Business traveler well-being

How to keep your employees healthy, happy and productive when they travel for work

Foreword

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We've never had more ways to instantly connect with people halfway around the world, and yet we've never been so keen to meet our overseas colleagues, business partners and customers face to face. Traveling is at the heart of what we do and we believe business travel and creating these opportunities for our employees, customers and companies worldwide to interact in person brings great value.

According to the Global Business Travel Association, global business travel spend is set to reach $1.7 trillion in 2022[1].

Nothing it seems can compete with a handshake, a smile, and a shared cup of tea to close a business deal, even in 2019.

It's not that hard to fathom why, after all; there's something special about discovering new cultures, and meeting people face to face, that we all seem to enjoy, from time to time.

But for frequent flyers, the novelty and benefits of business travel can quickly dissolve in the face of long layovers, jetlag, and stacks of receipts in foreign currencies to process.

Business travel can benefit corporations, employees, and their customers, but only when it's managed well. So how can we mitigate some of the stress factors faced by frequent business travelers?

That's a question Amadeus hoped to answer with this study on business travel and its impact on stress, productivity and health. We found that while most employees enjoy traveling for work, there can be risk factors influencing traveler well-being, which can in turn trigger costs and other concerns for corporations.

'Business traveler well-being: How to keep your employees healthy, happy and productive when they travel for work' identifies five strategies corporations can apply to reduce these stress factors, to improve traveler well-being, retain employees, attract new talent, and even boost your ROI.

In short, a good travel policy is bound to make everyone happier, healthier and more productive.

We hope you enjoy reading this study and that some of these strategies work for you. For more information about how Amadeus can help you create better journeys, we invite you to visit www.amadeus.com/en/industries/corporations.

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[1] https://www.businesstravelnews.com/Global/Global-Business-Travel-Spend-Will-Reach-17T-by-2022

Introduction

What is well-being?

Well-being is universally defined as the state of being comfortable, healthy and/or happy. Psychology today says that well-being includes "health, high life satisfaction, and a sense of meaning or purpose."[2] That means it's not just about our physical health, but our mental health too.

In most countries, employers have a legal and ethical duty of care to their employees, which means they should take all reasonable steps to ensure employee health, safety and well-being.

The case for companies to actively manage their travelers' well-being is growing ever stronger. The human connections established through business travel can often boost employees' career paths, help them close deals, and improve a company's bottom line. But can there be too much of a good thing? Companies that want to attract and retain the best talent have a lot to gain from developing effective well-being strategies for their business travelers. Corporations typically have duty of care programs in place, including insurance and assistance in case of medical or security issues, but:

_ *Are corporations, and travel managers developing effective well-being strategies?*

_ *How do travelers feel about stress and productivity on business trips?*

_ *What can corporations, travel management companies, travel agencies, travel managers and human resources teams do to improve traveler well-being?*

This report seeks to answer these three crucial questions. It gives a fresh view on the impacts of business travel on employees' stress and productivity levels. It also provides practical ways to reduce or mitigate these effects to improve employee satisfaction and well-being while increasing return on investment from travel spend.

Why travel health should be a priority

There is no doubt that both companies and employees can benefit from business travel when it's managed well. However, there is growing evidence that high levels of business travel are associated with some impacts on travelers' well-being. "We found a strong correlation between the frequency of business travel and a wide range of physical and behavioral health risks,"[3] wrote

[2] https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201901/what-is-well-being-definition-types-and-well-being-skills
[3] Just How Bad is Business Travel for Your Health? Here's the Data, Andrew Rundle, Harvard, Business Review, May 31, 2018.

Andrew Rundle, Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health, who led the most recent major study on this issue.[4]

According to Rundle, employees who spend 14 nights or more a month away from home may have significantly higher body mass index scores and are more likely to report poor self-rated health, clinical symptoms of anxiety, depression and alcohol dependence, smoking, trouble sleeping and no physical activity or exercise. Other studies by medical and travel experts have reached similar conclusions.[5]

Why investing in travel health can yield great returns

Studies suggest that happier, well-rested and healthy business travelers are more productive, more present, more likely to maintain strong relationships with their clients and suppliers, and more likely to stay with their employers.

On the flip side, Rundle says that issues related to poor traveler well-being "can create costs for employers through higher medical claims, reduced employee productivity and performance, absenteeism, presenteeism and short-term disability, leading to "the potential to strain or sever relationships with clients and suppliers." In addition, a poor travel policy negatively impacts corporations' ability to attract and retain talent, as shown by a recent survey of US road warriors[6].

In a competitive marketplace where corporations struggle to attract and retain great talent, a thoughtful travel well-being strategy could be a competitive advantage. This is especially true for millennials who are said to place more emphasis than their older colleagues on a healthy work-life balance. According to the Association of Corporate Travel Executives, travel policy satisfaction is increasingly playing a role in corporations' talent acquisition and retention agendas.[7]

[4] Business Travel and Behavioral and Mental Health, op.cit.

[5] For example: Medical Insurance Claims Associated with International Business Travel, B. Liese, K.A.Mundt, L.D. Dell, L. Nagy, B. Demure, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, July 1997; International Business Travel: Impact on Families and Travelers, C.M. Espino, S.M. Sundstrom, H.L. Frick, M. Jacobs, M. Peters, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, May 2002; Health and well-being Factors Associated with Business Travel, J.D. Burkholder, R. Joines, M. Cunningham-Hill, B. Xu, Journal of Travel Medicine, August 4, 2010; Travel Programs – Insights from U.S. Road Warriors, 2017, ARC, American Express Global Business Travel, tClara, 2017.

