

Guiding Travel Through Uncharted Territory

6 Tactics for Personal
and Program Growth

In Partnership With





You Know What You're Up Against

It's no surprise that travel has been up in the air for a few years now, and the air has been pretty rough. Volatile, uncontrollable market forces – from staffing shortages and supplier stability to rising costs and fears of recession – have made it difficult to manage any travel program at any level.

Rising employee expectations have put greater demands on your organization, and because travelers are willing to decline a trip or quit altogether if travel doesn't meet those expectations, your organization is putting greater demands on you. Your business needs increased visibility into what you're doing, they want to know the value of your program – they want tangible ROI – and like everyone in your organization, they want an increased focus on safety. All, of course, while prioritizing on sustainable practices and DEI efforts.

Add to this the growing operational hurdles you're facing: Getting travelers back into booking online, dealing with decreased budgets, trying to keep tired tech in working order, and managing a work-from-anywhere environment.

The bottom line is this: Corporate travel has changed, and to take on a leadership role, you need to change too.

1 Upgrade to the C-Suite

As a travel manager, you're becoming a far more influential and strategic component of business recovery and growth plans. Simply put, your CEO and CFO need your program to be effective, because they're counting on travel to drive business performance.

With this increased exposure from increasingly interested executives, it's important that you clearly demonstrate a strong command of your program. That starts by aligning travel program goals with the governance goals of your organization – giving execs confidence by demonstrating how you'll meet their objectives.

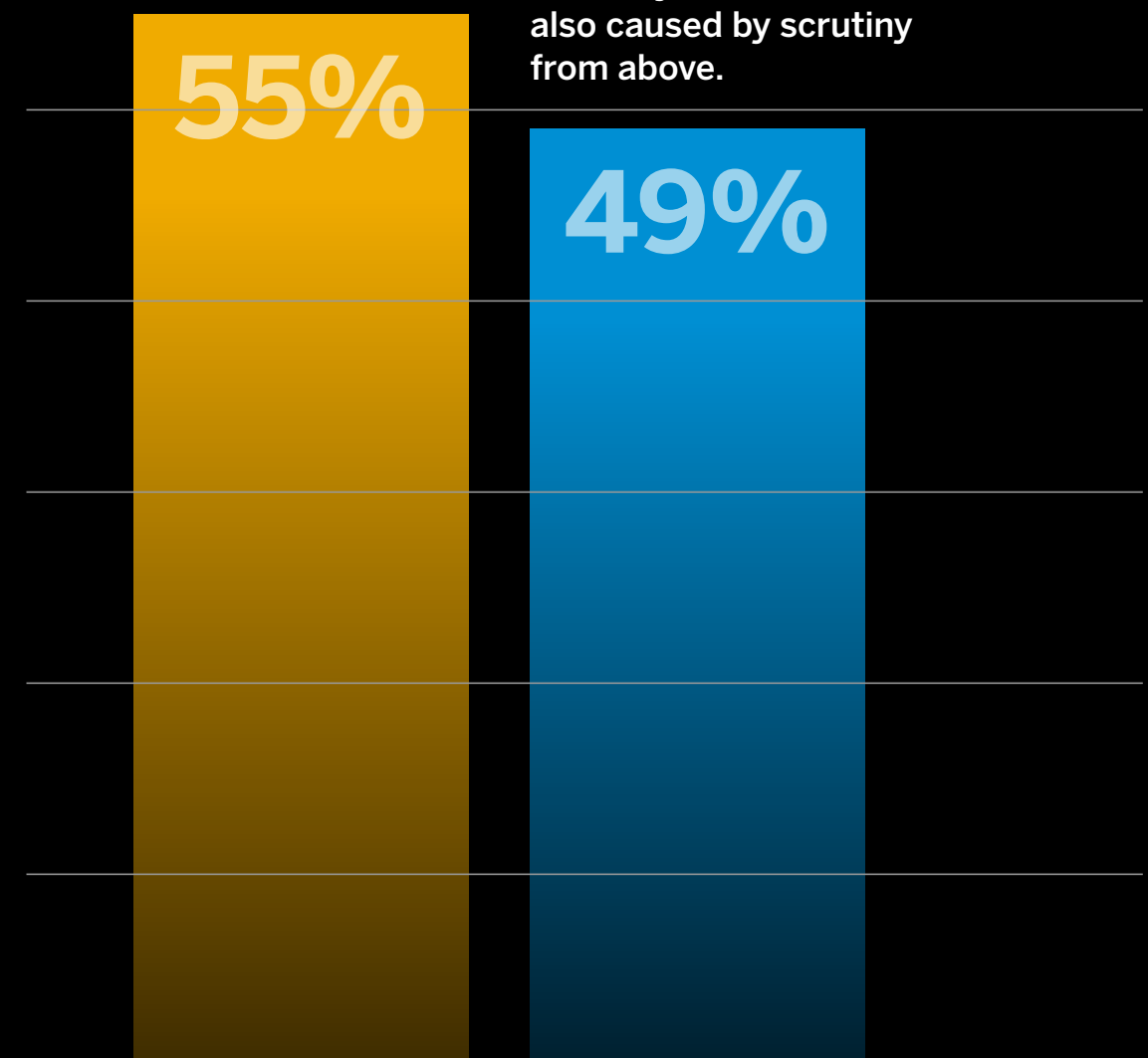
As you go forward, you'll want to identify four or five key benchmarks of your travel program's health, then share them with the C-suite in a clear, compelling way – and do so regularly. Having data you can count on, understand, and easily share with leadership will be critical to demonstrating value.


