

Strategies for Success – The White Paper Series from Concur

Taking Your Travel Program Global

ABSTRACT

A panel of travel experts gathered at the 2007 Concur International User Conference to discuss how multi-national organizations are managing their global travel programs. These speakers provided insight to the challenges and accomplishments they experienced along the way, as well as specific advice for success. This white paper provides detailed information on best practices, keys to success, benefits and potential risks associated with deploying a travel booking tool internationally.

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At the 2007 Concur International User Conference, a panel of travel experts assembled for the session “Taking Your Travel Program Global”. These experts included Sue Scriven from Dell, Jessica Moyer of Merck and Jeff Kurn representing Hewlett Packard. This panel of representatives revealed their experiences on deploying a global travel program to new markets. The session, moderated by Concur’s Steve Young, Vice President of Implementation Services, presented best practices and strategies for implementing a travel booking tool globally.

According to Travel Industry Wire, more U.S. companies have travel policies covering all areas of travel than any other country. On the other hand, many organizations outside of the U.S. are just now realizing the importance of managing travel. Consider the statistics. In 2006, Europe had an estimated 19 billion Euros in unmanaged online business travel, expected to increase by 35-40% by 2010.*

With the growing trend of international business and an overall rise of a traveling workforce, travel programs are forced to expand to global offices. With the help of automated travel and expense management solutions, organizations are finding a way to increase compliance, reduce travel spend and improve overall efficiency. Expanding your travel management program offers many benefits; however, there is much to be considered when deciding to take your travel program global.

WHY GO GLOBAL?

Many organizations decide to expand globally with their travel program to reduce costs and increase compliance, but there are various reasons to invest in an international rollout. Going global with a travel program takes a great deal of planning and cooperation, but the monetary savings and control it can offer your organization make it worth the trouble.

Jeff Kurn of Hewlett Packard says, “Our effort right now is reducing the pie.” He adds, “We’re excited about where we’re heading as an organization.” By consolidating to a single platform for their online booking tool, combining travel agencies and GDSs, HP was able to impact many of these savings.

Dell’s Travel Manager for Europe, Sue Scriven is concerned with visibility. The visibility provided by a travel booking tool allows Dell to always be able to locate their travelers for safety and security purposes. According to Dell’s Scriven, “We are very conscious of security and tracking our travelers.” She explains, “We are mandating their use of either the online tool or the agency, to ensure that we’ve got total visibility of all our travelers.”

Besides the benefits of cost savings and control, organizations decide to take their travel program global for several reasons. A global travel program simplifies travel management and consolidates reporting and analytics, while helping provide valuable data to facilitate pricing negotiations with vendors.

DECIDING TO LAUNCH

There are a few fundamental indicators to help you decide when to launch your travel program in a new market. First and foremost, your organization must have a tangible number of travelers/transactions to necessitate a global rollout. Most consider launching an online booking tool into a market once it is producing 100-500 transactions per month. This is a good benchmark to keep in mind before initiating any plans to expand your travel program.

While it's crucial to have enough travelers and transactions for a global rollout to make sense, it's also very important that your staff is receptive to following a new process. The culture must be ready and willing to adopt online travel booking. Although, when expecting your staff to follow a new corporate travel program, you'll want to be sure your travelers will have access to the local travel content needed to fulfill the unique needs of the market. For example, if your selected booking tool doesn't support rail when that's the preferred mode of transportation in the region, chances are the local market won't adopt the online tool and will continue to procure their travel through other methods, contributing to leakage within the overall program.

Dell's Scriven explains how limited access to a local airline made her deployment to Ireland quite difficult. She revealed, "We launched in Ireland in April of this year, and that was really painful. Ireland was a challenge to us because of Aer Lingus. We have huge usage of Aer Lingus, and the fact that there was no direct connect available, seriously impacted our rollout. So, the news that Aer Lingus will have a direct connect (in Concur® Cliqbook Travel - their chosen online booking tool) early next year is just the best news we could have had in Europe."

Not only does your staff need to be ready for an online booking technology, but your local travel management company also needs to be in synch with your plan. Having your local fulfillment team ready for an online technology will ensure that your staff gets the strong local support they need.

THE LANGUAGE CHALLENGE

Another major consideration when implementing a travel program internationally is figuring out what language would work best within your chosen travel booking tool. If multi-language capability is important, choose a booking tool with robust language resources. Take a look at language spoken by the travelers in that particular market, and determine how fulfillment is completed, such as the languages spoken by the local travel agents. Your travelers may feel more comfortable using the application if it has been localized. You may simplify support and administration by considering a single language policy globally.

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KEY PEOPLE OF SUCCESS

When you are looking to expand your travel booking program, local support from the market you are launching in is critical. Identify the key people in making your global program work, and get them on your side. Having an internal business champion or a local representative will give you the support effort you need on the ground. To aid your travelers from a technical aspect, on-site IT support for performance issues is also significant for sustaining success globally. Of course, as mentioned earlier, it is important to ensure you have the TMC resources to maintain the fulfillment needs of your travelers. And, certainly, if you've chosen a best-in-class travel booking provider, they will be able to help you through any challenges you may encounter along the way.