[6] 83% of road warriors would change jobs if it meant the same amount of travel but a better travel policy, while 83% consider a new employer's travel policy equally important or more than pay or responsibilities; Airlines Reporting Corp., American Express Global Business Travel & tClara's "Traveler friction: insights from US Road Warriors".

[7] Balancing traveller tools & policy for the right traveller experience, Modern Business Traveller, Part 6, Association of Corporate Travel Executives, April 30, 2018.

With this backdrop, Amadeus decided to conduct a report analyzing business travel and its impact on stress, productivity and health. We felt it was important to get input from both sides of the spectrum which is why we ran two surveys on the topic of business travel stress: one with travel managers and another with business travelers.

This research was conducted in collaboration with the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) which provided input into the survey instruments, reviewed, and endorsed the content of the report. The first survey addressed a niche segment, targeting a sample size of nearly 100 travel managers from medium to large companies across the globe. The objective of this survey was to understand how traveler well-being is managed in their companies. The second survey, with a sample size of close to 900 respondents, focused on understanding business travelers' attitudes towards travel, stress and productivity.

What's in this report?

Based on those two surveys with travel managers and business travelers, this report uncovers key findings about traveler well-being and outlines a variety of recommendations for corporations, travel management companies, travel managers and human resources teams to consider.

This report is divided into three parts:

Part 1 – Travel manager survey outcome

Amadeus surveyed nearly 100 travel managers globally about whether they manage traveler well-being and if the topic is supported by senior management. This section reveals the key results of this survey.

Part 2 – Business traveler survey outcome

Amadeus surveyed close to 900 travelers globally to understand their key stress points before, during and after a trip, and how they feel overall about travel stress and productivity while they travel for business. This section uncovers key business traveler concerns.

Part 3 – How to improve traveler well-being?

This section outlines five strategies that corporations, their travel managers and human resources teams, as well as travel management companies can use as a guide to improve traveler well-being and productivity.

1

Company attitudes towards traveler well-being:

room for improvement

Over the course of two months, Amadeus invited travel managers from medium to large companies across the globe to complete an online survey about traveler well-being. 96 travel managers in 14 countries responded, with 63 percent of them managing 1,000-plus travelers, 13 percent managing 501-1,000 travelers, 17 percent managing 100-500 travelers, and the rest managing less than 100 travelers.

KEY FINDINGS

44%

of surveyed travel managers have no duty of care responsibilities.

91%

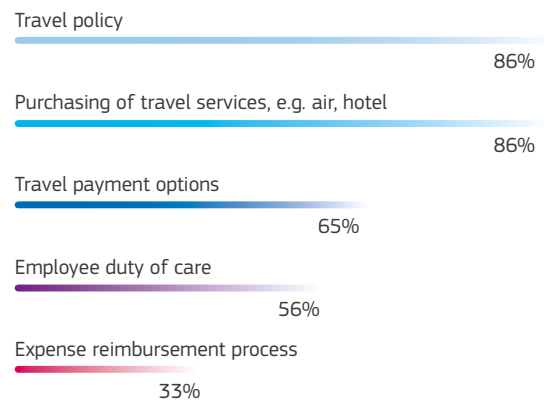of travel managers believe business travel is stressful.

39%

of companies take no action to improve traveler well-being as those that do (39%), while in 22% of cases the travel manager is not sure if any action is being taken.

!

When travel managers propose improvements to traveler well-being, those ideas are often accepted by the organization.

Nearly half of travel managers are not involved in duty of care

Figure 1: Please indicate which of the following you are responsible for, or involved in for your organization's travel program (select all that apply):

Travel policy
86%

Purchasing of travel services, e.g. air, hotel
86%

Travel payment options
65%

Employee duty of care
56%

Expense reimbursement process
33%

The survey indicated that although the vast majority of travel managers are involved in policy and procurement, only 56% are involved in duty of care.

For the 44% of companies where the travel manager's remit does not include duty of care, other departments may be responsible instead. But even if this is the case, traveler well-being may not be managed as a company-wide initiative in these organizations.

Travel managers recognize travel can be stressful

Figure 2: Overall, do your employees experience high levels of stress when traveling for business?

Most of the time
11%

Sometimes
80%

Never
0%

Not sure
9%
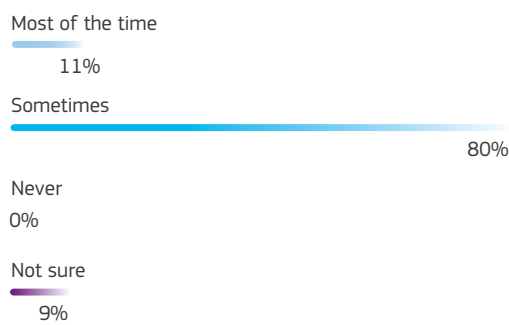
Whether they are responsible or not for duty of care, **91% of travel managers perceive a link between business travel and stress.** In fact, 11% believe their travelers suffer high levels of stress most of the time.

Corporations do think about travelers

Figure 3: What level of attention does your organization give to the well-being (both physical health and stress levels) of its traveling employees?

(Absolutely none) 1
3%
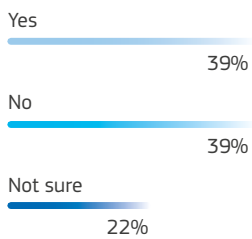
2
20%

3
34%

4
34%

(Extremely high) 5
7%

Not sure
2%
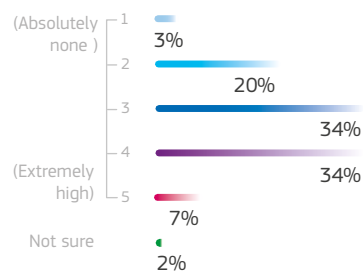
A substantial majority of travel managers believe their company pays some, or even significant, attention to traveler well-being. Only 3% say the issue is completely ignored, while another 20% give a poor "2" rating. On the other hand, only 7% give their employer full marks for taking well-being seriously.

