23 SECRETS TO CUTTING YOUR BUSINESS TRAVEL COSTS
By the end of this year, I will have spoken at over 100 events in over 21 countries. That is a lot of travel planning and the management of it is not only exhausting, but a job in its own right. My Assistant was starting to look tired.

If you then add our London 2014 Executive Secretary LIVE conference and nine international speakers jetting in from all over the world, including one of the most successful entrepreneurs of our time, along with the event that we will be launching in Dubai in November 2014 into the mix, we knew that moving forward, we needed a travel partner and choosing the right one would be key to the success of our business.

We already knew that we desperately needed some expert travel advice and due to our rapid expansion we had not taken the time to fully scope, plan and review our approach. Arranging travel had been a little ad hoc, to say the least, which has often meant paying above and beyond what we should have. So we started to look at the options.

Corporate Traveller stood out from the crowd as an ideal partner for Executive Secretary. It was not just about finding the best company to look after our business travel and the travel arrangement for our speakers and events, we were also looking for a partner with similar brand values to ours that wanted to share their knowledge, business insight and expert advice with our audience.

We are delighted to have partnered with Corporate Traveller. In the last couple of weeks we have already experienced some of the benefits that having an expert travel company on board can bring. Inside this supplement they share some of their secrets to cutting your business travel costs.

We hope you learn as much from it as we have.

Warm regards,
Lucy Brazier, Editor
Introduction

If you've never been properly walked through the benefits of professionally managed travel, your business is at a major disadvantage. Expert business travel management can open up a world of savings and efficiencies for your organisation.

While there are many cost reduction strategies which can be applied to an organisation's travel programme, for businesses with a small-to-medium sized travel spend, the secret to success is knowing what the best strategies are and how they can be applied to your individual business.

Within this booklet you'll find 23 different ways to reduce your business travel costs including a wide range of advice, tips and strategies. Put into practice all 23 cost saving strategies and your business will be well on the way to achieving outstanding results on your company travel now and into the future.

1. Partner with a travel expert

When it comes to business travel nothing beats having a travel expert on board. A business travel expert is highly experienced, commercially driven and has exceptional product knowledge to deliver airfare and accommodation options which will have an immediate impact on your bottom line. Partner with an expert and your business can expect travel management, advice and strategies tailored specifically for your business.

Expert travel management means that every cost saving opportunity will be explored for the overall financial benefit of your business. A travel manager will also work closely with you to identify opportunities for you to benefit from process and booking efficiencies.

When you are choosing a travel management company, be sure to ask the right questions:

• How many clients do they look after and what kind of clients do they manage travel for?
• How can they guarantee best prices on hotels, car hire and airfares?
• How do they intend to create time and cost efficiencies for your travel?
• What online technology do they offer?
• Do they have examples of client success stories?
• Do they have a global network?

2. Dedicated, personal & flexible service

Partner with a travel management company that offers dedicated, personal and flexible service and your business will benefit from high-touch travel assistance delivered by small teams which develop an in-depth understanding of your business.

Dedicated personal service means your business will be appointed its own account manager or team to look after your every need. A dedicated travel manager will also work to a pre-determined service level agreement, which includes agreed-upon standards for services, priorities and responsibilities.

In addition, find out what your travel provider's operating hours are and if they offer extended work hours for easy access to your own travel team. And finally, look for a travel manager that offers no fixed contracts to ensure your business is free to leave if you're not happy with the quality of service.

3. Booking consolidation

One of the most important secrets to a successful travel programme is consolidation.

Consolidation brings all the pieces of your business travel together, to achieve work efficiencies across your programme. A single and consistent approach to travel management provides your business with a central point of contact for better control of bookings, data, changes, expense management and reporting.

Consolidation provides insight and big picture data, which is needed to leverage your travel volume and increase savings.

With a focus on policy management and reporting, consolidation drives accountability and results, by allowing you to better monitor your business’ performance.

