



THE MOVE TO TRAVELER CENTRICITY

Design policy and source tools that travelers want to use—and compliance will follow.

A new generation of Millennial employees (21 to 30 year olds) is poised to become a stronghold in the workforce—and they are bringing their intensive technology habits with them. A proliferation of consumer and business-focused mobile travel apps and websites designed to meet the needs of this new generation is taking its place alongside traditional corporate online booking tools and consumer travel websites. As a result, those Millennial travelers, along with more experienced colleagues who have also adopted intensive ties to technology, have more options than ever when it comes to searching and booking travel. They are using these options regardless of whether such options are approved by their corporations or not.

While the procurement practices that have become a standard part of managed travel over the past decade remain firmly in place, forward-thinking corporate travel managers are responding to these changing consumer and tech forces by looking for new ways to connect with their travelers and ensure that corporate policies and tools continue to serve traveler needs as well as corporate needs.

To that end, the concept of “traveler centricity”—a focus on the needs and wants of the corporate traveler in order to ensure those needs are being met—has come to the forefront in the travel manager toolbox. “It’s our responsibility to find the right solutions—solutions that our travelers want to use,” said Doug Weeks, director of global sourcing at consulting company Booz & Company.

This white paper will explore the importance of traveler centricity, as well as highlight a variety of approaches travel managers can use today to increase traveler satisfaction and drive desired behaviors.

> DEFINING TRAVELER CENTRICITY

To take the current pulse of the industry regarding the importance of traveler centricity, the BTN Group and Travel and Transport fielded a survey to 107 corporate travel buyers in the spring of 2012.

The respondents represented a variety of travel programs and approaches to travel management, with a fairly equal distribution of annual travel spend volume ranging from less than \$1 million to more than \$50 million. Among respondents, 62 percent

SPONSORED BY

TRAVEL
AND TRANSPORT®

PRODUCED BY
BTNGROUP

Elizabeth West
Group Director, Content Solutions
ewest@thebtngroup.com

Irene Korn, Executive Editor
Content Solutions
ikorn@thebtngroup.com

Melanie Kinney
Associate Graphic Designer
mkinney@ntmlc.com

Louis Magliaro, Publisher
lmagliaro@thebtngroup.com

Tim Reid, Vice President
treid@thebtngroup.com



TRAVELER ENGAGEMENT

The fifth largest corporate travel management company in the United States, Travel and Transport specializes in corporate travel management along with group and meeting travel services. As a company that is 100 percent-employee owned, Travel and Transport is recognized for its commitment to its own employees as well as those of the companies it works with.

Nancy Risky, Travel and Transport's Vice President, Account Management, discusses the importance of focusing on traveler needs.

How does Travel and Transport help corporations understand and meet traveler needs?

In addition to ongoing conversations with clients, we regularly meet with our advisory council of top clients to discuss industry trends and issues. As a supplement to regular satisfaction surveys, we've been conducting surveys of our corporate clients' top travelers to find out what they like, what they need, what they would change. We're also exploring social media options with customers, looking to tie internal social media sites to travel portals.

Have you introduced traveler-centric tools?

Our customized mobile app, eTek Dash, was designed to empower travelers with information they need in one mobile tool. It includes information about itineraries past and present, travel alerts, seating, destinations and more. There's also an option that can connect a traveler to a live traveler counselor at any time.

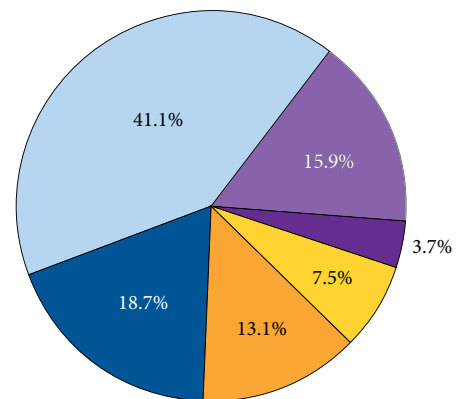
What's next?

This summer, we are introducing My Home to complement existing corporate portals. Travelers will have easy access to all their information in one place. We're also rolling out our Points 2 Points program, which ties compliance to gamification, with rewards ranging from e-thank you cards to points that travelers can redeem for rewards. The programs will be customized—each corporation can choose what traveler behaviors it wants to reward, such as usage of preferred suppliers, advance purchase, online adoption and more. There's also the option to create tiered programs.

said their travel program is mandated while 38 percent said there is no mandate. More than half (57 percent) said their largest group of travelers are in the range of 31 to 45 years old.

While interpretation of “traveler centricity” varied among the different survey respondents, travel buyers most commonly regard it as a combination of several elements.

What Is Traveler Centricity?
Which best defines traveler centricity to you?



- Offering flexible travel policies to accommodate individual traveler needs
- Ensuring service excellence from TMC and other suppliers
- Offering innovative technologies within the travel program to support booking/en route decision-making/expense reporting
- All of the above
- Not familiar with the term traveler centric
- Other

If the end goal of all those approaches is simple—provide travelers with the policies and tools they need in order to drive compliance to the travel program—the path to that goal is not always straight-forward.

> **FOCUS ON THE TRAVELER**

While it's tempting to think there is one path to traveler centricity, one right way to engage travelers and one set of tools to answer their needs, the reality is that traveler needs differ from company to company, based on the individual demographics, business needs and corporate



culture. The right tools and policies for a sales-driven organization whose travelers go to different cities every week, for example, can be very different from those tools necessary for a company that specializes in consulting whose travelers return to the same locale on a weekly or monthly basis. Similarly, what appeals to the middle-aged manager who travels occasionally will not be the same as the needs of a Millennial corporate trainer who is on the road every week.

