



# PRACTICAL POINTERS: Benefits of Leveraging Transient and Meetings Hotel Spend

**U**pward pressure on room rates and downward pressure on corporate travel budgets have prompted buyers to take a new look at opportunities to reduce costs by consolidating transient and meeting/event room nights in negotiations with preferred accommodation suppliers.

Average daily room rates have been climbing steadily since 2020 and are likely to rise again in 2025, exceeding the 2024 rate on average by 1.99%, according to the [American Hotel and Lodging Association's 2025 State of the Industry report](#). The most recent meetings industry [PULSE survey](#) by Northstar Meetings Group and Cvent found that higher costs for goods and services and budget constraints are the top two planner concerns.



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At the same time, an [April survey by Business Travel News](#) found that while buyers who expected travel budgets to increase by more than 10% (about one quarter of respondents) remained confident of the increased spending, the majority had begun to pull back their budget forecasts. Buyers “largely maintain a tentative approach” as they wait for markets to settle over tariffs and other matters. Increasingly, “centralizing sourcing management for travel and meetings is becoming the new norm,” Cvent found in its [2025 Travel Management Report](#).

**“There’s a growing recognition that consolidating transient and M&E spend is a powerful way to strengthen negotiations with hotel chains.”**

— Gabriella Antoniotti, FCM Meetings and Events

While integrating transient travel with meetings and group travel is not a new strategy, “What’s different now is the intensified focus on cost savings, especially among large corporate clients,” said Gabriella Antoniotti, FCM Meetings and Events business leader USA and Canada. “In today’s economic environment, organizations are under pressure to demonstrate ROI on every dollar spent,” she added. “There’s a growing recognition that consolidating transient and M&E spend is a powerful way to strengthen negotiations with hotel chains.”

Read on for successful strategies and practical tips. [View](#) a related thought-leadership webinar that the BTN Group and Cvent hosted on this topic.

### OPPORTUNITIES AND ADVANTAGES

Companies that have successfully leveraged their transient and meeting room night volume report

advantageous outcomes for both travelers and travel departments. Those may include cost savings, streamlined contract negotiations with hotel partners, improved travel team efficiency, reduced leakage, stronger duty of care, and increased satisfaction for meeting attendees and business travelers.

“It’s all the things that you want for your travelers themselves, as well as for your program in terms of costs and management and duty of care,” said Kimberly Meyer, co-founder of The Data Angel, a data measurement and analytics integration available on [Cvent’s App Marketplace](#). “They’re all going to happen.”

While cost savings is generally the biggest driver for companies seeking to leverage room night volume, the strategy also supports duty of care, according to consultant Kevin Iwamoto. “It sends a stronger message to employees about complying with the program. Demonstrated duty of care is a strong motivator for the traveler, as well as for the company.”

### CHALLENGES AND TIPS

The biggest challenge for buyers interested in leveraging room night spending is typically internal, due to misalignment between teams or a lack of cohesive policy around meetings and events. “Stakeholder alignment is key, especially between procurement, travel, meetings, finance, and even HR,” Antoniotti said. “Executive sponsorship is also critical to break down silos and ensure goals and metrics are aligned.”

For small and mid-sized companies, collecting and analyzing the necessary data and developing a strategy to follow through with moving market share as promised takes time and resources.

“It’s a big project,” Meyer said. “If you’ve got procurement people and analysts, that’s great. But if you’re a small travel or meetings team, it’s a lot of work.”



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### ▶ CASE STUDY: DYNATRACE

**Experts offer the following advice and practical pointers on how buyers can develop a successful strategy to leverage transient and meetings room night volume:**

#### ▶ **Aggregate and Analyze Data**

Antoniotti recommends that buyers begin by aggregating their data across transient travel, group bookings and event spend—categories which are often managed in different silos, which makes it difficult to see the whole picture.

“Conduct a comprehensive spend analysis to identify overlaps in destinations, preferred properties, and volume,” she said. “These insights are foundational to building an integrated strategy. Accurate data allows you to identify patterns, consolidate volume, and make smarter, more strategic decisions. Leveraging tools like centralized booking platforms and consolidated reporting dashboards allows organizations to quantify total account value and approach hotel partners with a more compelling business case.”