4. Industry specialisation

When partnering with a travel manager ensure they have in-depth knowledge of your industry. By choosing a travel manager with an understanding of your field, your business will benefit from travel expertise that caters for the unique challenges and demands of your industry.

Ask your travel provider if they have white papers, client case studies or references detailing their work or knowledge of your industry.

When you partner with a travel manager familiar with the complexities of your specific industry – you can be confident your people and your travel budget are in the right hands.
5. Supplier consolidation

Try to book with the same hotel chain or car hire company to leverage your travel volume with suppliers. A consolidated accommodation programme will provide clear insight into how much business you have to offer a hotel, which can help in the negotiation process. The broader the knowledge your travel manager has of your travel volume, the easier it is for them to negotiate competitive corporate rates on your behalf.

Likewise if you have employees using rental vehicles across the country or in one area in particular – stick to the same car hire company and find out if your car hire volume qualifies for discounted corporate rates.

6. Efficiencies

Work with your travel manager to create efficiencies at every stage of the travel process. Are all of your booking, buying, account management and expense management systems operating as efficiently as possible?

The first step in creating efficiencies on your travel is to work with the one travel manager. From here your business can look at options to simplify and streamline your processes with offline and where appropriate, online solutions.

The less time your employees spend on organising travel, the more time they’ll have to focus on your core business.

7. Best deals every day

Do you have access to the hottest deals across air, hotel and car hire every day of the year? Is your travel manager prepared to price match on an airfare if you happen to find a cheaper available ticket elsewhere? Do you have access to exclusive deals from a range of travel industry suppliers?

If you have said no to any of these questions it may be time to think about changing to a new travel manager!

Partner with an expert travel manager and you can expect:

1. Access to globally competitive prices sourced from multi-product platforms for air, hotel and car hire.
2. Rapid turnaround on best prices for your business. A travel manager will search and compare prices across airlines, hotels and car hire while at the same time adhering to your travel policy.
3. Access to exclusive client offers from a range of travel industry suppliers to drive savings and value for your business.

8. Travel policy

A travel policy provides an essential framework for your travel. Amongst other things, a policy may outline how your people travel, where they stay, what cabin class they travel in, what hotels you stay at and if your company uses preferred suppliers.

The most successful business travel policies are simple and concise. The policy should be ‘owned’ internally by someone in your business, who will work with your travel manager to measure, track and take corrective action for non compliance.

Good policy design is a crucial aspect of maintaining cost containment across your travel spend. A proactive travel manager will not only help you develop a policy, but they will also help to implement and monitor the policy for company-wide compliance.

9. Access to lowest logical fare and best rate of day

Companies which effectively use a lowest logical fare (LLF) policy, are achieving maximum savings on air travel. By using LLF, your business is making the most of discount air tickets offered by a spread of carriers.

Likewise if your company has access to best rate of day for hotels, you’ll receive the best rate and lowest rate across a spread of suppliers. LLF and rate of the day ideally, should be controlled and monitored by an experienced travel manager or a travel management company provided online booking tool.

Ask your travel manager for LLF reporting which highlights aspects such as the savings made (as a result of contracted air agreements), missed savings where LLF has not been selected and lost savings by reason code, airline taken, city pairs, cost centres and or travellers.

10. Cost saving strategies

Industry studies prove there are a number of strategies companies can use to drive savings on their air, hotel and car hire spend. By implementing ‘best practice’ booking, buying and operating processes, your business is in an excellent position to leverage savings through smarter travel management.

An advance purchase strategy of booking as many flights 12 days plus in advance, is often a fairly immediate way of achieving substantial savings. Companies are also able to take advantage of business rewards programmes to add value to your travel spend.
Your travel manager can monitor and utilise your miles for flights and upgrades. In addition, your travel manager should be able to leverage their relationship with travel suppliers on your behalf to waive specific fees and charges. Referred to as ‘waivers and favours’, these individually smaller savings can add up to a substantial improvement for your travel budget.