There are several ways to take the pulse of traveler needs, and best practice is to use multiple avenues to ensure comprehensive feedback. The most engaged travel managers have implemented the following:

- Survey travelers about current levels of satisfaction with corporate tools and policies
- Inquire about what mobile apps and websites travelers are already using for their business and personal travel
- Ask probing questions about what travelers would want if left completely to their own devices
- Monitor and participate in corporate social media to ask questions, respond to comments and keep abreast of what travelers are saying to each other
- Review data to ascertain areas of leakage and if there are patterns of non-compliance based on age, job description, type of travel, etc.
- Work with their travel management company to see what other similar companies are doing and brainstorm new approaches

In addition to gathering information from travelers, a key focus of traveler centricity is also providing travelers with information. Without an understanding of why policies exist and why certain travel tools or apps are approved and others are not, travelers are more likely to go outside of policy. One of the common reasons travelers will go outside of policy is when they think they have found a better deal on their own and are

saving the company money, for example.

In such a case, the base price the traveler books might indeed be lower—but that doesn't take into account add-ons such as free internet, parking or breakfast, that might be negotiated as part of a preferred vendor agreement, nor can it factor in the impact of lowering volume with a preferred supplier, which can affect future supplier negotiations.

For those who book outside of preferred channels, not only does that exacerbate leakage, but they put themselves at risk in the event of a security emergency or other safety issue if the corporation does not know where they are.

While a mandate will attempt to force the issue by theoretically giving travelers less choice, showing the benefits of policy and offering reliable, intuitive tools should help travelers want to comply.

To that end, Weeks said he releases fare audits to his travelers to assure them that the corporate rate is in fact the best rate. "It demonstrates that our program really does work and instills confidence in our travelers that they can use the corporate channel to find the best fares without wasting their time searching for better deals."

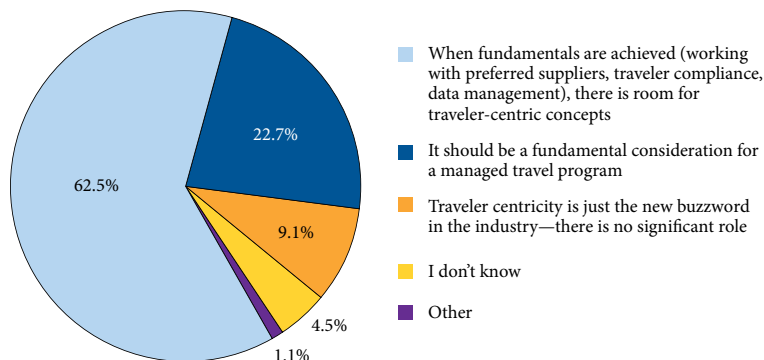
> USING TRAVELER CENTRICITY TO DRIVE COMPLIANCE

While the vast majority of corporate travel managers surveyed agree that traveler centricity is important, the degree of importance varied. Nearly one-quarter of those surveyed (23 percent) believe it should be a fundamental consideration for a managed travel program. Another 63 percent believe that there is room for traveler-centric concepts, but only after fundamentals, such as working with preferred suppliers, traveler compliance and data management, are achieved.

However, forward-thinking travel managers are realizing that traveler centricity is not a concept that stands on its own—the goal of traveler centricity is ultimately to drive compliance by ensuring travelers have the proper



Prioritizing Traveler Centricity: What role should traveler centricity place in a managed travel program?



information and tools to address their needs, concerns and desires. “If we can’t give our people what they want, they will go out there and find it themselves,” said Weeks. When viewed through the window of compliance, traveler centricity cannot come after compliance; it is a fundamental part of driving compliance.

To that end, in addition to communication, a focus on traveler centricity can take many different paths, depending on the exact needs of the corporate population. Techniques already in use at some corporations include:

- Segment corporate travelers to see if the needs are different even among travelers in the same company. The once-a-year traveler might need special hand-holding during the booking process, while the weekly traveler is going to count speed of booking as a top priority. To ascertain needs, look at groupings by such factors as:
 - o Age of traveler
 - o Purpose of travel
 - o Frequency of travel
 - o Destinations (domestic vs. international, for example)
 - o Mobile tools and apps already being used
- Once needs are established, what is the best way to address those needs? You might create a special portal for a group of travelers that links seamlessly once they get online to book or a website only accessible to certain

groups. While there is clearly a move towards online booking, maybe that isn’t appropriate for all travelers. For example, Weeks noted that for many of his travelers who often return to the same destination, it’s fastest for them to call in and ask for the same arrangements they’ve already used; thus it would be counter-productive to insist on the use of an online booking tool for this group.

- Recommend, support and/or provide mobile tools and apps that are compliant with policy and also fit into travelers’ established consumer patterns of technology usage. Make sure technology systems are integrated with each other and intuitive for users.

- Negotiate or reimburse for value-adds that travelers want: Beyond hotel internet or parking, there are value-adds that can actually drive a traveler to a preferred supplier over another, such as access to a health club, upgrade to a higher level vehicle, air club access or a premium corporate card.

- Consider travel benefits that are not directly related to corporate travel, such as employee specials for personal travel for hotels, airlines, restaurants, etc. “We recently rolled out some leisure travel programs,” said Weeks. “It’s not directly related to our corporate travel, but it shows our travelers we care about them personally too.”

Traveler centricity can come in multiple forms and is certainly not a one-and-done technique. It requires an ongoing commitment to first discerning what travelers need and want in terms of technology, policy and suppliers, and then ensuring the corporate travel program is designed to meet those needs. The process is ongoing, but so are the results: The more the program meets the traveler’s needs, the more the traveler will comply with the program. Truly a win-win.

**TRAVEL
AND TRANSPORT®**

For more information about how Travel and Transport can help you connect with your travelers, go to www.tandt.com.