“We expect the role of travel managers to become much more influential and strategic in delivering on business recovery and growth plans as travel activity increases under the more watchful eye of CFOs and CEOs.”

~ CTM Head of ESG & Sustainability, John Nicholls

55% of travel managers say their job is already as or more stressful than last year.

49% say the stress is also caused by scrutiny from above.



A man in a tan coat and dark trousers is walking towards the right, pulling a black rolling suitcase. He is looking off to the side. The background shows a modern building with large glass windows and a covered walkway.

“This is an exciting opportunity for travel managers to own a significant role in driving business performance through effective travel program development which supports all areas of business including sustainability objectives towards environmental social performance.”

~ CTM Head of ESG & Sustainability,
John Nicholls

2 Get Comfortable Being Flexible

The economy is in constant flux – again, this is no surprise to anyone in the travel world. But as costs rise beyond expectations, safety protocols shift, and supply stops without warning, flexibility and quick-but-thoughtful decision making becomes key to resiliency.

How do you keep these changes in check? Here are a couple of quick examples:

- If you're not already doing so, examine your policies and program more frequently. Real-time data and intelligent dashboards let you measure and manage your program on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis. So if airlines aren't building back capacity, you know what to do. And if new health and safety restrictions come into play, you're ready.
- It's also important to stay tuned to your TMC for their insight into upcoming airline requirements, guidance on airline bookings that are least likely to be affected by labor, and assessments of hotels and their ability to serve your travelers.

Flexibility of this sort comes down to planning in shorter stints – again, instead of planning a year in advance, take it one quarter at a time.

3 Work up a Plan for Labor Shortages

As travelers take to the roads, rails, and skies, they're going to run into questions – and often, they'll have forgotten how to find the answers. As a result, you may be seeing a spike in calls to your TMC, calls that take away even more time from shorthanded teams.

Airlines, hotels, and TMCs continue to add staff, but the backlog isn't going away anytime soon. In the meantime, here are a few things you can do to keep your travelers moving:

- Consider communications and campaigns that drive travelers to book online and to other self-service resources, reducing unnecessary calls to your TMC partner.
- Tap into your TMC for dedicated resources, so travelers can get better support faster.
- Enhance your online booking experience, so travelers get answers before they turn into questions.
- Take every opportunity to educate your travelers about what's new and what's next.