Good intentions may not translate into action

Yes

39%

No

39%

Not sure

22%

Travel managers may (generally) believe their company thinks about traveler well-being, but that doesn't necessarily lead to meaningful action. While, 39% say their organization takes active steps towards improving traveler well-being, exactly the same number say no steps are being taken. It's also worth noting that 22% answered "not sure." This implies a potential internal disconnect, where those responsible for managing travel are unaware of what, if anything, is being done to manage and improve travelers' well-being.
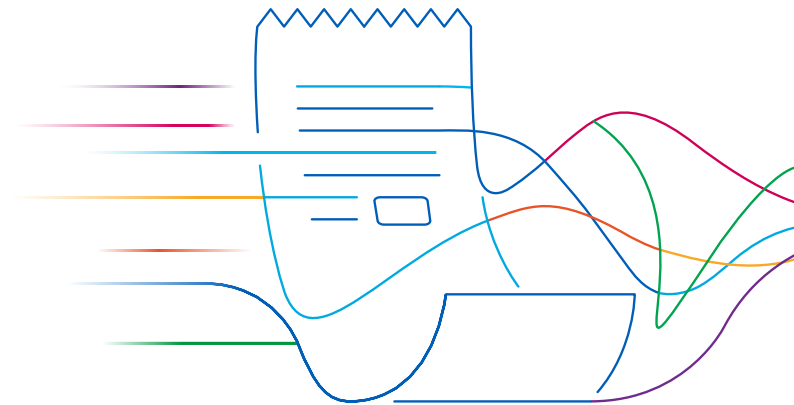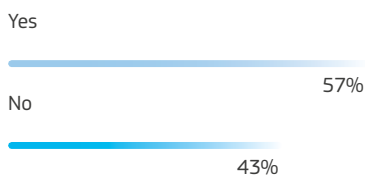
Who manages travelers' well-being?

Only 26% of travel managers have received instructions from their organization to improve traveler well-being. More often travel managers take the lead: 57% have suggested improvements within their company. Encouragingly, a high proportion of travel managers who make suggestions have their ideas accepted at least sometimes.

Figure 5: Has your organization ever asked you to introduce changes to your travel program designed to improve the well-being of its traveling employees?

Yes
26%

No
74%
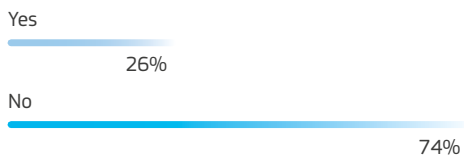
Figure 6: Have you ever suggested changes to your organization designed to improve the well-being of traveling employees?

Yes
57%

No
43%

Figure 7: When you made suggestions, how did your organization respond to your idea(s)?

Generally accepted
33%

Sometimes accepted
40%

Sometimes rejected
15%

Generally rejected
12%
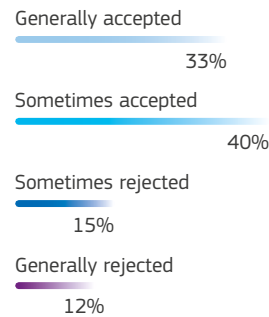
Why aren't companies doing more?

A recent study found that more than 80% of business travelers wanted the management at their company to be more aware of the impact of business travel, and to show more appreciation for it[8].

So if:

_The medical evidence is becoming clearer

_Travel managers can see a problem

_Travelers want employers to show some interest

… then why aren't more companies taking action to improve well-being?

There are several possible explanations:

Lack of inter-departmental coordination across the company

The travel manager survey results suggest poor coordination is an important factor. Traveler well-being is a multi-departmental issue that potentially touches on travel managers as well as human resources and risk management. In complex organizations where many people need to be consulted on transversal issues, it can be hard for individuals to take the lead. If no single department or transversal team has the remit, incentive and authority to put effective traveler well-being strategies in place, it's easy for it to fall between the cracks.

Travel manager priorities

If 44% do not even consider duty of care a responsibility, motivation for travel managers to take initiative on well-being is limited, travel managers often report to procurement or finance and are more likely to be measured (and in some cases rewarded) on key performance indicators like immediate financial savings, rather than on traveler well-being, which is more likely to result harder to calculate, long-term returns.

[8] Programs – Insights from U.S. Road Warriors, 2017, op. cit.

Why aren't companies doing more?

Fears about cost

Some companies may worry that improving traveler well-being has a heavy price-tag attached to it. But how can a travel manager defend the cost? One has to consider the hidden costs in terms of reduced productivity, recruitment and retention problems. There are many traveler-friendly initiatives that can be introduced with little or no cost which we'll be exploring later on.

Lack of awareness

It could be that senior management is unaware of the risks caused by frequent business travel on employee well-being and its possible consequences on the company's employee retention, recruitment, productivity and bottom line. Increasing internal communications around travelers' well-being will create more awareness and can help employees develop healthier travel habits while also winning C-level sponsorship for healthier company-wide travel policies.

Lack of tools to measure the ROI of better travel policies

Even if there is awareness of the benefits of healthier travel policies, it is difficult to measure the long-term impacts of traveler well-being on a company's productivity, return on investment and employee satisfaction. Likewise, there is a lack of metrics on the costs of inaction, and the harms that poor travel policies can have on traveler health and business results.