At Merck, there are 60,000 travelers worldwide and Travel Manager Jessica Moyer agrees that it's important to have local support and employees. "We think getting people on the ground is key. It's too difficult to manage 140 countries, respect culture, consider language and all of those things with one person." Moyer adds, "We think it's critical to have some local representation to our team."

Good planning and communication will prove to be very important when going global with your travel program. Consider establishing a local travel council to help select an online travel booking solution. The local resources will be more inclined to adopt the new technology if they have a role in selecting it. Also, establish and communicate your expectations and adoption goals. Moyer gives additional insight on creating and communicating a travel policy. Moyer mentions, "We did webcasts. We did live training sessions."

She says, "In terms of creating a policy, we created not necessarily a council, but we engaged stakeholders from all divisions of the company, as well as all geographies." Moyer continues, "We got as many stakeholders involved as possible, but the real key was to get our executive committee, our president of the company to endorse the policy. We had a sponsor on the executive committee that helped us drive things forward." Moyer explains, "So, rather than us putting out a communication, the communication came from the actual division heads or the presidents of the various divisions and then cascaded down. So, it's a top down approach."

SINGLE TRAVEL SITE FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

If you are contemplating taking your travel booking tool global, it is a best practice to use a single site throughout your organization. There are several reasons for this, one being it provides travelers with the ease of using the same site and login. This is especially helpful when employees are transferred to international offices; administrators don't have to create new logins and travelers are able to continue using the same login used prior to their move.

Another good reason to use a singular travel booking site is to have consolidated reporting for your entire organization instead of having multiple reporting sites. A single instance also brings ease and less confusion to administration, so they only need to become familiar with one site. Furthermore, flexible support for approvals is an added benefit to having a single global travel booking site for your organization. This allows a manager based out of one country or location to approve a traveler in another. However, if necessary, make sure the online booking tool you choose can be deployed in a divisional access model if separation of travel data and configuration is a requirement. With a divisional access model, you should still be able to administer the site globally while maintaining the separation of travel data and configuration access at the country or location level.

ENCOURAGING ADOPTION

Our panel also had some interesting tactics for increasing user adoption within their organizations.

Hewlett Packard's Kurn explains that making travel and expense reporting easy for travelers will increase their adoption. He says, "What's in it for me? Travel is about personal things – I like where I stay. I like my points. I like the free tickets. I'm going to go out of the way because I'm traveling on my time to not necessarily do things that are right for the company, but more towards my incentives." Kurn explains, "As you put in things like Concur® Expense (HP's chosen expense reporting solution) and you allow the downloading of the corporate card, it is much easier for me to utilize the corporate card. It gets paid easily. Then, maybe I won't use my personal card."

Contrasting to Hewlett Packard's strategy, Dell prefers to mandate their travel policy and has seen a larger adoption rate in the markets with a simpler approval process.

According to Scriven, the adoption rate for their online booking tool, Concur Cliqbook Travel, within the U.S organization is "almost 80%". She adds, "People don't even think about going anywhere else. We don't have an approval process in the U.S. either, which makes it a really fast transaction." Scriven continues, "When we launched in the UK a year ago, we had a two-step approval process in place, which did make it quite cumbersome. We have increased the threshold for approvals, and that means that now about 60 percent of our transactions are going to instant ticketing. So, that's something to bear in mind if you do need to have an approval process put in place. Our adoption rates in the UK are now over 60 percent, and that's of all eligible transactions. User acceptance has increased significantly."

CONCUR CLIQBOOK TRAVEL AND GLOBAL CAPABILITIES

Concur Cliqbook Travel is trusted by organizations of all sizes in more than 60 countries around the world to help them manage their corporate travel needs. Through Concur® Connect – a global program connecting more than 6,000 Concur clients, representing over \$35 billion of spend, to suppliers from around the world – Concur clients have access to the industry's broadest selection of travel content, independent of any travel provider, agency or distribution relationship.

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ABOUT CONCUR

Concur is the world's leading provider of on-demand Employee Spend Management services. Concur enables organizations to globally control costs by automating the processes they use to manage employee spending. Concur's end-to-end solutions seamlessly unite online travel booking with automated expense reporting, streamline meeting management and optimize the process of managing vendor payments, employee check requests and direct reimbursements. Organizations of all sizes trust Concur to help them control spend before it occurs while eliminating paper and optimizing supplier relations. Concur's unified approach to managing employee spend delivers a 360 degree view into all employee expenses, helping companies globally enforce policies and monitor vendor compliance, while delivering unprecedented control and valuable insight. Concur's suite of on-demand services reach millions of employees across thousands of organizations around the world – streamlining business processes, reducing operating costs, improving internal controls and providing enhanced visibility and actionable expense analysis. More information about Concur is available at www.concur.com.

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