

SAP Concur 

Where are we going **next?**

**The re-emergence of travel and
getting your business moving**

In Collaboration With



THE BEST RUN 



According to the 2021 Global Travel Management Report,

98% of travel managers expect their company's travel spending to

increase in the next twelve months. This is good news for business and travelers alike, and after a year of restrictions and unknowns, it's great to see something so encouraging on the horizon.

It's clear business wants to get moving again – so now's a good time to examine why travel is so important, how businesses measure its value, what's changed (hint: a lot), and how to lead the next era of business travel.

Let's go.

Why do we go places?

Human connection is an innate desire; we want to see our colleagues, we want to make new memories, and we want to feel normal again. We want to travel, whether it's for business or for leisure. The *2021 Global Business Traveler Study* bears this out:



38% of business travelers are concerned that if they can't travel, it will be difficult to build new relationships with clients.

45% are concerned about developing and maintaining business connections.

54% want to travel to make personal connections with customers and colleagues.

Virtual meetings might be more efficient, but they don't have the same effect. They've been the context for "relationships" during the pandemic, but face-to-face connections – meeting customers, socializing with clients, walking through their work environments – cannot be completely replaced.

Think about when someone from your company retires – there's a party, there's reminiscing, there's a photo montage set to some sappy music and filled with pictures of corporate events, team dinners, and company meetings. These in-person milestones are critical, they leave an indelible mark on our lives and our careers, and while going virtual helped carry us through last year, it can't replace getting together.

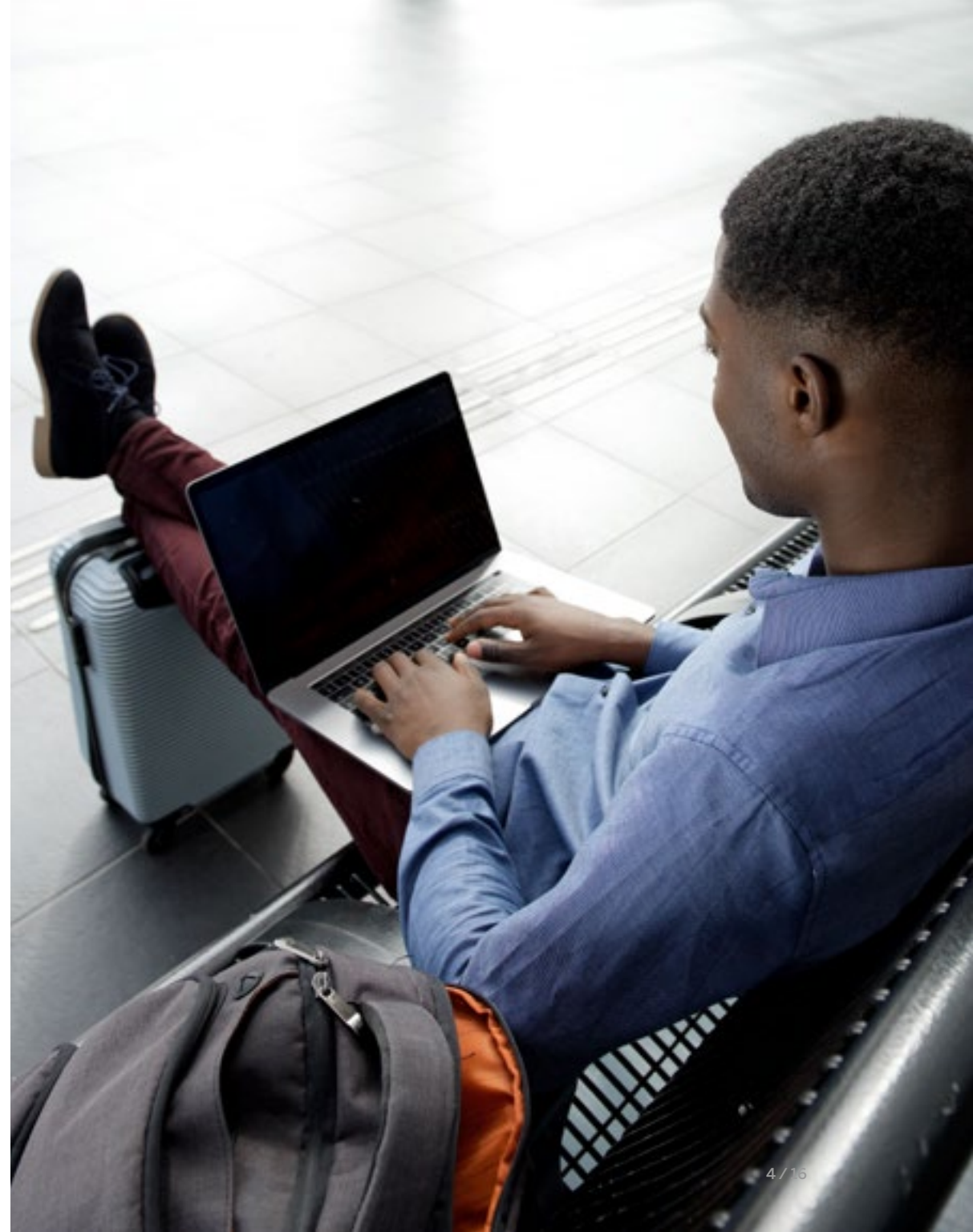
It's that human connection that bonds us together and that's one of the reasons we travel.

