of those grants, there's not a mandate to a procurement channel. By leveraging the message, though, there's an opportunity to improve the duty of care from door to door.

HOW HAVE YOU MEASURED THE CHANGES AND WHAT HAVE YOU SEEN?

We audit our expense reports and match those to bookings through our preferred channels. Where we see [a discrepancy], we look at the delta and measure that gap. It was a 79 percent adoption, and as we moved along the path of the pandemic, that grew to 82 percent. We currently stand just a skosh above 86 percent in a non-mandated environment. Now, we've leveled off, so I don't know where we go from here, but we had just under a 10 percent improvement in 20 months.

ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR SKILLS THE PANDEMIC HAS SPURRED YOU TO FLEX OR IMPROVE?

The stretch has been stepping out of what we know and finding new information resources that we may not have accessed before so we can be proactive in assisting our travelers and organization to be prepared. [That could be] government websites or gaining knowledge of security support companies or being able to provide analysis of new and different products to assist with improving duty of care.

WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU TAP FOR YOUR OWN IMPROVEMENT?

I'm a lifelong learner, and I want to be the best travel manager I can be and be very active in the industry that is so good to me. One of the things I've benefitted from and invested in is the Global Leadership Professional program through the Global Business Travel Association. That is a financial and time investment, but it is the master's class on new analytics, how to do regression analyses, learning tools and strategies on how to approach carbon footprint measurement and reporting.

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY NOW?

The biggest challenge is is to create that support environment where the end user really experiences service levels that not only meet but exceed their expectations. I would say that also is the biggest opportunity. If we can get there, we have happy travelers, happy travel planners, happy finance and the travel budget parts of the grants are aligned with the rules of the grants. ■

TMC Insider Drives Change in Buy-Side Role

PANDEMIC STRAITS FURLOUGHED AND THEN LAID OFF THIS TMC AGENT TURNED ACCOUNT MANAGER. SHE REALIZED THERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY HER FORMER CLIENT, BLUE YONDER, NEEDED TO CONVERT. SHE MADE THE CALL AND NOW IS WORKING TO TRANSFORM THE TRAVEL PROGRAM.



WHO: Kathie Gatchell, global travel manager

WHERE: Blue Yonder (a division of Panasonic)

WHAT: Policy optimization, traveler-centricity and tech transformation are at the heart of the vision

TELL ME MORE ABOUT HOW YOU BECAME BLUE YONDER'S GLOBAL TRAVEL MANAGER.

When I was an account manager at [the travel management company], Blue Yonder had a person who handled travel sort of down the list of their roles and responsibilities. That's very common within companies. He leaned heavily on me in my role at the TMC, and as we built that relationship, I filled a need within Blue Yonder because they didn't have that dedicated role. Fast forward, I knew Blue Yonder was implementing a new global travel management company, moving on from the company I had been with. A new person was managing that implementation. She was amazing, and I know she would have done it, but I really knew she could use some help. So I emailed her. I sent something like "I'm happy to help you because I'm currently, you know, not working." And I told them even then that I thought a company like Blue Yonder would benefit from a dedicated global travel manager. I was brought on in a contract capacity in a matter of weeks.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF MOVING FROM THE SUPPLY SIDE TO THE BUY SIDE, AND HAS IT CHANGED YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF TRAVEL MANAGEMENT?

I was stretched on the corporate side. So I just dug in. I learned a lot by building my internal network. They saw early on how valuable it was to have someone really on their side in the implementation process—working with the TMC, but who was not [employed by] the TMC, and holding them accountable for what I thought they really should provide us, especially when resources were bare bones. I'm happy to say that my role now is permanent. Through the implementation I've built a very strong partnership [with the new TMC] that is deeper than it was before Covid. The pandemic gave us opportunities to have deeper conversations about what we need going forward.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK TECHNOLOGY WILL PLAY MOVING FORWARD?

Self-service is going to be a huge focus because of [TMC] staffing issues. So I want to make sure if I'm asking our travelers to self-serve as much as possible that the infrastructure is strong—and that the offerings we give them are strong. I need my TMC to spend money on technology, and I think TMCs are listening. They're developing the technology and I think their roadmaps are exciting. We have to work together to make the travel experience better for our associates because they're really feeling the pain of all of the disruptions in the industry right now. Technology will play a big role.

YOU REPORT THROUGH HUMAN RESOURCES NOW, BUT YOU DIDN'T WHEN YOU WERE HIRED. WILL THIS CHANGE YOUR FOCUS?

I literally just moved to the structure under HR, so I'm super interested about how that's going to look. I think there will be more input on policy issues now because our leadership is the decision-maker on policy. I've not been part of that yet, but there are things within the travel policy that I think we could do better—and now with the opportunity, I've brought some elements to their attention.

LIKE WHAT?

We made changes during Covid to relax policy—because of the reduced flight schedules and they wanted associates to have fewer touchpoints. We need to revisit that. On the other hand, we need to look at more holistic elements of what can be expensed and think about lounge access or enhancements on ancillary purchases like seat choice. Those are very well-received by travelers. And if you look at something like lounge access for \$59 a day when you have a long layover or have a disruption, the quieter space, internet access and complimentary food and beverage is a great value when you think you might pay \$40 for an airport meal by itself. I haven't yet talked with my leaders about these, but we need to revisit those aspects of policy, too—our associates are traveling for work after all. I believe we can help them do that better, without really increasing our costs, but of course it's a challenge. ■

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