11. Value add services

Does your travel manager have the global buying power and negotiating strength to provide you with special deals on a regular basis? Are you getting true value for money for your spend on travel?

If you’re partnered with the right travel manager, you should have access to a world of special travel deals, discounts and offers across leisure and corporate travel.

Value extras such as complimentary seat upgrades, flights, passes to airline lounges, room and car hire upgrades. The list is endless, you just have to make sure you’re on the receiving end of these great deals.

12. Expense management and account reconciliation

For many companies travel-related expense and entertainment costs represent the second largest controllable area of expense. In addition to primary costs such as airfares, accommodation and car hire, there are often hidden and disaggregated travel related costs like taxis, out-of-policy expenditure and the cost of processing claims.

Ineffective expense management can quickly offset the benefits of a ‘best airfare’ strategy or strong corporate rates with a hotel partner.

When partnering with a travel manager ask if their core travel accounting products and tools offer:

- Consolidated billing options
- Data management and bill-back facilities
- Management of the cost of airfares and accommodation
- Online strategies
- Process improvements and efficiencies

In addition, discuss with your travel manager which payment system works best for your business. Would you prefer to pay for your travel through an invoiced account or are you happy to use a departmental or individual credit card alternative? Consider how you would prefer your invoices to be issued. Would you prefer they are sent to your travel booker at the point of sale or periodically with statement reports delivered on a recurring schedule.

Having access to flexible payment and invoicing solutions that are tailored to suit your business is crucial for process efficiencies.

13. Traveller compliance

How well do your employees follow company guidelines for business travel? Are there areas where a change in behaviour could save you more?

A lack of compliance among your travelling employees can result in significant ‘missed savings’ through unauthorised and noncompliant
bookings for air, hotel and ground travel, which over the course of a year, or even a few months, can significantly erode potential savings.

A travel manager will not only help you promote and maintain compliance but they will also identify where a lack of compliance is affecting your ability to save. Your travel manager can also recommend strategies for your business to address non-compliance.

14. Policy implementation

If you’re implementing a new travel policy or making changes to your existing travel policy, it’s vital these changes are communicated properly to your employees.

A travel policy should not only be communicated verbally but should sit on your intranet site with policy updates and changes clearly identified.

Your travel manager can help you identify what implementation strategies are best suited to your business.

Your travel manager may even conduct ‘roadshows’ and take a more personal approach to informing your employees of how travelling within guidelines benefits both themselves and the company.

15. Preferred relationships with global suppliers

A travel manager must have well established relationships with a wide range of local, national and global travel industry suppliers to ensure their corporate customers have access to the best prices and widest range of travel product.

Find out what preferred relationships your travel manager has in place with air, hotel and car suppliers and how these partnerships benefit your business.

Travel management company alliances with suppliers can deliver a world of travel benefits to your business from discounts to upgrades, priority service, special allocations and much more!

16. Management information reporting

Well informed is well-armed. Unless you have overall visibility of your organisation’s travel profile, it’s difficult to put in place cost reduction strategies and make informed decisions regarding your internal processes and policies. While you don’t want to be drowned in unnecessary reams of data, a travel manager can provide you with a comprehensive set of reports along with recommendations based on their analysis of your data and experience with clients who have a similar travel pattern to you.

17. Industry leading technology

A blended booking model

One of the best ways to maximise efficiencies in your travel is through ensuring the right booking process is used for the type of travel it is. While an online tool is most beneficial for simple point to point bookings, for most other travel you will derive greater benefit from the knowledge and expertise of an experienced consultant.

Partner with the right travel manager and they will guide you as to if and when it makes sense to shift some of your bookings to an online booking tool. An online tool should be simple to use and quick to provide the user with what they are looking for. Ask your travel manager whether they also have in place a process whereby there are ‘human’ checks and balances in place for the booking tool to ensure if a better priced, more competitive solution is available through creative fare construction, you are contacted with this option.

