



# OPTIMIZING GLOBAL TRAVEL DATA

Accurate data drives the success of a global travel program. Find out how to achieve it in this insiders' guide.

In an increasingly globalized economy in which businesses are continuously driving down costs and increasing productivity, it stands to reason that an increasing number of travel managers have globalized their travel programs—or will soon be on that path. When managed successfully, globalized travel programs offer a number of benefits:

- Better safety and security controls for business travelers
- A rationalized supplier base that realizes overall travel program savings
- Increased visibility into overall travel policy compliance

None of these benefits can be fully realized, however, without timely access to quality global data. Accurate global data that is derived from more granular country- or region-specific data should be the lynchpin of a best-in-class global travel program. Whether for a large market corporation or a midsize global firm, quality data is achievable. The travel manager or travel procurement director must establish a strong foundation of data collection from the outset, with an understanding that not every region can sell travel or deliver travel data detail in a uniform way.

In this industry white paper, corporate travel professionals will get a primer on how to approach data collection and analysis for a global travel program—and what to look for in an agency partner to ensure it can deliver.

## > STANDARDIZE DATA ACROSS GLOBAL MARKETS

For a travel manager accustomed to managing a domestic program, collecting standardized data to measure program progress against goals should be a given. The concept assumes an entirely different scope, however, when taking on a global program.

North America and much of Western Europe represent mature and fairly homogeneous markets when it comes to travel management. Extending the scope of a program beyond those regions presents new challenges. Technologies differ by region, including access to or effectiveness of global distribution systems (GDS) and use of online booking tools, complicating the process of gathering

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### TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT PRIORITIZES DATA

Travel and Transport is a founding member and major shareholder in RADIUS, a market leader in global travel management. RADIUS designs custom global travel management solutions and delivers them through a network of 90 corporate travel agencies in 3,300 locations across 80 countries.

RADIUS has invested heavily in data cleansing, normalization and consolidation to ensure that clients receive clean, actionable, global data. Travel and Transport added to its RADIUS investment in 2011, as it saw the growing value of the RADIUS network for clients globalizing their programs as well as the opportunity to further strengthen RADIUS' proprietary data systems. Tim Fleming, CTC, Travel and Transport's Executive Vice President, Sales, Operations and Account Management, discusses the company's investment – and why it matters to global clients.

#### ***What was the impetus for Travel and Transport's additional investment in RADIUS?***

Our investment has been all about data because the rest of [a global program] doesn't matter if you can't get the data. That will continue to be the key area of focus: to improve on the data process, making it faster and more accurate. We really think that's where Travel and Transport, operating as a member of the RADIUS travel network, can differentiate ourselves—both now and in the future.

#### ***How does Travel and Transport ensure that its in-market agency partners are fit to deliver services and data for global clients?***

First, RADIUS requires that all member agencies meet high standards of service and data. In addition, RADIUS has developed a scorecard to measure agency performance to further ensure that data standards are being maintained. We've created more awareness internally and we are offering more transparency with our accounts so we tell them exactly what to expect as far as the granularity of data from the different countries and regions they need to manage.

complete data—and often limiting the fields that can reasonably be standardized within a region.

Modes of travel vary widely as well. Rail content is commonly distributed and used in Europe, and local low-cost airlines are also active around the world. However they are likely not distributed through standard GDS providers. When taking on a global travel program, travel managers may need to expand their concept of what types of travel products could be used—and how that could redefine what is considered a “standard” piece of data.

An experienced global partner should work in tandem with travel managers to help them understand the variables that could expand or limit the data collection desired from a specific region, and how this data should ultimately be incorporated into the corporation's global travel profile.

For many corporations it is more effective to view global travel data in a summary format, identifying fewer but very critical data points that will show a trajectory of progress against a particular goal, whether traveler safety, cost savings or traveler compliance. For more granular detail, travel managers should have access to country- or region-specific data.

### > USAGE-DRIVEN DATA

Failure to define specific usage for data is a common pitfall for companies driving a travel program globalization effort. For most companies, data usage falls into three main categories: traveler safety and security, supplier negotiations and management, and traveler compliance to policy. The data required to optimize each aspect of the travel program is unique to the goal.

- **Traveler Safety & Security** – On-demand access to real-time data should be a non-negotiable item when partnering with an agency or TMC to help manage a global program. Online reporting systems should be well established, offering travel managers instant access to summary



or individual destination information, flight numbers, hotel information, rail bookings (if applicable) as well as any bus, car rental or car service connected to that itinerary. Traveler profiles should have standardized fields for mobile/smartphone information—and best-in-class global agencies should have mobile alert systems in place to contact travelers in an emergency.

- **Supplier Negotiations** – Travel managers should look for monthly summary and region-specific data that shows top suppliers by volume overall, top suppliers in each managed region and granular detail that drills down into how much each region is spending with these suppliers. Demonstrating growth in a specific region should allow travel managers to broker better deals with in-market providers, while strong usage of international brands across borders could offer an opportunity to leverage cross-regional volume with suppliers.

- **Traveler Compliance** – The backbone of both traveler safety and supplier management efforts is the ongoing effort to drive traveler compliance. While not every region will drill down into reason codes and approvals for out-of-policy bookings, monthly compliance data is a must-have for a comprehensive global travel program. Key reports include percent of travel booked through approved channels, overall and regional volume placed with preferred air and hotel partners, information about advance purchase behaviors and percent of travelers booking lowest rates. Compliant behaviors should be clearly defined with the agency partner(s) to allow for detailed reporting designed to offer visibility into compliance across regions.

BTN Group would like to acknowledge the following Travel and Transport executives for their contributions to this paper: Tim Fleming, CTC, Executive Vice President of Sales, Operations and Account Management, and Michael P. Kubasik, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer.

## > DATA PARTNERS: ENSURING ACCURATE, ACTIONABLE BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

A best-in-class partner should offer total transparency about how much data detail a corporation can expect from each region within a global program, the process for accessing the data and any local agencies used to support the overall effort. A disciplined vetting process should be firmly in place to ensure local agencies are equipped to deliver service and data excellence for corporate travel accounts.

Before contracting with an agency or multiple agency partners, it is critical for any corporation to discuss with potential partners the timing required for data submission to a centralized data warehouse and how data will be cleansed and normalized before it is published to the reporting agency. Whether a corporation partners with a single global agency, a multi-partner network or opts to engage agency partners per region, a robust data consolidation effort is key to data accuracy. Standard summary dashboards as well as customized dashboards that will track progress against defined travel globalization goals should also be established from the outset of the partnership. Best-in-class dashboards and regional reporting should reveal optimization opportunities for the corporation.

As the global program matures, this is the type of business intelligence that will allow travel managers to drive decision-making with confidence that they are benefiting the corporation and their global travelers.

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For more information about how Travel and Transport can help optimize your globalization goals, go to [www.tandt.com](http://www.tandt.com).