How should we measure the value of business travel?

If there wasn't value in taking our business on the road, we wouldn't have been doing it for decades. But if there's one silver lining to the pandemic, it's that it has given us time to re-examine the things we've been doing for decades to see if "what we've always done" is "what we should keep doing."

Businesses aren't looking back to see if their past approach and investments paid off, they're looking forward, with a semi-clean slate, and they're redefining what travel should look like, not only to the company, but also to the individual.

The difficult question here is, of course, how do you measure that value? It isn't a number you can put in a column or a total you add to the bottom line. A tangible ROI is very difficult to define for travel, so organizations should look to assess value in ways that align with their culture. What do you value as a business? How does that align with how you assess an individual trip?





To address this trip-assessment question, many organizations look at four factors:

**WILL IT
STRENGTHEN
A BUSINESS
RELATIONSHIP?**

Does meeting
face-to-face
accomplish more
than a video call?

**DOES IT
DRIVE
REVENUE?**

Is it essential
to business
continuity
or growth?

**IS THE TIMING/
FREQUENCY
RIGHT?**

Were we just
there? Can we
group this with
another meeting?

IS IT SAFE?

What health
concerns do we
have to consider?

Your answers should direct you to purposeful, strategic travel that matches your company goals and culture.

At the same time, many companies are creating tools and systems to more easily measure this value. These tools are designed to get employees thinking about the purpose of their trips and to force them to see travel in a new way. The ultimate goal is to get the entire company thinking differently and to drive new behaviors coming out of the pandemic.



You're building an all-new travel program. Any questions?

As you develop new processes and protocols for your program, ask yourself about the purpose of every trip – does it bring value to the relationship and to the business? Consider each trip's focus – is it internal or geared toward the customer? And ask yourself logistics questions you've never had to consider before:

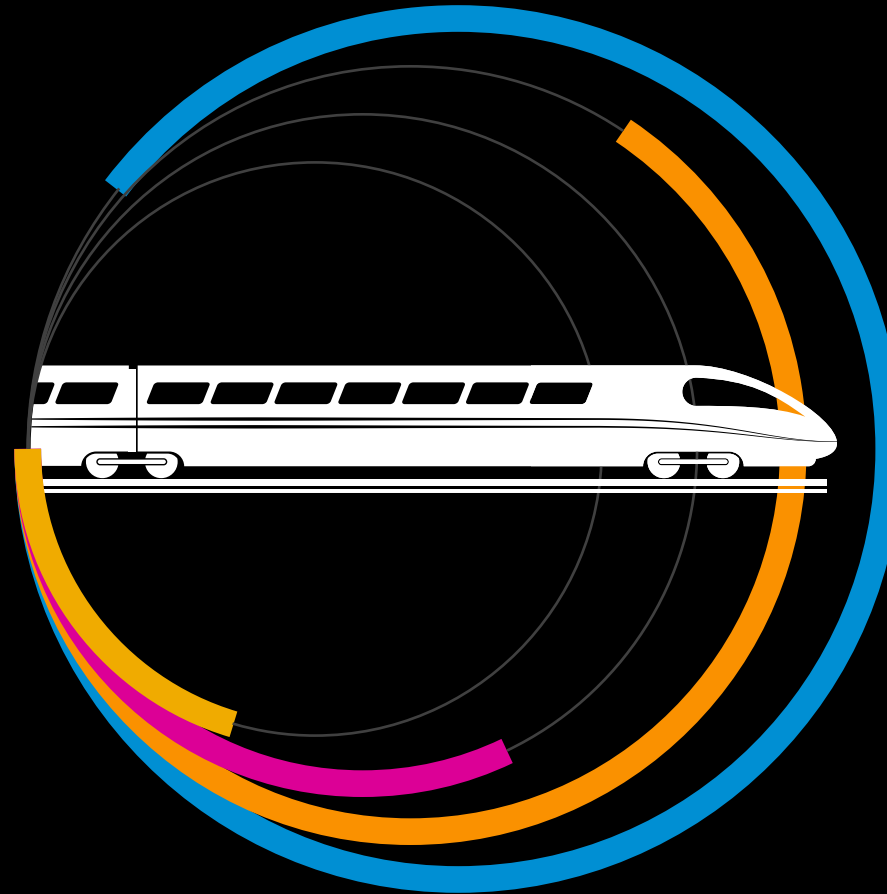
What are the mask/ vaccination/other requirements of your destination?	Is your client's office or facility open? Are they working remotely or in a hybrid model? Do you have a place to meet? What are their visitation policies?	Is your client comfortable with your visit? Do they prefer that you're vaccinated? Are you vaccinated?	What risk are you placing on your loved ones by traveling for business?
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These assessments are essential to the success of your “new” travel program, but putting them in action should fit your company’s culture and your style. Otherwise, they most assuredly won’t be successful. For some, a 15-question decision-tree tool is the way to go. For others, it’s more about thought-provoking training and communication. Either way, assessments will play a significant role in defining the value of travel in your company.

