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Technology and Business Travel

Four powerful
steps to increase
adoption of
New Digital
Tools



Technology and Business Travel: Four powerful steps to increase adoption of New Digital Tools

Various technology waves have swept over business travel, bringing new ways of planning, travelling and reporting. Tools to manage online bookings, check and share travel updates in real time, claim expenses on the go, etc. all promise speed, convenience, accuracy, and in some cases, to make the once impossible, possible.

You might find it hard to remember the time before Google Maps and its real-time traffic reports. You have no idea how you found your way around a new city back then, in that seemingly ancient time. In fact, most travellers didn't pick up Google Maps or apps like CityMapper or MapQuest until a few years ago, but for but now it's the norm. Tools like those have transformed business travel. It takes time and effort to learn them and get the best out of them, though.

When it comes to a digital solution for business, such as an all-in-one hotel booking platform, adoption correlates with productivity. You want the whole company to start using a new tool quickly and keep using it long enough for changes and improvements to occur. To achieve that target, it requires specific goals, an elaborate plan, ongoing training and continuous testing and evaluation.

Makers of digital tools are placing more and more focus on user experience so great tools are relatively easy to use. That is not an excuse though for you to cut corners or oversimplify the implementation process. The last thing you want is to invest in a tool that staff fail to use to its full potential.

This eBook is written to ensure the above-mentioned scenario never happens to you and your company, and so that you can get every penny's worth out of your new tools. Follow the following four steps to encourage complete adoption of any new digital tools for business travel.

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STEP 1 Set clear goals



Since any changes in travel policy are likely to affect most employees in the company, clear communication is essential and the first step is to clarify the goals.

What are the purposes of having a new tool?

You probably work with travel expense reports day-in, day-out, and to you the frustration from spending discrepancies is as big as an elephant. It doesn't mean everyone else in the company sees that elephant in the room. Don't just assume. Tell others why you all, as a company, need a new tool for expense reporting, for example. Beginning with **'why'** is a good start, but you need to go further to explain the goals that you want to achieve with the investment.

Think long-term

Look beyond the first few months after implementing a new tool. Whether it's a new booking system for everything from accommodation to transportation, or a new messaging app for travellers to use on the road; you should be able to see improvements far into the future thanks to the new technology you are investing in.

When setting goals, ask yourself these questions:

- What improvements do you want to create with the tool?
- How will these advances support the business into the future, two or ten years down the line?
- How will you measure the goals?
- What are the top priorities and secondary goals?

Gather intel

To set realistic and meaningful goals, you need to collect information. Some questions can be answered by yourself while others require outside input. Consult with the C-suite if you need to clarify future business goals. Another source of valuable information is the feedback from your business travellers.

Here are a few ways of getting much-needed feedback from travellers:

- Send an online survey to everyone before making any purchase decision
- Conduct in-person discussions with a target group about the possibility of a new tool for travellers
- Send feedback forms periodically to ask about pain points of your frequent business travellers

Getting feedback from travellers helps to keep your goals more authentic and attainable. Plus, as you involve travellers early on in the decision-making process, you increase the level of engagement, which is vital for successful adoption of any new tool.

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STEP 2

Establish a workable plan



It's tempting to dive in headfirst as the faster you have a new tool installed and running, the quicker your problem will be solved, right? Not really! It might work with a mobile app for personal use, but with a new tool that will be used by two hundred or so travellers in your company, you need a workable plan first and foremost.

In a nutshell, you need to outline all the next steps, from choosing the right tool to getting the right people involved, from training to installation, from testing to evaluation.

A viable plan needs the following components:

Budget

You can't shoot for the moon if you don't have it as a priority in the budget, right? The good news is that with startups disrupting the market, you have many options to get a digital tool that comes at a reasonable price and still solves your specific problem. Opt for solutions with a trial period and test their usability and functionality before making a purchase.

When budgeting for a new tool, make sure to include all possible costs, which could be:

- One-time licence cost
- Monthly subscription fees
- Premium fees for exclusive updates
- Training costs
- Opportunity costs: temporary productivity reduction, total working hours spent on installing the new system and learning the ropes, etc.