Business traveler attitudes towards stress and productivity

A second online survey was conducted with a sample size of 874 business travelers from 109 countries. All respondents had taken at least three business trips, of which at least one included a flight, in the previous 12 months.

KEY FINDINGS

75%

of respondents enjoy traveling for business most of the time, if not all the time.

TOP 5

stress factors for business travelers:

_ baggage-delay or loss

_ no mobile network

_ poor or no internet connectivity

_ flying economy on long-haul flights

_ flight delays

1 out of 5

business travelers believes travel makes them less productive.

Delays and connectivity issues are the top sources of stress

We surveyed business travelers to learn what stresses them when traveling. We asked them to rate from 'not stressed' to 'extremely stressed' how they felt about 37 different aspects of traveling. Results are presented in the figure on the next page.

While this might not come as a surprise, broadly speaking, **the factors which contributed most to stress were delays and network connectivity issues. Delayed or lost baggage was the biggest stress factor of all, with delayed return flights in fifth position.** The lack of mobile network and the absence or poor quality of internet connectivity ranked second and third respectively. Independently, these travel stress factors may not seem that disruptive but, combining them makes it easier for companies to identify them and take action.

Discomfort plays a major role

The second highest category of stress factors for business travelers relates to personal discomfort. Flying economy on long-haul flights ranked fourth, while long journeys, inconvenient flight times, indirect flights, poor hotel category and location also ranked high.

Health concerns come to the surface

Another very prominent stress factor, ranked 8th out of 37, was unhealthy eating. Further down, in 13th place, was lack of exercise. Put together, they raise concerns about the direct effect of travel on employee physical and emotional health.

Trip organization is relatively stress-free

Two categories of potential stress factors scored relatively low in the survey. The first category can be described as engagement with the wider world such as culture differences or use of foreign currency. The other was organizing trips: for example, making bookings or visa applications. The most stressful of these trip management factors was completing expenses which ranked 16th.
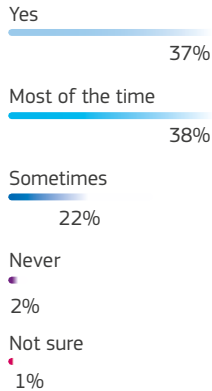
Figure 7: How stressful do the following make you feel before, during or after a business trip?

(Ranking of Travel Stress Factors)

Delayed/Lost Baggage	83.0	Unfamiliar Language	51.0
No Mobile Network	72.0	Restricted Fares	51.0
Poor/No Internet	71.0	Visa Applications	50.0
Flying Economy on Long Haul	71.0	Weekend Trip	49.0
Return Flight Delays	69.0	Immigration & Customs	48.0
Bad Hotel Location	68.0	Long Stay	47.0
Long Trips	67.0	Never Visited Destination	46.0
Unhealthy Eating	67.0	Home to Airport Commute	46.0
Inconvenient Flight Time	65.0	Culture Difference	45.0
Low Category Hotels	65.0	Using Foreign Currency	45.0
Late Flight Arrival Time	65.0	Using Hire Car	43.0
Indirect Flight	64.0	Packing Luggage	43.0
No Exercise	60.0	Using Taxi	41.0
Backlog After Trip	59.0	Booking w/Mobile App	40.0
Geopolitical Tensions	57.0	Using Travel Agent	40.0
Completing Trip Expenses	56.0	Using Online Booking Tool	38.0
Time Zone Charge	54.0	Add-On Services	37.0
Last Minute Trip	53.0	Fear of Flying	33.0
Longer Business Hours	53.0		

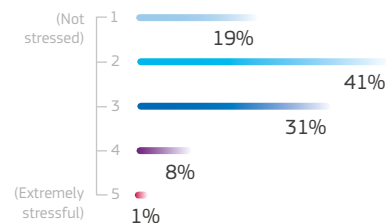Stress (max score of 100)

Employees enjoy traveling most of the time

Are business travelers happy? Seems like they are! A vast majority of respondents surveyed said they enjoy traveling for business.

We also asked travelers to rate how stressful they find business travel:

Figure 8: Do you like traveling for business?

Yes
37%

Most of the time
38%

Sometimes
22%

Never
2%

Not sure
1%

Figure 9: Overall, how stressful do you find business travel?

(Not stressed) 1
19%

2
41%

3
31%

4
8%

(Extremely stressful) 5
1%

In a sharp contrast to travel managers—who largely perceived business travel to be stressful for their employees—these self-assessments suggest that only 1% of business travelers found business travel extremely stressful.
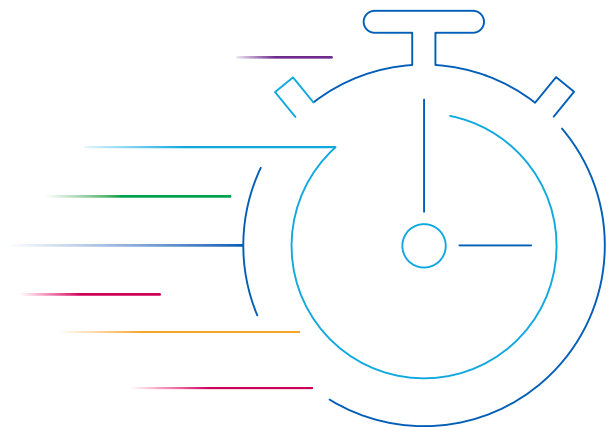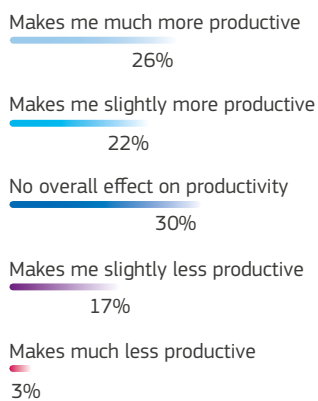
The weighted mean for the overall stress score was 2.3. But when we looked at the mean of the responses to the 37 individual stress factors, the score was considerably higher: 2.8. Could this be an indication that travelers are more stressed by the trip experience than they realize?

