



What are the big questions your business needs to answer for travel in 2021?

Probably at the top of many of our lists is ... what will business travel look like post-vaccines?

Business travel changed when the pandemic hit. Well, our entire lives did but we're here to discuss business travel. For travel, we now must think about varying regulations and guidelines, and vaccinations.

Luckily, it appears there have been some positive steps. Our State of Market report released in September 2020 showed 8.6 out of 10 companies (2,320 participants) were proud of how their business adapted to the sudden changes brought on by coronavirus. It's no surprise that duty of care was the highest priority.

As always, there were some areas for improvement:

- Earlier communication to key travellers
- Repatriating workforce quicker
- Faster shut down of future travel bookings
- Involve procurement and bookers to manage cancellations and track travellers

Thoughts have naturally now turned to vaccinations and employees getting back on the road. As vaccine rollouts ramp up, it appears that the appetite for travel will too. This means that you need to be ready for when travel picks up at your company. With travel changed forever, is your organisation prepared for change?

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It's time to know the answers to some pretty big questions.



Big questions your business needs to answer for travel in 2021

In some businesses, we know that people have continued to travel throughout the pandemic. But when everyone else gets back to travelling again, there are some factors to consider now.

- Should your people even be on the road? How will you know when the time is right?
- When will it be safe to travel internationally?
- Is the ideal travel experience a touchless experience?
- What do your travellers want in this new world? Flexibility, access to an expert, added perks, sustainability options?
- Does dedicated service matter in a post-vaccine world?
- Does detailed reporting matter in a post-vaccine world?
- Is it better to do longer trips less frequently or day-trips?
- Can you have expertise, service and still realise savings?
- How important is it for your travellers to have access to immediate real-life support in one click?

It's time to prepare

Another question – how do you go about getting those answers? Communication is vital to any future plans, so let's get you prepared for that now. Talk to your travel management company (TMC) early on. They will have advice, resources and tools to help you get started and how to manage it all.

Assess traveller confidence

Our survey showed that people are ready to get on the road once vaccinated. But how do your own travellers feel? Some may be worried about travelling until certain measures are in place. Others might not even want a vaccine. Do you know what their expectations are? Every workforce is different.

If you haven't already, we believe now is the time to start surveying employees. Ask them about what they want from travel in the future and how comfortable they are. Get chatting to your frequent travellers and get their feedback. Your TMC can help sculpt your survey and advise on the how, when and what to send out. For example, we already know from our own research that travellers want to know essential information and definitions about what critical travel means to your business.





Travel policy priorities

Review and communicate your travel policy

Travel has changed, so your policy needs to as well. If you had an interim policy during 2020, that's good news, but we would also suggest it's probably time to reassess for 2021.

To answer the questions we've outlined, you need to talk to employees outside of your bubble. Talk to your security, procurement and HR teams, as well as your TMC. They will all have opinions (hopefully useful ones) about when it's okay for your people to start travelling again and how to go about it. The sales and project management teams will know what travel patterns might look like.

Looking back to our State of Market report again, many thought their companies should have shut down future bookings sooner. So, let's think about the reverse; are you going to allow anyone and everyone to travel when restrictions ease? You need to consider what essential travel means to your business. Decide the thresholds or factors that will make your organisation more comfortable about sending employees on business trips. Is an approval process needed? While the world continues to open up at various stages you might still need a flexible and adaptable travel policy.

Your TMC can talk you through the details and help make amendments to your travel policy.

Health and hygiene

- Taking care of own personal health.
- Declarations of being medically fit.
- Guidelines of what to do if travellers feel unwell

Pre-trip approval

New or additional layers of pre-booking approval, ensuring travel is essential and permissible

Business class

- Approval for employee levels or critical requirements

Business essential

- Clearly defined reasons for travel
- Moving to virtual events

Journey changes

Advice on changes and protocols throughout journey

COVID conduct

Social distancing, no handshaking, masks and capacity considerations

Finding the right suppliers

All that survey data and feedback will give you a good overview about traveller confidence and expectations. Look over the data with your TMC to figure out next steps. It might mean suggesting travellers book a particular hotel chain or airline that takes the steps they expect. The data may drive some of the decisions for you. Your TMC can assist in conversations with airlines, hotels, taxi firms and car rental providers.

Evaluate the value of support and technology

Time to reflect. What sticks in your memory from your TMC experience in the last year? It might be a team or tool that has brought some comfort or peace of mind. Or something that has saved you a bunch of time. You might tick off several of the below if we asked in a survey. With a TMC taking all of this off your hands, you are freed up to focus on what matters.

- Knowing your travellers have someone to contact 24/7 if something goes wrong
- Someone handling all those trip cancellations and changes
- Having regular updates on government regulations and supplier protocols
- Easy-to-read data and reports that you can get to quickly
- At-a-glance savings reports, showing you how much you've saved, and which savings were missed.
- A consistent, helpful service
- Regular communication, advice and recommendations to make informed decisions on travel policy and future travel plans
- Having a dashboard where you can see where your travellers are
- Expertise in your company's sector
- Trusted suppliers relationships to boost your savings potential
- Flexible tickets and negotiated airfares with routings and timings best suited to your travellers
- Hotel program support, contributing to lower rates, last minute availability, value-adds and wellness benefits for your travellers

Savings

There's already a lot to think about. Add in the pressure of trying to save money on top of it all! Back to our State of the Market report – 31% of respondents said they were due to decrease their travel budgets in 2021 and 39% were unsure what their budgets would look like. So, while safety is important, it's clear saving money still is as well.

Your TMC has always been there to help you save money and get the most value out of your travel programme -- this hasn't changed! Your TMC can help you recognise changes in your programme and opportunities to save money, such as flexible airfares and hotel negotiations. Even spotting patterns in your travel data creates a chance to save some cash.

Remember, you aren't alone!

Business travel has always been complex. Now it's been made even more so since 2020 and beyond. Let us take most of the strain; we know what we're doing and can make business travel easier. Honestly, no question is a stupid question. And lean in because we'll let you in on a little secret – we've got an exciting new digital experience launching later this year. If you'd like to understand how we work a bit further and see our tech in action,

[Get in touch today](#)

