

# How companies can enable hassle-free business travel for employees

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*It's glamour notwithstanding; there are many reasons why business travel can be incredibly stressful for both corporate travel managers and business travellers. Flawless planning is key from the word "Go" as each stage of the booking process can be quite challenging, says Anil Parashar, President and CEO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient.*

India is an emerging economy with a modern workforce scaling business opportunity not only within the country, but across the globe. Business travel has now become a necessity, with employees racing

through airports, navigating new locations and dealing with flight changes. And let's not forget the pre and post travel policy requirements they must deal with besides work stress.

Like in the rest of the world, companies in India continuously look to simplify corporate travel processes to reduce stress and create a seamless travel experience. Technology is a critical enabler that can not only help travellers but also travel managers, who are responsible for the wellbeing of employees. If statistics are to be taken as guiderails for the rise of India's business travel industry, the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has revealed that the country's annual growth in business travel spend is at 11.4 percent.<sup>1</sup> This is the largest rise among the top 15 business travel markets globally. But the need of the hour is for organisations to focus on leveraging agile and responsive technology to empower travel managers and make business travel hassle-free.



It's glamour notwithstanding, there are many reasons why business travel can be incredibly stressful for both corporate travel managers and business travellers. Flawless planning is key from the word "Go" as each stage of the booking process can be quite challenging. Traveller satisfaction is not only about the best quality flights, accommodation and safety, but also about improving engagement in the decision-making process and user experience. While travel managers are stressed with the task of researching flights, hotels and liaising with all the different stakeholders in a timely manner, business travellers can also be left fatigued with navigating to the destination. Surveys suggest that 87 percent of travellers feel

that the quality of their business travel impacts their business results and over 90 percent agreed that it impacts their overall job satisfaction.<sup>2</sup> In such a scenario, one needs a reliable technology partner that allows seamless use of digital tools and help ease travel-related stress.

Now more than ever, companies prioritise the well-being of their employees across the spectrum of work. The focus is on utilising user-friendly and streamlined tech tools to improve the traveller's experience and remove the anxiety associated with it, while still delivering value for money. However, traditional command-and-control models are no longer viable in a digital environment as travellers tend to easily deviate from company travel policies due to conveniences provided by their personal preferences.

In fact, as per the American Express Global Business Travel, despite being the most aware of company travel policies of the six countries surveyed, 66 percent of Indian business travellers were reported not booking within policy all the time. An advantage of bookings made via approved booking tools ensure that there is at least one point of contact in an emergency. A visibility into a booking enables quick tracking of where employees are. Afterall, the travel manager's fundamental responsibility is to ensure that the traveller is productive, happy, and safe.

The advent of technology has brought major change to the travel industry, creating new ways for companies to interact with travellers. One such medium are mobile apps which has transformed the way we communicate as well as traverse. It is not only improving experiences, but also helping organisations meet duty of care obligations by making it easier to locate and communication with employees in case of an emergency.

Therefore, to alleviate some of the pain points of the on-demand mobile traveller, organisations need to leverage mobile technology. They need to develop a mobile corporate travel management platform, which allows business travellers to search, book, view and edit their itinerary while on the go; and even stay engaged with their travel consultant, all within a single app. Having instant access to this information will help travellers to feel less stressed. Research from Travelport Digital revealed that 77 percent of business travellers rely on their smartphone to alert them to flight changes and disruptions.

Mobile is just one small part of the digital transformation of corporate travel. A look into the future in connection with tech advancements suggests that the next wave of innovation could be driven by the likes of artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies. Machine learning technology allows chatbots to send booking confirmations, check-in notifications, boarding passes and flight status