Productivity – a concern for some

Perhaps the most surprising result of the traveler survey was that nearly half of respondents consider that traveling makes them more productive. However, one out of five finds that travel has a negative impact on their productivity.

Figure 10: Overall how does business travel affect your productivity?

Makes me much more productive

26%

Makes me slightly more productive

22%

No overall effect on productivity

30%

Makes me slightly less productive

17%

Makes much less productive

3%

Intentional flexibility will keep employees in the workforce, improve productivity, widen the pool of talent and ensure companies are matching the demands and expectations of the current workforce which has shifted from a 9-5 schedule to an alternative model dictated by technology and globalization.

Five strategies for better traveler well-being

The survey results revealed many ways to reduce business travelers' stress, increase productivity and create well-being programs that benefit both travelers and corporations.

Broadly speaking:

_ The travel manager survey revealed the need for companies to organize their well-being strategies better.

_ The traveler survey revealed key stress points for travelers, making it possible to propose recommendations and remedies for the stress points, and for measures to boost productivity.

5 strategies

to manage traveler well-being:

 _ Organizational remit
 _ Trip discipline (whether or not to travel)
 _ Travel policy
 _ Health management
 _ Disruption management

1. Organizational remit

Incentivize well-being management

All too often, travel manager performance bonuses are linked solely to financial savings. It could be interesting to analyze alternative ways of rewarding travel managers for other strategic goals, such as employee retention, medical claims, or employee days off work. Alternatively, program milestones related to well-being could be set as a target for travel managers to aim for.

Improved internal coordination

Earlier research sponsored by Amadeus has shown that travel management requires a strategic and global approach to maximize a company's return on investment in travel[9]. As a contributor to travel ROI, that same holistic attitude is also important for managing traveler well-being.

A transversal team involving not just travel managers but other relevant departments, such as HR, health & safety and risk & security management are more likely to have the knowledge, internal influence and buy-in to make their travel well-being program a success. This team could lead a multi-disciplinary approach to identify ways to improve traveler well-being, put them into action, and measure their effectiveness.

[9] Managing every mile. How to deliver greater ROI from travel and expense, Dr Alexander Grous, The London School of Economics and Political Science, August 2017.

1. Organizational remit

Research

Survey your travelers to better understand their stress points, their views on productivity, and what would help improve their well-being. You could learn many specific insights that could quickly be addressed, such as hotels in your preferred program that are inconveniently located.

With the help of HR, ' teams' could track anonymized data such as absenteeism, medical claims and retention rates of frequent travelers, and compare results with non-travelers in order to identify potential problems and measure progress in traveler well-being over time.

Gain C-suite buy-in

As with all aspects of travel management, endorsement from the C-suite will open many doors. There may be senior managers in the company, such as the head of human resources or the person with lead responsibility for risk management, who could help get the buy-in to implement well-being projects. To do so, teams may consider:

_ *Creating a concise but compelling cost-benefit analysis using internal research.*

_ *Identify highlights from medical research papers.*

_ *Summarize the risks of inaction and the ROI of proposed actions to improve traveler well-being.*

_ *Highlight that some of initiatives will cost the company little or nothing.*

Finally, let's not forget that C-suite leaders most probably travel a lot and could also personally benefit from proposed measures.

Make travel managers well-being champions

If corporations want to show they take traveler well-being seriously, it needs to be clear who is responsible for it and who manages it.

Our survey showed that when travel managers suggested changes to improve traveler well-being, their organization accepted these suggestions in 73% of the cases. This presents a great opportunity for travel managers to become well-being champions. This would:

_ *Ensure a balanced approach to travel management priorities (meeting the needs of both employer and employee).*

_ *Give travelers a voice in the rest of the organization.*

2. Policy

Make policy more flexible

Most travelers are happier if they have more self-control over their travel arrangements. As a result, policies have become more flexible in recent years, sometimes even to the point of telling travelers simply to do 'what is right'. A typical way of showing greater flexibility and accountability is letting them choose any hotel in a city, or even to stay with friends, family or in collaborative housing, as long as it costs less than a set price cap.

Technology can play a major role in giving travelers more choice, while still trying to influence their decisions. An example of this influence would be displaying a message telling them how much their colleagues normally spend on a similar itinerary.

Reduce indirect flights

Flying indirect also emerged as an important stress factor in the traveler survey. In another survey of business travelers, allowing non-stop travel was also chosen as the number one way to reduce traveler stress.[10]

Allow trip recovery time

Some companies allow business travelers to take a day off after a long-haul flight to help overcome jet lag, especially when flying economy.

Minimize travel outside working hours

Extensive time spent away from families affects not only travelers but also their partners and children, which becomes another source of stress for travelers.[11] It is rarely possible to mandate travel during normal working hours only, but the principle can at least be encouraged.

Choose your preferred hotels carefully

Avoid selecting hotels located far away from where your employees will have their meeting, especially in cities with chronic traffic problems. And since connectivity problems are identified in our survey as another major source of stress, it's equally important to ensure hotels have the required phone or Wi-Fi connections that travelers need to do their job.

