

WHO IS HANDLING YOUR BUSINESS TRAVEL?

And Why They Might Be Messing It Up

Ever booked a crucial client meeting in Sandton, only to find yourself stuck in a Midrand hotel because someone didn't check the location? If you're nodding along, you're not alone. The person booking your travel can make or break your business trip - and maybe even your deal.

“Deciding who is responsible for your travel arrangements isn't just admin work; it's a critical business decision,” says Bonnie Smith, GM of FCM. “Get it wrong, and you're looking at missed opportunities, wasted time, and a lot of frustration.”

Smith takes us through the following business travel booking options to highlight the risks.

THE IN-HOUSE APPROACH

Imagine someone from finance or admin squeezing in travel bookings





between their regular tasks. Sounds efficient, right? Well, not exactly.

From booking non-refundable flights on the wrong day to choosing less-than-ideal hotels, the potential for hiccups is real. Smith says: "Oversights happen when the company's travel needs aren't someone's primary focus. These aren't just inconveniences - they can impact business outcomes and eat into your profits, too."

If you're sticking with in-house booking, invest in some training. Your

team needs to understand travel industry best practices, or you'll keep missing out on savings and efficiencies

THE DIY TRAVELLER

Letting employees book their own travel seems like a great idea. Freedom! Flexibility! What's not to love? In reality, it can get complicated fast.

From unintentional overspending to accidentally booking outside policy, this approach can lead to some tricky situations. Smith cautions, "Without proper guidelines, self-booking can quickly become a challenge for both travellers and the finance team."

If this is your preferred method, implement a user-friendly booking tool that incorporates your travel policy. And make sure everyone actually understands the rules.

THE TRADITIONAL TRAVEL AGENT

Using a regular travel agent for business trips is like using a map app that doesn't update in real time. They might not be fully equipped for the complexities of corporate travel.

While great for planning holidays, they often lack the specialised tools and knowledge required for effectively managing business travel. Think limited reporting capabilities and potential struggles with implementing corporate travel policies.

THE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PROS

Travel Management Companies

(TMCs) like FCM specialise in corporate travel, and are armed with industry connections, advanced tech, and the ability to handle everything from simple bookings to travel emergencies.

But even experts need to be in sync with your company's needs. Smith notes, "A good TMC acts as a strategic partner in your business growth. They should understand your company culture, align with your goals, and make your travellers' lives easier."

THE AI APPROACH

AI is making its mark in travel management, promising streamlined bookings and personalised recommendations. Exciting stuff - but it's not without its challenges. There's potential for errors and the risk of losing that human touch when unexpected issues arise (and they always will in travel).

Smith's perspective? "AI is a powerful tool, but it works best when combined with human expertise and oversight."

Each approach has its pros and cons. The key is understanding the risks, preparing for potential issues, and having a clear, well-communicated travel policy.

"Regardless of your chosen method, success comes down to clear communication, regular programme reviews, and balancing cost-efficiency with traveller satisfaction," concludes Smith. 🗣️

