

## GUIDE TO MAKING THE MOVE TO MANAGED TRAVEL

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**S**o your travel needs have evolved and you've decided that you want to work with a partner to help manage your travel. Maybe your designated in-house "travel agent" is overwhelmed with requests and needs to pass that responsibility off to a real professional? Or your revenue and staff numbers have grown to the point that it makes sense to partner with a managed travel company. There are a number of reasons to begin a managed travel program, most relating to control over travel expenses and better insight into travel spending. When making a decision on a new corporate partner, you have a lot of stakeholders and requests to consider. As you're determining the right path forward toward a consolidated travel program, consider these suggestions from a team who's BTDT - been there, done that.

### **1** Start at the Beginning: Get Buy-in From Your Travelers

Kick off this project by asking for feedback and input from the people who travel on behalf of your business. Explain your side - why it's time for a travel management partner. Bring up for consideration that frequent changes in the business travel industry can leave you behind the eight-ball in terms of technology and strategy. Highlight the benefits: saving money on business travel expenses and improved travel environment for the people on the ground - or in the air as the case may be.

### **2** Clarify Your Travel Policy

The savings opportunities are probably what started you down the path of exploring options related to corporate travel. Now's the time to clarify your company travel policy. Consider how to tailor booking guidelines and expense requirements to your company culture. Big policy changes may affect compliance - any drastic measures will require training and follow-up. Your travelers and stakeholders need to understand the "whys" behind any suggested policies, and how they benefit the traveler as well as the business.



### 3 Select a Travel Management Partner

There are a lot of sub-steps contained within this point in the process. You'll need to compare between the plethora of options in the corporate travel space. First, you'll send out an RFP to some prime candidates. But know that it may take you more time than you think to sort out the advantages of each proposal. Next, you'll identify a potential partner that is a good fit with your organization's corporate culture. What's more, be sure the company you select has a proven track record in helping companies of similar size implement a managed travel program.

### 4 Partner Up and Get Started

Now that you're up & running with the new program, you should be enjoying comprehensive travel fulfillment. Your travel management company should offer a door-to-door solution to take your employees anywhere in the world. This is when you get to leverage their vast web of networks and long-standing relationships with travel vendors to finally see some impact of your budget. Discounts on hotels, flights and car rentals are just the beginning. A travel management company should be able to reward your travelers more personal benefits from these relationships like flight upgrades, free hotel breakfasts, room upgrades and VIP check-in lines at rental car counters.

One of the less-touted advantages of using a centralized travel company is having an emergency contact and a back-up plan for travel disruptions - large or small. You may be thanking your lucky stars that you contracted with a travel management company because of an emergency. They might have helped someone out of a weather delay, or rebooked a cancelled flight. But a travel partnership really pays off when you have help standing by for a traveler in a real-time crisis situation.

As you are getting settled into your new relationship, take time to check in with your staff. Increase awareness of any new policies and this new program in a kickoff meeting to ensure it's being implemented and adopted. You might invite the travel management company in to provide a training session or conduct a roadshow day to help with change management.

Hype the benefits they're seeing as an end user - hopefully you've replaced some manual processes with updated technology. This stage really brings to life the value of working with industry experts.

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## 5 Reap the Benefits of Your Foresight and Planning

After you've implemented your new and improved travel program and had some time to consider the value your corporate travel partner has brought you - take stock of how far you've come. Consolidating travel spending has meant that you gained leverage in vendor negotiations. Your vendor is likely trying to drive further savings after demonstrating your loyalty and spending with their brands. Your travelers have a new awareness and appreciation for how the company values their efforts while on the road - with improved creature comforts and additional personal safety protections. You have saved so much time and money that you've finally planned that hard-earned vacation - using the travel management company's leisure division. And you can rest easy knowing a dedicated agent is on call for after-hours support.

Moving from DIY travel to a managed travel program is a big deal. And it may turn out to be the deal of the year once you start to see the cost savings stack up.

### How Can I Find the Right Fit?

Many players in the managed travel space want to provide booking fulfillment with a dash of professional expertise; some will provide guidance on cutting business travel expenses; and others purport to manage your entire travel experience. With so many options - large and small - who to trust?

### Why Choose Travel Leaders Group?

What differentiates us from other travel management companies is our blend of offerings and decades of hard-won experience with clients ranging from emerging boutique firms to established multi-national corporations. Travel Leaders Group makes your company's business travel more convenient, more productive and more affordable. We have over 40,000 people who service clients worldwide to the tune of \$24 billion in annual sales.

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### We Start As Your Partner But Become Part of Your Company

The more involved we become, the better savings we'll generate. And our experienced and passionate agents provide clients with higher levels of service and more tailored experiences. We're an ideal solution for smaller businesses and a powerful tool for larger ones.