Is your business travel approval process fit for a COVID world?

Cast your mind back to travel approvals before COVID-19. For some, it may have been the wild west - with little or no process in place. For others, it may have run like a well-oiled machine with checks and reporting parameters all working together.

No matter what side of the coin you fell on, COVID-19 has thrown a spanner in the works. Travel programmes have ground to a virtual halt and there's still uncertainty of what a return to travel will look like. What's important now is that you step back, review and reassess your travel programme's approval process so you are match fit for when you return to business travel.

There's a lot to consider when putting in place a robust travel approval process. Corporate Traveller's recent State of the Market survey indicated that safety and security of employees is the number one priority for businesses at the moment. Cost reduction for businesses will also remain a priority in this economic climate.

Travel approval is an effective way of curtailing spend, while helping to implement your organisation's duty of care programme. **So where do you start when it comes to reviewing your travel approval process?**

Talk to your Account Manager

A good Account Manager will know what their customers are trying to achieve from their approval process. For example, is it just to keep an eye on where travellers are heading? Or is it around trying to reduce cost and bringing travellers booking behaviours in line with travel policy?

Account Managers will also discuss options around what policies need loading into online booking tools like Corporate Traveller's SAVI, as many customers don't want to be sending approval emails through to Managers for travellers who have booked everything within policy.

In addition to this, you should also discuss what level Managers will sit within the cost centre structure, and how this would work when approvers are away on leave.

Utilise your technology

For many clients, it's not only the cost of the trip that is important, but the reason for travel that helps approvers understand the value in making the trip. This is where Corporate Traveller's technology suite can save you time and money.

Corporate Traveller Account Managers work closely with your organisation and the online booking tool provider to develop an approval and authorisation process that is customised to your travel program and business requirements.

The Sweet Spot

At the end of the day, when it comes to travel approval processes it's important to find a balance that doesn't cause too much stress for travellers, bookers and approvers, otherwise the process will become ineffective and could increase costs, instead of reduce them.

To help you find that balance, we've collated our top tips to ensure your approval process is fit for travel:

- **Visibility:** Now that businesses are clear on what is deemed "necessary travel", a good travel approval process will have high visibility around the reasons for travel.

- **Customisable:** Your travel approval process needs to understand the unique requirements of your business.

- **Integration:** Can you integrate your current tools to collate information for the purpose of streamlining the booking and travel management process?

- **Automation:** Can parts of the process be automated for efficiency gains?

- **Travel policy:** Can your travel policy be built into the approval process?

- **Multiple approval levels:** Now that traveller safety has become more important than ever, it makes sense to add more than one authoriser into your travel approvals process. Multiple stakeholder approvals will provide reassurance to employees who may feel nervous about flying. These stakeholders should have access to detailed info regarding risk assessment and travel guidelines to ensure the traveller wellbeing is put first. Savi supports a highly configurable authorisation process with multi-tier approval that can be dynamically assigned based on trip parameters.

- **Who are your Approvers?:** Are they people who are in meetings all day who won't have time to approve travel in time before the fares expire? It's helpful to make sure approvers are actually available to review and approve or reject travel in a timely manner.

- **One-click response:** Can stakeholders approve a trip with one click? Is your process mobile compatible? Ease of use is key.

Need help reviewing your travel approval process or restarting your travel programme? Please contact your dedicated Travel Manager or Account Manager.

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