“Data is your validator of leverage in negotiations,” Iwamoto added. “You should feel confident that when you’re quoting numbers and percentages to the hotel that you’re accurate enough to set reasonable targets.”

#### ▶ **Prove You Can Move Market Share**

It’s important to understand what your hotel partners want in return for consolidating a company’s transient and meetings volume, according to Iwamoto. Simply put, he said, “Hotels want to see either a market share shift, a revenue increase, or a combination of both.” When negotiating to leverage transient and meetings business in return for discounts and other concessions, Meyer said buyers need to demonstrate with data that they can bring both transient and meetings market share to a property.

Karen Heslin, senior manager global travel and events with Dynatrace, saw an opportunity when the company was preparing to move its offices from Waltham, Mass., to Boston. The move happened to coincide with a renewal period for the company’s preferred hotel program for transient business travel.

Working with the company’s internal sales enablement team, the Dynatrace travel team successfully leveraged transient travel room nights and the company’s monthly sales training events in negotiations with a Boston property. The result: savings of \$95,000.

More than \$20,000 in savings resulted from negotiating a room rate for 11 meetings with 100 rooms each that was \$20 lower than the company’s rate in Waltham. “The stars just kind of aligned, and we were able to negotiate an amazing deal,” Heslin said. “It was a huge win to get a lower rate in Boston than Waltham,” a western suburb of the city.

Additional cost savings resulted from waived resort and rental fees, complimentary meeting space, parking passes, and rebates on food and beverage services. The travel team also negotiated a flexible cancellation policy which was important to sales enablement team stakeholders.

Monthly sales training meetings for new hires at Dynatrace cover four or five nights and require about 100 sleeping rooms every month of the year. Heslin evaluated all potential hotels in the company’s program and found one hotel in Boston that had availability for all 12 meetings. “They really wanted our business for transient, so they gave us their lowest group rate, and they also gave us a lot of nice concessions from a meeting standpoint as well,” she said. “It was a big success story internally for us.”

Timing was key to success, as the office move and contracts for transient hotel negotiations came up at the same time. “We could take our time and look at multiple hotels that were competing for the business. That worked in our favor,” she said.



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"If there's more market share out there that the buyer is actively going to work to move to my hotel versus the hotel down the street, that's what the hotel wants to hear," Meyer said. If you promise to move market share, "you have to follow through on producing the actual results. That's critical to make this work. You can only play poker and bluff for so long," she warned.

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### ► **Understand Your Audience, What They Need**

At Elevance Health, understanding who the users are in particular markets has been a foundational component in successfully leveraging room night volume across transient and meeting travel, according to Dan Stagnitta, travel services consultant for the company (see Case Study, Page 5).

"Identify the type of traveler coming for a meeting, the number of meetings, when they are occurring, and whether they are reoccurring," he said. "For example, is it an integration team, so they're going to be there for three months and then they're never going to go back. Is it a new business unit that's going to be a continual source of business for meetings and transient travel? Understanding the type of travel that's going into a market helps us make sure that we have the right agreements in place in the right places."

### ► **Ready Your Wish List**

In addition to room rate discounts, buyers should not shy away from negotiating amenities important to their program, including free breakfast and/ or coffee breaks, discounts on AV rentals, and free use of meeting or event venues in the hotel. Other concessions and contract terms are also fair game. But buyers must know what they want; when negotiating, everything is on the table, experts advised.

"Knowing what you want from a concession standpoint is important," said Karen Heslin, senior manager of global travel and events with Dynatrace (see Case Study, Page 3). "Rate was very important for us, but flexibility was also big. For some it could be terms and conditions. Understand what you're trying to achieve so you focus on the right things."

### ► **SMEs Should Start Small**

"If you try to leverage a global program with a large hotel chain, you're just taking one bite out of the elephant," Meyer said. "But if you say, 'In these three cities, and with these four properties in each city, here's what I'm going to do,' then it totally becomes manageable."

The 'start small' strategy also applies to hotel partners, she added. "An individual hotel, or individual hotel owners or asset managers who own a small group, are much more flexible and focused on those particular hotels which can make negotiations easier."

Iwamoto noted that local hotels that are in close proximity to a company's headquarters or satellite offices could be a good starting point. "They're looking to guarantee that whatever internal or external meetings you have stay in their hotel rooms and utilize their meetings services on a regular, ongoing basis," he said. "That is very valuable business for them."



