**September blog #4**

**TMCs, technology and the new normal**

Buyers need TMCs more than ever. It may be some time yet before travellers are back on the road in significant numbers.

When they do, travellers will find business travel a more complex activity than it was before lockdown. Travel policy chances, new rules and booking tool configurations are just three reasons travel managers are working with their TMCs to re-tool their programmes for 2021.

Safety and security concerns will not be restricted to travellers. The primary objectives of any travel programme are duty of care, traveller well-being and satisfaction, so the executive floor will be taking a keen interest in their travel programmes too. Travel managers will need expert support from their TMCs to cover all the bases.

A changing market

Travel programmes will also need to take into account changing market trends. TMCs will be working with their customers to help them define the parameters for justifiable, or necessary travel.

TMCs will help travel managers to understand which suppliers are operating, when and which services are available at key locations. Content will have to be updated to include air, hotel and ground transportation suppliers’ new cleaning and safety protocols.

Strong relationships with airlines will be important too, especially with capacity presently estimated to be less than 15% of 2019 levels. Travel managers will need to call on their TMCs to negotiate around the use of ticket refunds and vouchers can be used, and for how long. They may have to deal with fuel surcharges or third-party distribution fees.

Uncertainty around future demand could see changing hotel pricing models as RFP’s become obsolete. TMC expertise will be important here too. After all, dynamic hotel rates may offer a better deal than a negotiated rate, but a percentage off best available rate only works if you know what the BAR is. The continuous rate auditing we undertake will be key.

Creativity & new thinking

Crises often stimulate innovation through necessity. Travel managers could turn to car rental or even chauffeur drive suppliers as a solution to exposing travellers to public transport – even if it involves wearing a mask – or to enable workers to return to offices.

Employers may re-consider their rules around personal vehicle usage on business, allowing them to be used for longer trips instead of flights or car rental. Those who do this will also need to consider the potential impact on their agreements with the suppliers impacted.

Technology

As the core principles of travel management change to those of bringing employees home safely and communicating updates to employees about the viability of future business travel plans, the range and functionality of technology to support travel programmes will be critical too.

From pre-trip authorisation to total trip cost management, Capita Travel and Events’ suite of iris technology encourages positive behaviours, cost savings and increased productivity. For example, our workspacePro helps keep travellers and delegates safe by managing workspace effectively.

Meanwhile, iris:intelligent tracking tool supports duty of care by enabling travel managers to pinpoint and report on traveller whereabouts. Whilst iris:go is a personal travel assistant that enables travellers to view every itinerary, timetables, maps and more - all whilst on the move.

The pandemic has highlighted why corporates rely on travel management companies. At Capita Travel and Events, we help travellers, bookers and organisations think and choose better. We provide a one-stop service that can be trusted. We have the technology in place to deliver a robust service, 24 x 7. We enjoy close industry relationships that enable us to solve issues before they become problems.

The immediate future may be uncertain, but we believe that the benefits of working with a TMC that understands how and why we travel has never been more important. That’s why choosing the right one is so important.