The more your travelers can take care of on their own, the less you'll have to rely on overloaded TMCs and the less time it will take to book a trip.





4 Get Your Arms Around Future-Forward Tech

Now's the time to be proactive about the technology that's fueling (or attempting to fuel) your program. Is it out of date? Is it capable of keeping up with rapid-fire changes in the travel industry? Is it capable of keeping up with changes in the tech industry?

Just as importantly, are you able to steer clear of technology providers making big promises with little clarity?

Even with the most advanced tech teams, it can be hard to know what to do. So as you chart your path forward, look for solutions that allow you to:

- Tap into your TMC's portal for all things travel, giving travelers one place to go for everything they need.
- Employ tools built on AI and machine learning, so they can do more of the work for you and get smarter along the way.
- Stay up to date on what's going on in the market, so you can always be aligned with industry experts.
- Personalize each travel experience, so every traveler gets just what they need – including recommendations based on their preferences and your policies.

Forward-thinking technologies such as these can keep you up to date with travelers on a number of fronts. And having a variety of real-time communication channels (from Yammer to Slack to Microsoft Teams) – across voice, SMS, email, chat, and internal tools – works like a forum of travel experiences to improve employees' time on the road.

5 Lead Your Program with Compassion

Workplace experiences have never been more important to business – they're critical to attracting and retaining talent, even as talent pools continue to evaporate. And when it comes to road warriors, the travel experience is just as important.

If booking after booking and trip after trip are a pain in the process for travelers, it can mean the difference between staying in a job or looking for a new one.

What can you do to show travelers their best interests are your priority?

- Create a consistent way to listen: Use digital tools to capture sentiment, understand motivation, and identify any friction and pain points in your travel program, travel policies, and the tools travelers are using.
- Sit down with HR to understand their objectives and their strategies for attracting and retaining talent. Make sure your travel program aligns with those goals, and be transparent with each other regarding employee priorities and feedback.

It isn't just about leading your travel program, it's about moving the company forward. And the best way to do so is to keep going back to your employees.



3 in 5 business travelers are unhappy with their current travel frequency,



Nearly 1 in 4 of them say they'll look for a new position if their travel schedule doesn't improve.

2022 SAP Concur Global Business Traveler Survey



94% of business travelers are looking to take their own steps to ensure greener travel over the next 12 months.²

72% of businesses and their travel program stakeholders are interested in learning more about sustainable travel, especially supply chain sustainability strategies.¹

24% of business travelers would decline a business trip if it required using non-sustainable travel options.²

6 Position Yourself as a Sustainability and DEI Leader

Issues like sustainability and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) matter to everyone – from shareholders and employees to regulators and the community at large.

If you lead – by exceeding sustainability standards, by ensuring women and LGBTQ+ travelers are safe and supported on the road, by doing whatever it takes to understand the needs of diverse travelers – people will reward you with loyalty.

- Hold focus groups with sustainability stakeholders to align your travel program with corporate sustainability priorities, DEI strategies, and KPIs.
- Talk to preferred-supplier partners to see how they're managing sustainability, so you can incorporate their successes into your program.
- Build out your travel supplier base to include women- and minority-owned organizations, and push your current travel suppliers for clear reporting on their DEI commitment.
- Educate yourself and your team about the specific needs of various groups. The LGBTQ community, for example, requires more information about the neighborhoods they'll be visiting, the risks they face, and the acceptance of how they identify.
- Partner with airlines committed to carbon neutrality and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), and make it easier for travelers to use carbon offsets to reduce the impact of their travel.

Doing the right thing for your people and the planet will make your travel program an example to follow.

¹ 2022 CTM Global Customer Survey

² 2022 SAP Concur Global Business Traveler Survey

Travel Can Take Your Company Anywhere

Strategy has replaced survival on the travel leader's to-do list. So take this time to shape what comes next, to show what you'll accomplish in the coming year, and to lead not just a group of road warriors but your company as a whole.

And take a minute to see how how [SAP® Concur® travel solutions](#) can help you get there.



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