

# 5 ways Covid will transform your business travel programme

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Corporate travellers from around the globe are gradually starting to feel confident enough to take to the skies once again. However, despite this, there is no escaping the fact that the business travel industry can expect a slow recovery, as has been the case after global events in the past.



Andriy Popov via [123RF](#)

According to *The Travel Industry Turned Upside Down* report by Skift Research in partnership with McKinsey & Company, business travel has been impacted more significantly than leisure travel during other economic downturns in recent times, including during the 2008 – 2009 global recession. The report states that leisure travel recovered from this recession in just two years, while business travel took almost five years to bounce back. It would seem that the revival of the travel industry as a whole will follow similar trends in light of the upheaval and changes brought about by Covid-19.

In an effort to get corporate travel back on track, companies of all types and sizes will need to turn their attention to their business travel programmes. Below is a look at how these programmes are set to change, as well as a few insights into how companies and employees can streamline and adapt.

## 1. Duty of care will be the most critical business driver

Unsurprisingly, new business travel programmes will need to prioritise corporate traveller safety. According to the *State of the Market – Business Travel Perspective* report, FCM Travel Solutions customers stated that duty of care was to be the most vital aspect of travel programmes going forward.

This means a much stronger focus on risk management, traveller health and safety, traveller tracking, and centralised reporting. Every travel programme should address questions and concerns relating to Covid-19 safety precautions and be constantly updated in line with the many ongoing changes as the world moves through this pandemic.

"Keeping business travellers informed is a challenge when precautions, guidelines, and restrictions are being altered so frequently, but it is a must to help restore traveller confidence. The benefit of working closely with a Travel Management Company (TMC) in this regard, is that many of these companies have created dedicated dashboards that deliver reliable information regarding confirmed Covid cases across the globe, risk maps and critical alerts, and timeous airline departure and arrival reports," says Oz Desai, GM at Corporate Traveller.

## **2. Better travel budget management will be key**

One of the primary objectives of a TMC is to help save companies time and money. This is achieved by creating and maintaining various partnerships with both local and international travel suppliers.

With budgets getting tighter, keeping a close eye on what is spent, when, and on what will become ever more important in 2021 and beyond. Companies should turn to TMCs for support in terms of optimising spending, especially when deciding where to funnel the funds to ensure maximum business traveller safety and productivity.

## **3. Policy changes are inevitable**

*It is not enough to claim that corporate traveller safety is a top priority if the various actions required to implement this are not clearly laid out. All companies must take the time to carefully update their business travel programme policies, paying special attention to writing up guidelines detailing health and hygiene before, during and after travel (i.e., guidelines on what to do if a traveller feels ill before or during their trip), pre-trip approval, and concisely defined reasons for business travel.*

## **4. Travel programmes must embrace technology**

*Technology is a critical factor influencing traveller confidence right now. Numerous companies have invested in an array of technological solutions not only to boost health and safety, but to streamline the travel experience, too. A business travel programme that incorporates technology in all shapes and forms – and with a specific focus on contactless technology that aids travellers in avoiding high-touch areas and thus reducing the risk of infection – is certain to help speed up the return to normalcy surrounding business-related travel.*

## **5. Taking advantage of collaboration opportunities**

*Covid-19 will not only demand change regarding companies' travel programmes from an internal perspective. It will also call for external change.*

*"Companies should strive to create new travel programmes that actively draw on the knowledge and resources of a TMC, as well as on valuable industry and supplier connections. In doing so, it will be easier to manage both business travel priorities and traveller concerns," comments Desai.*

*All in all, change is unavoidable within the current climate, and companies that acknowledge and accept this reality will be the ones that thrive and quickly adapt to the 'new normal'. Corporate travel remains an important part of business development and survival. Hence the reason why getting it back on track – with an emphasis on safety and optimisation – should be a top priority right now.*

*The great news is that, as long as companies adapt their travel programmes according to the times and embrace the many resources at their disposal, the sky is truly the limit.*

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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