18. Access to multiple product-sourcing platforms

Partner with a well-connected travel manager and your business will have access to a broad range of corporate and leisure travel product. An expert travel management company will have access to multiple inventory platforms including global programmes, wholesale options and online inventory to source product from.

Multi-channel product sourcing is very handy during times of high traveller demand, crisis situations or travel disruptions – as it means your travellers will always have options no matter what is happening in the travel industry.

Find out how your travel manager sources its hotel rooms and rates, air tickets and car hire to ensure your travellers have access to the broadest range of inventory and pricing options.

19. Benchmarking

By benchmarking your travel programme you can assess how your business is tracking in comparison to other clients that are of a similar size and also against standard industry measures.

Benchmarking can help you gauge how you’re tracking with airfare and accommodation purchasing strategies and demonstrate...
where changes need to be made to improve long term savings. An experienced travel management company will use benchmarking to help your business make the most informed decisions on buying travel.

20. 24/7 emergency assistance

When partnering with a travel manager, find out if they offer 24/7, emergency assistance for your travellers. Emergency assistance is now a duty of care priority for companies with a mobile workforce. It is vital that your travelling employees have access to personal and experienced travel managers when an emergency strikes.

A travel manager will take care of everything from bookings to insurance, visas and passport issues – your travel manager is your central point of contact. Your travel manager will also be able to assess what alternatives are available during major flight disruptions to ensure there is minimal disruption for your people.

For many businesses time is money and when your employee time is being spent waiting in airports or trying to re-book travel during an emergency – the delay will come at a cost to your business.

21. Traveller safety and security

Safety and security has always been an important aspect of business travel. But major disruptions to the global travel industry in the past few years have made traveller safety and security one of the most talked about topics in corporate travel. When it comes to traveller safety, the involvement of an experienced travel manager is a crucial part of managing the risks of a mobile workforce. In the event of an emergency, you need to be able to track the location of your travellers quickly and efficiently. This visibility is only possible when flights and accommodation are booked through one central source.

Ask your travel manager what traveller tracking technology they have in place.

22. Access to breaking travel news and information

Keep abreast of the latest industry developments, deals and specials with regular news updates. Travel management companies will often ask your travel bookers if they want to opt in for online/email marketing initiatives that provide a valuable source of industry news and exclusive travel deals.

These services also help to communicate emergency or trade updates that may affect your business (i.e. airline fare restructures, price and inventory changes).

Social media has become a widely-used information tool in the travel industry. Ask your travel manager if they have Twitter or Facebook accounts and how your business can benefit from using these online streams.

23. Travel insurance

Without comprehensive travel insurance, businesses with staff on the move are leaving themselves open to a financial and possibly legal catastrophe. An overseas medical evacuation can cost upwards of $45,000, while a few weeks in an overseas hospital can be equally as expensive.

In addition, not all travel insurance policies offer the same level of cover and travellers should ensure they have unlimited cover for overseas medical and dental.

Your travel manager can help you select a reputable travel insurer with policies and financial cover that best suits your style of travel.
About Corporate Traveller

Corporate Traveller is a leading travel management specialist for the SME market.

They offer a unique combination of expert advice, local personal service and global negotiating strength to maximise your savings.

The Corporate Traveller team is the best in the business. Their travel experts are highly experienced and have exceptional product knowledge to deliver airfare and accommodation options that will have an immediate and positive impact on your bottom line. Their flexible business model is shaped to match the distinctive needs of SMEs, enabling them to better understand your travel requirements, offer tailored solutions and build long-term partnerships.

As part of the Flight Centre Limited group of travel companies, Corporate Traveller can provide businesses with a range of services and tailored travel strategies to drive long term savings. From airfares to hotel bookings, car hire to emergency assistance and travel insurance, their spread of business travel management services will streamline your travel for optimal results.