Human Resources

An excellent digital tool will help to replace human work in specific tasks. However efficient it is though, it doesn't install itself. You need to gather a team who will set the stage for the new tool. Specifically, you need to answer these questions:

- Who is the project leader, the one who has the final say and oversees implementing the new tool?
- Who will provide technical support during training and implementation: the internal IT team, the vendor's support team or both?
- Who else in HR should be involved in training, collecting feedback and assessing the results?

Timeline

Although most of today's digital tools take just a few minutes to install, you still need to set schedules. Adopting new technology is about creating change, and you want the momentum that comes with clear deadlines.

Here are examples of some timeframes you should cover:

- New tool introduction seminar lasts [number] minutes, and should be done by [time & date].
- Training takes approximately [number] hours, and should be done by [time & date].
- Group training sessions are available on [time & date], [time & date], [time & date] and should be registered by [time & date], [time & date], [time & date] respectively.
- Installation takes [number] minutes, and should be done by [time & date].
- Any requests for technical support regarding training and installation should be sent by [time & date].
- Ongoing technical support is available Mon- Fri, 9am - 5pm GMT until [time & date].
- Trial and testing feedback will be collected on [time & date].
- Evaluation of trial period will be performed and delivered by [time & date].
- Full implementation is planned on [time & date].

It is essential that you communicate these deadlines clearly so that everyone knows their next steps and how they need to arrange their work to attend training or to install the new software.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

If you want the new tool to help save time for travellers, travel managers and buyers, you need to have a vision. A goal could be: “to reduce accommodation booking time by 50%”, for example. The “accommodation booking time” is one indicator you could use. There could be “accommodation booking cost”, “variety of accommodation options” and so on. Without a few KPIs like those, all your goal setting work will fail to impress.

When choosing the right KPIs for your project of implementing a new tool for business travellers, consider the following:

- **Data collection:** How will you collect the data? How accurately? How frequently? How easily?
- **Measurability:** How will you measure the data? What will you do with qualitative data? What are the industry standards?
- **Cost of data analysis:** How will you analyse the data? Who will be involved in analysing the available data: your team, the tool provider or a third-party consultant firm? How long will it take? How much will it cost?

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STEP 3

Provide ongoing training and support



Training and technical support is key to the successful adoption of any new business tool, including ones for business travel management. You need to make sure that proper and continuous coaching and support is available to all travellers, ideally, wherever they are in the world.

The complexity of training differs depending on the type of tool in question. It is likely to take longer to learn and correctly use a cross-device solution that makes a systematic change in claiming travel expenses than to become familiar with an app that sends travellers weather alerts in their destination.

However, whenever training is involved, it should be in three forms:

Pre-installation

Before you ask your colleagues to install and use a piece of software, either on their laptop or other smart devices, make sure they are on board about the purpose of the tool and the etiquette of using it. You can deliver this training in a text document, a diagram or a video. While making a visual instruction might take more time, the engagement is likely to be higher.

To make your life easier, put the training material online so travellers can access it anytime, from anywhere. Make sure you provide the current contact details for any questions and feedback.

During installation

Most software vendors have onboarding videos to take new users through the installation and to introduce basic functionalities. Make sure that your colleagues know how to access these videos and that they watch them.

Whether self-installation is possible or not, it's advisable to offer step-by-step guidance by a person, for anyone who wants the support. This training can be carried out by your IT team or the support team from the software provider. Some business-to-business providers have excellent support teams that will take the pressure of training staff off your hand entirely, and it could be a decisive element for choosing the vendor.

Again, using cloud storage for installation instructions will help to make the training and your life run a lot more smoothly.

