

# Is your company's travel technology future-proof?

Digital transformation and rapid innovation have seen companies completely rethink the way they conduct business these past few years.



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The way companies book travel has also come under scrutiny, with more businesses exploring online booking tools, chatbots and Artificial Intelligence solutions. More than 86% of companies now have an online booking tool their business travellers use, according to research by the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE).

Commenting on those results, Fitzgerald Draper, research director at ACTE Global, says, “The rise in adoption of online booking shows a real appetite among modern business travellers to book flights, accommodation, transfers and other business travel services through an easy-to-use online portal.”

However, corporate online travel tools do not yet provide the same user experience or satisfaction as consumer tools, leading to low levels of adoption.

“Travel managers should be wary of evolving traveller expectations,” suggested Draper. The booking experience needs to be highly flexible and should look and feel like it does when they book personal travel,” he said.

## Create integrated travel ecosystems

Nicole Adonis, general manager at FCM Travel Solutions Southern Africa, part of the Flight Centre Travel Group, explained that Travel Management Companies (TMCs) of today need the latest technologies to create integrated travel ecosystems through which they can help clients to achieve specific business objectives.



Nicole Adonis

It is vital that these ecosystems are future-proof and consider every stakeholder's needs, she maintains, from finance to procurement, HR to IT, and from traveller to travel manager.

Companies must also evaluate whether their travel technology meets their needs and travel policies.

"Any business traveller using an online booking tool should only be able to access approved travel products. If your policy only permits, for example, your travellers to stay at certain hotels, they should only see those hotels on the tool and book their stay accordingly," Adonis explained.

As the sharing economy becomes more prevalent in corporate travel, modern road warriors expect these suppliers to be featured in their solutions. However, the peer-to-peer product should be handled the same way as any other travel transaction, with travellers able to claim back or track costs by uploading receipts through an integrated mobile App.

A useful online booking tool should also streamline the approval processes, feature automated risk management processes, and help travel managers control travel costs. A heat map, for example, allows different aspects of the travel programme to be reviewed, areas of strength or under-performance are highlighted, and divisional delivery can be benchmarked.

Whether a company's travel system can track trends is another vital point to consider.

"Imagine what you could do with valuable data feedback that includes, for example, identifying frequent travellers who spend too much time travelling and consequently may be facing burnout or be considering resigning, with the attendant

risks to the business. Your technology should notify you when an employee travels often enough to justify business-class travel, or if they are over-travelling,” Adonis explained.

### **Stay connected**

Possibly one of the most crucial functions of any technology is keeping people connected.

“A good business travel experience is about being connected. Technology should allow travellers to access and manage their travel reservations via their mobile devices, enable them to make changes when necessary and to receive relevant notifications, such as flight delays. Tools should streamline business travel, while a human travel consultant is still available to offer a friendly voice and hands-on assistance when needed.” says Adonis.

In a changing world, technology has to meet the needs of an ever-changing business traveller market. Businesses willing to own this change and that remain flexible will be first to prosper.

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