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Heslin had a big win for Dynatrace with the start-small approach. “Look for opportunities that make sense, and keep in mind that leveraging meetings and transient travel does not have to be all or nothing,” she said. “Be strategic about it. Maybe look at one city and one hotel and go for a quick win. I think we get overwhelmed thinking it has to be a global deal.”

### ► Engage Key Stakeholders

“Do not undertake a project like this on your own,” advised Iwamoto. “You need other stakeholders to join with you and have a common alignment around the end goal. You cannot do this without having key stakeholder supporters throughout your organization, including travel, meetings, procurement and finance. There’s strength in numbers, so the more stakeholders support and alignment you can get the greater the degree of success you will have if you go down this path.”

### ► Don’t Fake the Data

It’s critical that buyers enter negotiations with a realistic assessment of their combined transient and meetings volume, not an approximation. “The hotels want business, so when you negotiate it can’t be pie in the sky,” Heslin said. “We had 12 meetings that we could sign a contract for as opposed to talking about potential for meetings business. That really helped us.”

If a hotel negotiates discounts and other amenities based on an overly optimistic volume provided by a company, “that’s where the relationship, the credibility, the integrity of your program, all come into question,” Iwamoto added. “If you’re a supplier and were given flawed data from a company so targets were set incorrectly, who’s out of pocket the most? It’s the supplier, because they gave you a discount based on volume that was not correct.”

## CASE STUDY: ELEVANCE HEALTH

For the past several years, Elevance Health travel services consultant Dan Stagnitta has leveraged transient and meeting room nights with hotels invited to bid on its hotel business. The company has contracts in place that leverage business travel and meetings spend with between 50 and 100 properties, covering about 75,000 room nights in all. Meeting size at the properties generally falls between 20 and 40 participants, and peaks at 75.

Data provided to hotels breaks out transient and meetings business, but the contract covers both. “It’s one package because in our top markets—and even in the majority of our secondary markets—we expect the hotel that we bring in for transient is also going to be meeting preferred,” Stagnitta said.

Advantages of the combined approach include cost savings, efficiency and streamlined operations, improved traveler experience and compliance, and duty of care, he said.

- **Cost savings:** “By strategically combining meeting and transient room nights in our negotiations, we achieve an immediate cost savings of 10-15% within the agreements,” Stagnitta said. Negotiating multiple meetings instead of one at a time “means increased negotiating power,” not just on sleeping rooms, but meeting space, food and beverage and AV discounts.

- **Streamlined operations for the travel team:** Efficiency was the primary goal in leveraging transient and meeting travel. Elevance reduced the workload on meeting sourcing staff by transforming requests for proposals (RFPs) into requests for availability (RFAs), an “approach that accelerates the timeline from RFP initiation to final contract by approximately threefold compared to traditional meetings,” Stagnitta said.

- **Improved traveler experience and compliance:** “Consistency of the traveler experience is another easy win,” Stagnitta said. “We don’t want to have a traveler going into a market for a transient business purpose” directed to one set of hotel options and then find a “different set of hotels” when they go to the same market for a meeting. Conversely, when travelers have a positive experience at a meeting property, it makes it easier to book a business travel stay there, thus improving program compliance.



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## CONCLUSION

If a company has sufficient night volume to combine transient and meetings travel, the benefits will outweigh the challenges involved in developing, implementing and following through on leveraging meetings and transient room nights.

If a travel team has policies in place to encourage preferreds and the ability to control where budgeted dollars are spent, "I don't know why you would slice and dice your business to show up as a smaller customer, especially if you are a smaller company," Stagnitta said. "It should be, 'I have one pot.' Why would you separate it out and negotiate groups separate from transient? Wouldn't you want to be as big as you can and have the most business opportunity for hotels to consider, as opposed to offering one more bite-sized piece at a time?," he questioned.

"This is more than just a cost-savings opportunity. It's about future-proofing your travel program," Antoniotti said. "As the line between business travel and meetings continues to blur, companies that don't adapt risk missing out on operational efficiencies, improved traveler satisfaction, and stronger supplier leverage." ■

About CVENT, Inc.

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