Post-installation

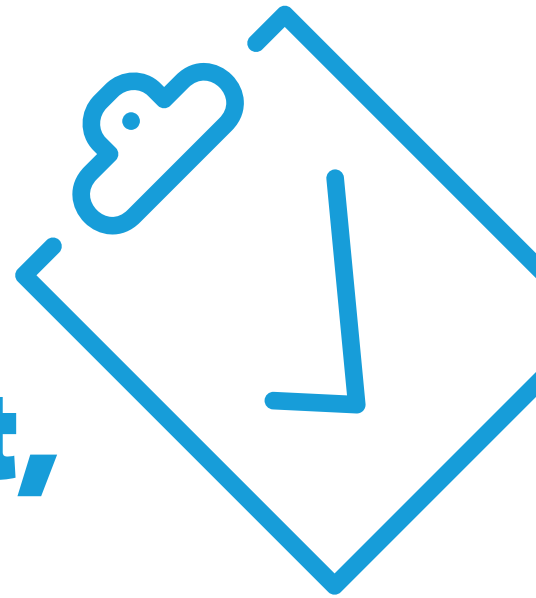
This is where mistakes are often made. Companies buy a new tool, have it installed for their employees and forget about it. After installation, it's important to keep the training and support available for those who need it, as not everyone learns at the same speed.

The same goes for a potential provider. You want to work with a software vendor that can guarantee support long after signing you. Make sure they have a well-trained support team. Think about your travellers on the road. They might need help when they are on the other side of the globe, thus a support team who is available 24/7, in multiple languages could be a plus.

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STEP 4

Test, evaluate, implement, evaluate



Testing

Testing is vital. A tool might work magically for one company but not another. As things get technical and are moved into practice, new wants and needs might surface, testing is an excellent time for discovery and adjustment.

If you are to make a systematic change, this trial period also provides you with a safety net as you can roll out the new tool in one department or team, and test its stability and reliability before making the jump.

Here are some decisions you need to make for a successful trial period:

- Backup: How much data needs backing up for the test? What is the most secure way of backing up data?
- Timeline: seven days, two weeks or a couple of months?
- Scope: one team in one country, one department across different countries or all the offices in a region?

After the trial period, remember to evaluate and celebrate any quick wins. Ask users for their feedback so that you will have a better idea of how a tool performs and how you can make it work better for your company. Bring the input to your vendor to see if they can work out a customised plan for when you implement the tool company-wide.

Implementing

When you decide to roll out the technology across your whole operation, make sure you repeat the backup, timeline and scope planning.

In the longer term, it is vital to evaluate the tool and its impact regularly. You can do so by looking at the quantitative data you collect: the amount of money saved in travel expenses, the reduced number of open bookings, the fewer amount of rogue travellers and so on.

Another way of evaluating the success of a new tool is to listen to travellers. Let them tell you how they find the experience. Their feedback might not be measurable in numbers, but it indicates their satisfaction. The more engaged and content they are, the more likely they will keep using the technology. That is your aim, right?

Here are some questions you can include in the next survey or in-person feedback session:

- How do you find the new tool?
- How easy is it to use?
- When you have a problem, is it difficult to get support?
- After three months of using the tool, is it helping you save time?
- How can we improve the experience?
- What are other features that you might want?

Long-term assessment

While you collect quantitative and qualitative data and do preliminary evaluation along the way, you also need to:

- Keep track of issues and risks as they arise
- Categorise problems into short-term and long-term challenges
- Make appropriate plans to solve them
- Analyse the data and assess your goals according to your timelines and commitments

If your data shows a tendency that you want to encourage, such as an individual or a team who uses the tool more often or much more efficiently, draw attention to the positive impact it creates and rewards the person or the group. Celebrating first wins and recognising early successes helps build a case for change.

When you see that the company as a whole meet the goals, communicate it loudly and celebrate hard, together!

Technology promises significant improvements in business travel management: reduce costs, increase travel policy compliance and improve traveller happiness. However, from promises to reality is a long way, and it doesn't just depend on which technology you use or which digital tools you will buy. It's also up to you, as the people in charge of making the travel policy.

Here are the four steps that you need to follow to increase the rate of success in new technology adoption.

- Clear goals, tied to the company's long-term business plan and the wishes of your business travellers
- A workable plan, outlining the financial and capital budget, appropriate timelines, and KPIs
- Ongoing training and support, internally and externally
- Test, implement and evaluate (though not just in that order)

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