



## BLEISURE TRAVEL: WHAT IS IT AND HOW WILL IT IMPACT YOUR TRAVELERS (AND YOUR BOTTOM LINE)

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**O**ne of the hottest trends in business travel is “bleisure”. Bleisure travel straddles the gap between work and fun, business and leisure. More and more, business travelers want to actually experience the places they are sent to, not just turn and burn after their business is done. Let’s explore bleisure, its downside and upsides, and who is most likely to demand it.

Some companies will rarely have to deal with bleisure travel because there’s no demand for it. Not everyone will want to take advantage of bleisure. Some travelers will want to get home as soon as possible. This can often (although not always) be affected by your travelers’ ages. In a recent study, Skift, a popular business travel magazine, noted that the younger the employee, the more likely it is they will extend their business trip: 48% turned their business trip to bleisure, while only 33% ages 36 to 54 did. Baby Boomers were the least likely to take advantage of bleisure opportunities—only 23% did so. That Millennials want to make their work trips more fun could be for several reasons: less vacation time (and therefore more incentive to tack some days onto a work trip), greater use of social media to crowdsource suggestions for their destination, and perhaps most significantly, Millennials are least likely to have children and spouses who might necessitate a speedy return home.

## Travel Policy Impacts

For those companies whose employees are asking to extend a work trip over a weekend or holiday for fun, there are some careful considerations that must be thought about. Duty of care (a legal term that just means the responsibility one party has for the care of another) is an important obligation on the part of the employer to its business travelers. But if an employee is spending part of their business trip on personal pursuits, does the duty of care only apply to the time spent on business? How can you ensure the duty of care throughout the entire trip?

Policy considerations are important to think through, such as vacation or “comp” time. A business traveler who flies to Los Angeles Monday morning, ends their meetings on Friday evening, and decides to fly back to town the following Monday night might not want to take Monday as a vacation day—after all, they spent the last week in LA going to early morning breakfast meetings, and taking clients out for late dinners. Does taking a day of comp time fit in with your organization’s policy? Or would it be better for them to count Monday as a vacation day since, after all, they will not be working.

There’s also the subject of money. In some cases, an employee indulging in some bleisure can be beneficial, since many plane tickets go down in price with a Saturday stay. But what happens if the timing dictates a higher price for the extra days? Does your business have a policy about that? Is the employee responsible for the additional air cost, and if so, what are the arrangements to pay the difference? And do they need to book their personal travel on their own, or may they take advantage of the business’s corporate travel agent partners?



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## Happy Employees = Healthy Bottom Line

As the Millennials age, workplaces should continue to keep an eye on the bleisure trend to see if they will continue to promote the concept of bleisure. While it's important to consider the possible issues that might arise and craft a strong bleisure policy, the advantages of your employees accessing bleisure can be numerous. A destination on an employee's travel bucket list can be enjoyed. Exploring the destination can also give the traveler more to talk about

with their clients, if they return to the destination. In a family-friendly place like Orlando or Hawaii, bringing the family along can help save on one airline ticket and hotel room. Overall, bleisure can contribute to greater employee satisfaction, and a greater willingness to travel for work, which translates to a higher retention rate and cost savings all around. There's no doubt that bleisure is here to stay, and it is important for companies to develop strong policies that meet their own needs, as well as those of their travelers.

Here's to travel, for both work and fun!



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