Maximize ability to work while traveling

The results of this research show that inability to stay "connected" and work productively while on a trip is a major source of stress. Take steps to help, such as selecting airlines that offer in-flight Wi-Fi, or allow employees to purchase airport lounge access.

[10] Travel Programs – Insights from U.S. Road Warriors, 2016, ARC, American Express Global Business Travel, tClara, 2016.

[11] International Business Travel: Impact on Families and Travelers, op. cit.

2. Policy

Support "bleisure"

In the past, business trips used to be swift and clinical. However, according to an Expedia study from 2018, 60% of business travelers extend their trip to include leisure activities and this applies to all age groups, not just millennials.

With constant advances in technology, business travelers have greater control and connectivity while on the road which means the corporate travel experience has taken on a different dimension. Increasingly employees on the road want more from their trips which is why it's important for companies that they can make the most of their trip.

Allowing travelers to add a day or two to their business trip can reduce stress caused by early or late flights and increase overall satisfaction with the trip. This flexibility will not only benefit the employee but might also translate in savings for the company as weekend flights are typically cheaper.

Introduce trusted reviews

Travelers use consumer review tools to find the hotels that best suit their sense of well-being – for example in a quiet location or with a well-equipped gym. Consider introducing tools where reviews are written by fellow employees.

Consider the total cost of travel

Some of these options could increase the initial cost of travel, however this needs to be weighed against the hidden costs of reduced productivity, increased sick leave or absenteeism for the company over time if travel well-being isn't considered. Work with your travel management company or consultant to understand exactly how travel costs could be affected.

3. Trip discipline

(to travel or not travel)

Understand better when not to travel

An unproductive business trip is bad for everyone. It loads unnecessary stress on employees as they know they aren't making the best use of their time and are away from home. It also wastes the company's money.

Find the right balance between trip length and frequency

A previous study about the return on investment in travel concluded that trips are more likely to be unproductive if they involve only a small number of meetings or are booked at short notice (not giving enough time to plan meetings properly).[12] Instead, one longer trip involving more meetings could be more productive than two shorter ones.

Set clear objectives for each trip

Another way to limit unproductive trips is to establish why someone needs to travel in the first place. Technology can play a major role by automating approval requests based on specific criteria and/or requesting a trip justification. Simply going through the process of having to justify travel in black and white makes travelers (and their management) more thoughtful about when to travel or not.

Opt for virtual alternatives

From desktop and mobile applications to advanced video-conferencing and, soon, via virtual reality headsets, there are increasingly good and cheaper ways to meet without having to travel. Companies can adopt a multi-disciplinary approach with other departments to invest in good quality non-travel alternatives.

[12] The Value of Business Travel – The Travelers' Perspective, CWT Solutions Group, 2014

4. Health Management

Communicate healthy lifestyle options

Travelers rated unhealthy eating and lack of exercise as their 8th and 13th greatest sources of stress respectively. Respond by offering education on healthy nutrition, exercise and sleep practices while on the road. Companies could include a healthy traveler section on a company travel app and invite employees to contribute with their own suggestions. In addition, offer free health-friendly accessories such as compression stockings to avoid deep vein thrombosis on long-haul flights.

Choose healthier hotels

Make well-being a key consideration when selecting your hotel program. Does the property have a gym or swimming pool, for example, and does the menu offer more than burgers and fries? Another option is to provide a membership to external gyms near hotels.

Help travelers manage their workloads

Other stress factors which scored fairly high in the survey were working long hours during a trip and catching up with work backlogs post-trip. Collaborate with HR and other departments to mitigate these problems, such as designating time for travelers to catch up on their work upon return, allowing preparation time pre-trip and recovery time post-trip, or delegating some of their workload to colleagues.

Subsidize healthy apps

Recommend and perhaps even pay for mobile apps that employees can use to monitor and improve their fitness while traveling. For example, frequent travelers could be given a budget to purchase from a selection of workout apps with exercises that can be done anywhere with no equipment, meditation apps, or some that track food and drink consumption.

Understand which travelers are most at risk

Track the well-being of travelers who run the highest risk of stress. This isn't always simply those who travel the most. Other determining factors might include those who regularly take early, late or weekend flights, cross the most time zones, or take back-to-back trips. Carry out regular traveler surveys and health checks too – perhaps an annual medical check.

Be ready to listen and intervene

Again, working with HR, encourage employees to speak up if they believe travel is burning them out. That means making them feel that they will be treated sympathetically and without jeopardizing their job – especially as sensitive issues like smoking and drinking could be connected. Also encourage travelers to monitor their own health and detect tell-tale signs of stress.

Give time off

Consider allowing travelers some paid time off if they have traveled extensively, especially at nights or during weekends. Recognition of this kind not only prevents potential burn-outs but could boost morale and productivity.

Intentional flexibility

Financing some childcare services and giving employees more flexibility in whether they travel overnight or take day trips when feasible could benefit all parents. This will improve productivity, widen the pool of talent and ensure companies are matching the demands and expectations of the current workforce.

5. Disruption management

Put in place effective disruption management tools and processes

With delayed baggage and return flights ranking in the top 5 of the 37 different travel stress factors, it is clear that mitigating disruption is critical to managing stress. Ensure your travel service providers have good processes and technology to handle flight delays, such as predicted and actual disruption alerts, and automated mobile rebooking for cancelled flights or missed transfers.

Stay informed on most punctual providers

Travel management companies and corporations can track the most punctual airlines or airports, and offer other transportation options like rail for shorter journeys when available.

