

Myths and magic of managed travel

Is an open travel policy all it's cracked up to be?





In the past, many start-ups, smaller companies and SMEs opted to book their own flights, accommodation and car hire. Enjoying the independence and relative ease of unmanaged travel. Enter COVID-19.

A certain virus has put the cat among the pigeons. Suddenly, unmanaged travel is a lot more complicated – and more and more organizations are turning to TMCs for specialist help.

The current uncertainty will not last indefinitely but business travel as we know it has changed forever.

The question is, has your approach to business travel?

Getting a grip on unmanaged travel

If your employees book their own trips and manage their own itineraries, before reclaiming their expenses, you're definitely operating in the realm of unmanaged travel. It just seems so easy to book directly with airlines and hotels of your choice – and maybe tag on a few days of leisure if the opportunity arises.

Except ... what if it all goes wrong?

COVID gave us all a comprehensive lesson in border closures, travel restrictions, cancellations and more. And while things are settling down, post-pandemic travel has highlighted just how important it is to have a travel expert in your corner.

Booking online is no longer a walk in the park, especially when it comes to ticketing complex routes, connecting flights, transit and arrival requirements, and navigating a destination's unique protocols. Here, a TMC's expertise is invaluable.

Not only will a travel management partner have up-to-the-minute travel information at their fingertips, but traveler safety is at the very heart of a managed travel program.

For example, even a light travel management service designed specifically for SMEs will give you access to traveler tracking tools, 24/7 crisis support, travel solutions and account management. Leaving you to concentrate on what's important. Your business.

Why then do companies still opt for self-booking or open-booking policies? Is it because managed travel is too expensive? In truth, that's just one of the many myths around managed travel programs.

Myth busters

Time to debunk a few common myths when it comes to handing over the reins to a TMC.



My business is too small for a TMC

Says who? Often small businesses don't even consider a TMC because they think they're too small to use a TMC's services. Total myth.

Studies show that SMEs actually outspend their corporate counterparts per person when it comes to travel. Crazy, but true. And it's not that they're booking better flights, rentals, or hotels – rather that they're not able to tap into the buying power of a TMC or benefit from exclusive deals and rates.

A good TMC will match you with the right travel expert in their team, no matter your size or budget. And if you're growing? A TMC will scale your travel policy as you grow.



Travel management is too expensive

Is it the monthly management fee that's got you worried? What if we told you that a TMC can deliver significant savings on your travel spend? So much so that you'll cover the management fee – and then some.

We've mentioned all-important buying power above (trust us, volume does allow TMCs to negotiate impressive rates), but it's often the unexpected expenses that add up: fare changes, surprise rental costs, taxes, and visa charges to name a few.

A travel expert will know to incorporate these expenses into your travel policy – or know how to avoid them in the first place.

Travel experts also have a few tricks up their sleeve. A professional consultant can tell you, for example, how far in advance to book your airfare to get the best deal. In 2016, the average client booking through Corporate Traveler saved 28.4% on the cost of a domestic flight when booking 3–7 days in advance, compared with clients who booked just three to seven days before travel.



It will be quicker to book my own trip

Not even close. Searching for flights, accommodation and shuttles is actually more time consuming than you think. And should you need to cancel or reschedule it takes even longer. Have you spent time on hold with a call center lately?

Experts (who know the system inside out) can manage and confirm your bookings in just a fraction of the time it would take you. Promise.



My employees will resist a travel policy

This is a tough one. Nobody likes change ... until they discover just how easy managed travel is. Honestly, everyone will enjoy a new kind of travel freedom (more time, less stress) when you hand your travel arrangements over to the experts.



Travel management is only about airmiles and accommodation – something I can handle on my own

Sigh. This could not be further from the truth. A TMC will monitor your travel spend; identify missed savings; analyze your ROI; and design a travel policy which takes all your needs into account – right down to preferred travel times, lounge access and car hire.



TMCs for the win!

Full disclosure: we're a little biased. But a reputable TMC will give their clients access to highly-personalized solutions, mobile tracking and security, instant reporting, flexibility and so much more.

As companies begin to grow and their travel needs become more complex, unwieldy and expensive, it's a good idea to outsource corporate travel management to a TMC.

The ideal partner will:

- Help you streamline your travel management, systems or policies
- Use their expertise and experience to personalize your travel policy
- Have significant buying power in the market – securing the best rates at all times
- Use real-time data for reports and decision-making (keeping ROI top of mind)
- Maintain a duty of care to all your employees – including limiting your team's exposure to risk
- Know what's happening locally, regionally and globally (and have the processes in place to change and update bookings or to bring people home safely)
- Offer advice and emergency assistance 24/7
- Provide up-to-the-minute alerts, information and updates
- Secure discounts and upgrades in exchange for repeat business
- Manage any loyalty programs on your behalf (and you can transfer your points!)
- Implement effective change management, i.e. ensure the transition to managed travel is as smooth and painless as possible.

Did you know ...

All new Corporate Traveler clients, big or small, are set up and have access to a travel expert within 48 hours? Or that managed travel is not an all or nothing approach?



We can help you manage the unmanaged –
by introducing just a few tools or personalized systems.



Freedom within a framework

Small companies who are used to an unmanaged approach to travel often find that moving towards a blended, more flexible strategy, i.e. introducing an agreed framework, gives them exactly the kind of control – and freedom – they need.

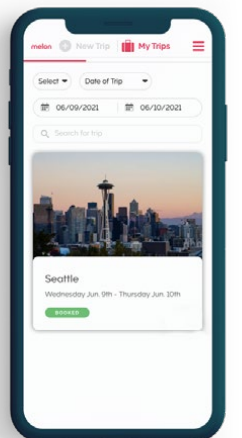
For example, traveling employees can arrange their own travel through a customized online booking system, using a set process within defined parameters.

This allows for independence and control, meaning employees can make travel decisions (within reason) while business owners maintain a comprehensive overview of their team's business travel, allowing them to draw reports and make informed decisions when needed.

Corporate Traveler's new platform, Melon, is a good example. This travel management tool was designed specifically with the SME customer in mind and offers travelers and travel managers access to pre-trip approval, booking options, profile management, traveler tracking, travel alerts and reporting.

Having access to highly-personalized solutions, reliable tech and 24-hour assistance has never been more important.

Corporate Traveler's app Melon Mobile (available to all SME clients) is programmed to keep travelers updated at all times, from weather updates at their destination to information on the traveler's departure gate, flight time changes and where to collect baggage. Even better? They'll have instant access to a travel expert (aka human on the other end of the line) at the touch of a button.



Suddenly the unmanaged starts to feel a little more managed – and in a post-COVID world it might be just the solution you are looking for.



If you want to find out more about how Corporate Traveler can help you with your unmanaged travel, please contact us corporatetraveler.us/contact