

# Mobile Travel Strategy MUST-HAVE MOBILE FUNCTIONS



The BTN Group and Concur recently hosted a panel of managed travel professionals to discuss some of the most important mobile travel functions that every TMC should have in their toolbox today—along with details about what they should look for in the future. *To watch the complete webinar, [click here](#).*

## IN THE MARKET NOW

### MOBILE BOOKING : TODAY & TOMORROW –

Technology researcher Gartner reported last year that CFOs view the T&E category as the No. 1 application candidate for mobile device usage. PhocusWright projects 12 percent of all U.S. travel sales would be transacted on a mobile device by 2015.

“We see adoption [of mobile managed booking tools] starting to grow at significant rates—in line with consumer trends,” said RJ Filipski, senior director of business development for Concur. “TMCs and technology providers really need to start looking at the next generation tools to understand what compels travelers to book on their devices.”

Filipski cited voice-based search capability that allows travelers to ask in simple terms for what they need with the mobile tool returning relevant results for air, hotel and/or car options. Another area to watch, he said, was better integrations for smart recommendations. “Let’s base the search on

smart data that we have: If you know the traveler, loyalty programs, popular routes, we need to pop up relevant search results.”

**MOBILE RECEIPT CAPTURE –** Understanding and supporting the T&E expense process is certainly one way to extend TMC value and services to the corporate client. Mobile receipt capture, in particular—whether integrated with a integrated travel and expense solution like Concur or recommended by the TMC as an a la carte mobile application—has proven exceedingly valuable.

“It was very important in our selection process that we had mobile offerings,” said Valerie Fender, travel and expense manager for Blackboard Inc., who recently changed expense providers to Concur. And her travelers reported it as a game changer. “I surveyed the travelers after three months of being live with the new tool,” she said. “Sixty-six percent of survey respondents identified receipt capture as the single-most useful task facilitated by their new mobile tools.”

**MOBILE ITINERARY MANAGEMENT TOOLS –** Itinerary management tools were another must-have for Blackboard Inc. “The travelers really appreciate the alerts, gate changes, time to check in—they find it all very useful,” Fender said. But Fender has a larger play for itinerary management tools in her program that makes them a must-have.

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“We recognize a large percentage of lodging bookings are made off channel,” she said, revealing that Blackboard is looking at an open booking strategy to bring that data back in house. “In the stats that we collected on mobile bookings, much of that is hotel. [Looping in data from itinerary management tools] will allow us to capture that much better.”

For TMCs that have not embraced the power of itinerary management, Thomas Gehrke, chief information officer for Ovation Travel Group, said the time has come. “We offer both TripCase and Triplt, and we are embracing open booking strategies though few of our clients have embraced it. It is important.”

**SMART MESSAGING** – Smart messaging tools offer corporates and TMCs the ability to influence traveler decision-making on the road. It works by importing, matching and storing data from various sources and applying business rules to deliver location-based information and alerts to travelers via SMS messaging and/or email.

“This is a very key piece to the evolution of TMC relevancy,” said Filipski. “TMCs’ relationship with the traveler should not just be when something goes wrong.” Filipski cited multiple policy-driven applications, from reminders about changing mobile plans for international travel to notifications about wifi or meal inclusions in hotel policy to ground transportation advice delivered as soon as the plane lands.

“It allows companies to help travelers make smart decisions, and it also makes travelers feel like they have concierge service and VIP status,” said Filipski.

### TMCS & PROPRIETARY APPS

Use of off-the-shelf mobile tools is critical for every TMC, but there is also the opportunity for agencies to create their own apps as they see the chance to answer a need for their clients. Ovation Travel Group is working on two interesting apps that combine some of the functionality discussed above to create new must-have capabilities.

**HOTEL ATTACHMENT** – Ovation is looking at combining smart messaging and mobile booking capabilities to contact travelers who have made an air booking without a hotel, and provide them access to a relevant hotel options and booking tools that will attach hotels on the fly.

“Mobile messaging after the air transaction is the easiest way to connect with them,” said Gehrke. “[To return relevant options], we are looking at their preferences, their own reviews about hotels, reviews we have received from them, their preferences on location—or even their colleague’s preferences.” Combined with a mobile booking option embedded in the text message, Gehrke believes Ovation can answer a critical need for corporations and their travelers.

**SOS ALERTS** – Travelers need fast assistance when things go wrong. Ovation is eyeing mobile alerts to the TMC to provide better personal service. “If the traveler is in a meeting or on the side of the road with a flat tire, they can tap a button and signal to Ovation that something is wrong, and we can respond. Maybe they just want an automated set of tools, but maybe they can’t deal with anything and they just want us to fix it. The idea is to trigger the TMC to take action.”

Ultimately, said Gehrke, Ovation is working on an opt-in service that would allow the TMC to track the location of the traveler and push alerts and re-booking information proactively. “If we know there is a traffic issue, and there is no way the traveler is going to make it to the airport based on her current location, we could take action before the traveler knew there was a problem.” There are data privacy challenges here but as an opt-in service, the capabilities are there.

### DON’T LOOK BACK

“Things are changing rapidly. This might support a mindset of waiting until things settle, but they never will. If you don’t jump in and become a part of this now, you will get left behind,” said Gehrke.

That’s the attitude that Concur’s Jigish Avalani, senior vice president and general manager of platform developer services, is hoping will spread more widely throughout the TMC community as agencies look to more mobile capabilities to extend their value.

“Mobile is about an ecosystem of value that is being brought to the table,” said Avalani. “Relevant capabilities don’t have to touch the traditional air, hotel and car categories anymore to make sense for the TMC to offer a solution. They simply need to bring value to the traveler and the organization—and enable the TMC to extend the richness of their services.”

## ABOUT CONCUR

Concur is a leading provider of integrated travel and expense management solutions. Concur’s easy-to-use Web-based and mobile solutions help companies control costs, save time and protect employees. Concur’s open platform enables the entire travel and expense ecosystem to access and extend Concur’s T&E cloud. Concur’s systems adapt to individual corporate and employee preferences, and scale to meet the needs of companies from small to large.

Learn more at [www.concur.com](http://www.concur.com)