Review mobile communication plans

Anyone who has had to navigate a foreign city during rush hour knows the importance of a reliable international data plan. Partnerships with mobile providers are often managed by the IT department. Make sure IT understands the types of problems your travelers may face while on the road and ask them to provide input on pricing and signal availability needs in key locations.

Use trip management tools

Technology can help reduce stress and improve productivity by keeping travelers better informed throughout their trip. A company travel management app could provide essential information including itineraries, destination maps and addresses, on-trip booking capability, contact numbers and much more.

Conclusion:

Putting wellness at the heart of your travel program is easier than you think, and benefits both the company and the traveler

There is no doubt that traveling for business is inherently good for a company and its employees. Getting out of the office and meeting customers face-to-face helps to build relationships and to move business forward.

The challenge for companies is to ensure that every business trip is as productive as can be and causes the minimal amount of stress for its employees.

The surveys Amadeus conducted with nearly 100 travel managers and 900 business travelers, answered these three key questions:

Are corporations developing well-being strategies?

Some are, but many aren't. The chances of success are higher when the travel manager has duty of care responsibilities, the authority and incentives they need to make changes happen across the company.

How do travelers themselves feel about stress and productivity of business trips?

Business travelers enjoy traveling most of the time. They may however be more stressed than they realize, especially by disruptions to their personal life and productivity.

And what can companies, and in particular their travel managers, do to improve travelers' well-being?

Plenty. There are a number of opportunities for companies to positively impact traveler well-being to increase productivity, reduce stress, and to retain and attract the best talent. Some initiatives may come with a cost, but this should not be taken into consideration if one looks at the overall return on investment of the trip.

The travel industry is evolving to help travelers at each step of their journey. Today's travelers benefit from in-flight Wi-Fi connectivity, airport technology to minimize waiting lines, hotel technology to provide guests with personalized services, and mobile travel apps with everything a traveler needs – services we never would have even dreamed of just ten years ago. However, it is up to the organization to leverage the right technology and implement the necessary travel policies to ensure employees on the road are healthy, happy and productive.

Opportunities for business travel agencies to create stress-free journeys

In a competitive marketplace, business travel agencies and global travel management companies can differentiate themselves from their competitors by establishing themselves as experts in travel well-being. Stand out from the competition by helping corporate customers wade through the hype so they can take practical steps to improve traveler well-being.

Be an Advisor

Amadeus' research suggests many corporations have little or no traveler well-being initiatives in place.

As an agency, this is an opportunity to have a conversation with your customers to advise them regarding the risks they are exposed to and the return on investment they can expect from developing a strategic approach to improving traveler well-being and more broadly speaking, duty of care, as well as the solutions available to them. Remember, these professionals are often very busy and are probably not fully versed on local laws and common practices. As the expert, you can drive this conversation and support them in articulating this message to senior management.

Another area that corporations are assessing is their travel policy. While multiple factors determine an organization's policy, traveler feedback plays a key role. Yet management often struggles with finding the right balance between cost and satisfaction.

As you engage with customers, bring up the topic of traveler wellness to learn what is currently being done, why certain decisions have been taken, and what has been the outcome. You can then use this insight to provide consultation to customers or prospects - adding incremental value that will always be welcomed.

Be an Educator

The hotel industry is becoming more effective in promoting wellness as a differentiator. Travel management companies can learn from this practice by making traveler well-being an on-going topic. How?

_ *Arrange for an on-site visit to your customer's offices. While you're talking with employees about the services you offer, you can educate them on travel wellness. Even better, bring along some giveaways such as a travel pillow or an eye mask.*

_ *Provide more detailed information that is sent directly to your customers' business travelers. Establish an editorial calendar with your customers to provide them with information that they can include in their employee communications or intranet site.*

_ *Share industry insights and expertise on available wellness services that will help corporations get the most out of their business travel.*

Leverage the technology available

Digital technologies are changing the face of business travel, so work with your technology suppliers to provide services that mitigate stress factors for travelers before, during and after the trip.

Here are a few examples:

_ *Include personal preferences in hotels–such as a gym or swimming pool–into travelers' profiles and search for them automatically. You can easily see if personal preferences match with the corporation approvals.*

_ *Set up the corporate online booking tool so that at the time of booking, employees can benefit from proactive offers such as business lounge access, speedy boarding or transfer services.*

_ *Provide instant alerts to employees on the road via SMS or email with flight changes and flight status updates. While you can never make disruptions disappear totally, emotional stress can be lowered with real-time information.*

_ *Be at your travelers' fingertips with mobile services that allow them to upload expenses and book additional services while on the road.*

By taking a consultative approach and capitalizing on the technology at hand, business travel agencies can bring significant value to their corporate customers by lowering travel stress to create better journeys for all employees.
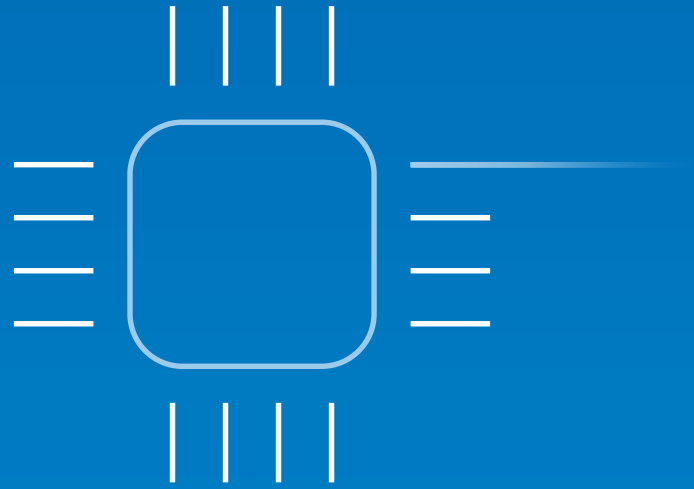
The technology behind better business travel

There's more than one way to simplify business travel. In 2019, technology is making all sorts of solutions possible. Players across the travel industry have an opportunity to develop simpler, more user-friendly solutions, and to make travel more efficient and responsive in times of disruption.

With that in mind, Amadeus has invested in several innovation projects in collaboration with key industry players and start-ups to keep the industry moving forward. Here's a quick look at what we're working on today, to make tomorrow's travel experience smoother, faster, and more convenient.

Luggage tracking

The top stress factor expressed by business travelers (figure 7 page 14) is delayed or lost baggage. With 23 million pieces of mishandled baggage in 2017[13], this topic is a clear focus area for airlines and airports, especially now that, IATA resolution 753[14] requires airlines to track baggage at four key points in the baggage journey.

This is where the Internet of Things (IoT) can help. The IoT basically embeds tiny computing devices on everyday objects so that they can send and receive data, such as their exact location for example.

With that in mind, Amadeus' Research and Innovation team is collaborating with airlines, airports and Sigfox, one of the leading Internet of Things providers to track the containers used to transfer luggage on and off aircrafts. By combining IoT technology with Amadeus' Baggage Reconciliation System (BRS) – a universal solution used by ground handlers, airlines and airports – it will be possible to automatically geo-locate baggage around the world.

Digital traveler ID

For frequent business travelers, every minute counts. Unfortunately, having to prove your identity repeatedly throughout the travel journey doesn't make the journey any smoother. It starts early on when you enter your data to make the booking, then for online check-in, and several times during the trip – at the airport (check-in/baggage drop, security, lounge access, boarding, etc.), for car rental pick-up, hotel check-in… What if you had one single certified digital identification?

Many players across the travel industry (IATA One ID, World Economic Forum, World Travel Tourism Council…) and even beyond are trying to address this problem. Amadeus' vision is to provide end-to-end interoperability between non-travel ID players and travel actors, to bridge the gap between air and non-air digital and physical touchpoints. But most importantly, our approach is traveler centric, aiming to make trips as frictionless as possible and to give control back to the traveler. Whilst this is a shared goal across the industry, for travel providers to come to an agreement, they must ensure they keep the security and the privacy of the traveler as well as their data the highest priority.

[13] https://rainrfid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RFID_for_Baggage_Handling_and_Tracking-UK.pdf
[14] https://www.iata.org/whatwedo/ops-infra/baggage/Pages/baggage-tracking.aspx

The importance of location

Biometrics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are also opening several doors in the world of traveler identification. Just last year, Lufthansa and Amadeus boarded an A380 in about 20 minutes thanks to biometric technology.

Several countries have implemented eVisas for inbound travelers over the last couple years yet, 1 out of 1,000 passengers still arrive to the airport without the visa documentation they need[15]. Providing employees with personalized recommendations on visa requirements during the submission process could also solve a major pain point for them. JoinSherpa, a member of the Amadeus Explore program, developed a platform to process e-file visa applications which outlines everything travelers need to know before going through customs.

Finding the most suitable location is critical for business travelers on the road. After price, this is one of the top two criteria when picking an accommodation. Geotagging technology could help travelers with more accurate and detailed information about the places they're going to visit.

_ *For example, Avuxi, one of the many start-ups Amadeus has invested in as part of our ventures program, analyses and ranks geolocated data – such as comments, photos and reviews from millions of users through more than 60 sources, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Google, Wikipedia and more – to rate the popularity of every place on earth. Then, their technology shows the most popular areas within a city through easy to understand heat maps, so travelers searching for a hotel, restaurant or bar can easily understand the most popular places in the city they are about to visit.*

_ *GeoSure, another start-up which recently joined the Amadeus Explore program, uses big data, crowd-sourced reporting and geo-spatial intelligence to develop a global standard for scoring that enables travelers to establish safety scores across 35,000 locations worldwide. It provides scores based on seven 'safety categories': overall, health and medical, theft, physical harm, political freedoms, safety for women and LGBTQ safety.*

[15] https://www.joinsherpa.com/solutions/airlines/

Other areas to explore

Last but not least, Amadeus is also looking at the power of Artificial Intelligence to better serve travelers. Here are some areas that we are actively looking into:

_ *How can AI powered chatbots for booking, support or disruption management improve customer service?*

_ *How can natural language processing and cognitive services identify business travel plans from email exchanges to proactively suggest booking options, such as flights and hotels?[16]*

_ *How can we develop a recommendation engine to provide hyper contextualized services? For example, Feasy, powered by Amadeus Ambient Services, acts as a digital travel concierge that will only push the best qualified service (based on usefulness, not on paid ranking and margins) from an ecosystem of travel and non-travel providers.*

_ *How can we use predictive analytics to anticipate disruptions[17]? The travel industry generates huge volumes of data. By using supervised machine learning algorithms, we can identify patterns based on a series of factors, much like how a set of symptoms helps doctors diagnose a disease. On the other hand, unsupervised learning algorithms can detect anomalies which trigger alerts when some of the data becomes suspicious.*

By embracing cutting-edge technology and exploring new areas, companies can better serve travelers, ultimately embedding "peace of mind" into the travel journey.

[16] https://amadeus.com/en/insights/blog/5-examples-predictive-analytics-travel-industry-2

[17] https://amadeus.com/en/insights/blog/5-examples-predictive-analytics-travel-industry