What's changed, other than everything?

As we venture out into the uncharted territory of post-pandemic corporate travel, what do we need to be looking for, what surprises lie beyond the horizon, what hurdles and opportunities will we face?

You can begin to answer these questions by asking your employees.



20% say they'll search for a new position if their employer doesn't offer measures to protect health and safety during travel.

32% say they'd like their companies to return to pre-COVID travel.

65% say they are very willing to travel in the next 12 months.

90% expect their company to provide benefits to ensure their health and safety while traveling.

Source: Global Business Traveler Report 2021

Once you decide travel is going to happen – once you get back out there as an organization – managing the trips themselves will be very different from before. According to a recent EY thought leadership report, *Business Travel Reimagined In and Beyond a COVID-19 World*, there are several key areas to consider as you get your program up and running again:

1 Health and Safety

Finding, filtering, and disseminating timely health and safety information for your travelers will be essential. This will include details on all aspects of travel, from working remotely to managing regulations and restrictions concerning a particular destination. It will also be important to gauge employee willingness and readiness to travel – because if you want them to be productive, you need them to be comfortable. Another consideration is how you'll respond to unforeseen events: You'll need to engage with both internal and external stakeholders (such as companies capable of extracting employees from an emergency abroad or providing local medical support services) to create and support coordinated responses to such events.



Consider this:

One other major shift to think about is the impact hybrid/virtual work has on travel. If you have a “work from anywhere” policy, for example, how does that effect your travel policy? If you don’t allow employees in the office, how does letting them jet off to Singapore make sense? Your message, whatever it is, has to be consistent and aligned with your culture. You want your employees to be safe wherever they are, and they’re in more places than they’ve ever been.

2 Traveler Toolkits

Building a robust traveler toolkit will be key to a successful return to travel. This kit can and should include: a travel readiness assessment, an immunization checklist, simple do's and don'ts for common travel situations, a traveler safety program that locates employees during emergency situations, two-way communication applications, contact tracing protocols, immunity certification apps, and up-to-date guidance from global health organizations on how to travel safely.

3 AI and Automation

As we've learned, the move to automation is a must in virtually every situation. It's no different in the travel sector. Artificial Intelligence (AI) may be able to support health assessments, immunity requirements, and travel readiness, then adjust travel plans accordingly. Cognitive technologies will also automatically factor in new or updated requirements for air travel, hotel stays, and airport health/security screenings, so your travelers will be in the know before they go.



Post-pandemic perspectives:

Only a fifth of employees would still expect to work fully (five or more days) in the office.

9 out of 10 want flexibility regarding where and when they work.

One-third want their employers to offer shorter workweeks.

54% of employees are likely to quit if they aren't offered the flexibility they want.

Despite the shift toward new ways of working and the rapid adoption of virtual meeting technology, nearly **two-thirds** of employees want to continue business travel post-pandemic, to at least some degree.

Source: EY Work Reimagined Employee Survey, 2021

Are you going to events again? Are you hosting them?

Maybe you never loved going to big conferences in Vegas, but it's hard to argue the appeal of getting back together with colleagues. So, as you venture out (or invite others in) consider a few new ways of doing things:

Embrace and expect hybrid approaches to events, like a “hub and spoke” model. The main conference is in New York, but there are “spokes” in Phoenix, Houston, and Seattle. So employees can go to a smaller-scale event with fewer people, but they can still take part in the main event presentations.

Everything will have a virtual option. Allowing people to attend virtually can actually draw larger crowds than in-person-only events. And when you offer this option, you could see residual audiences with on-demand replays of keynotes, etc. You have more ways to connect with an audience, simply by giving them the option of how and when they want to attend.

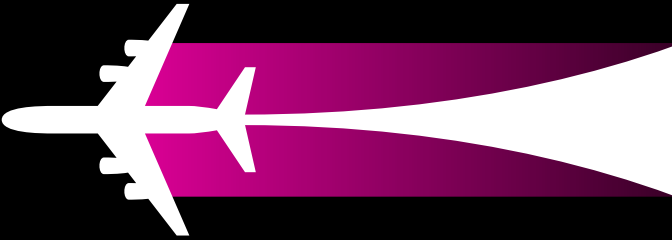
Networking can still happen. We go to these events for the meet-and-greet happy hour, because that's how we expand our network and learn from our peers. Organizations will need to tap into new technologies – like AI that finds similarities between virtual and in-person conference attendees and then creates networking opportunities where people can connect.





The next era of travel is here. How do we navigate it?

You can lead or you can follow, but you probably know which gets you there first. So, if you want to take the helm, take a look at how these best-practice insights could work for you.



Embrace a leadership role.

There's never been a brighter spotlight on travel and traveler safety, so this is a perfect time for you to shine. If you have a seat at the table where decisions are being made, make your mark. Solve the problem and build out your own path to travel recovery to support the business. If you don't have a seat at that table, force the conversation. Then walk in with a strategy, a benchmark, or a starting point for making travel work again.

Establish a task-force mindset.

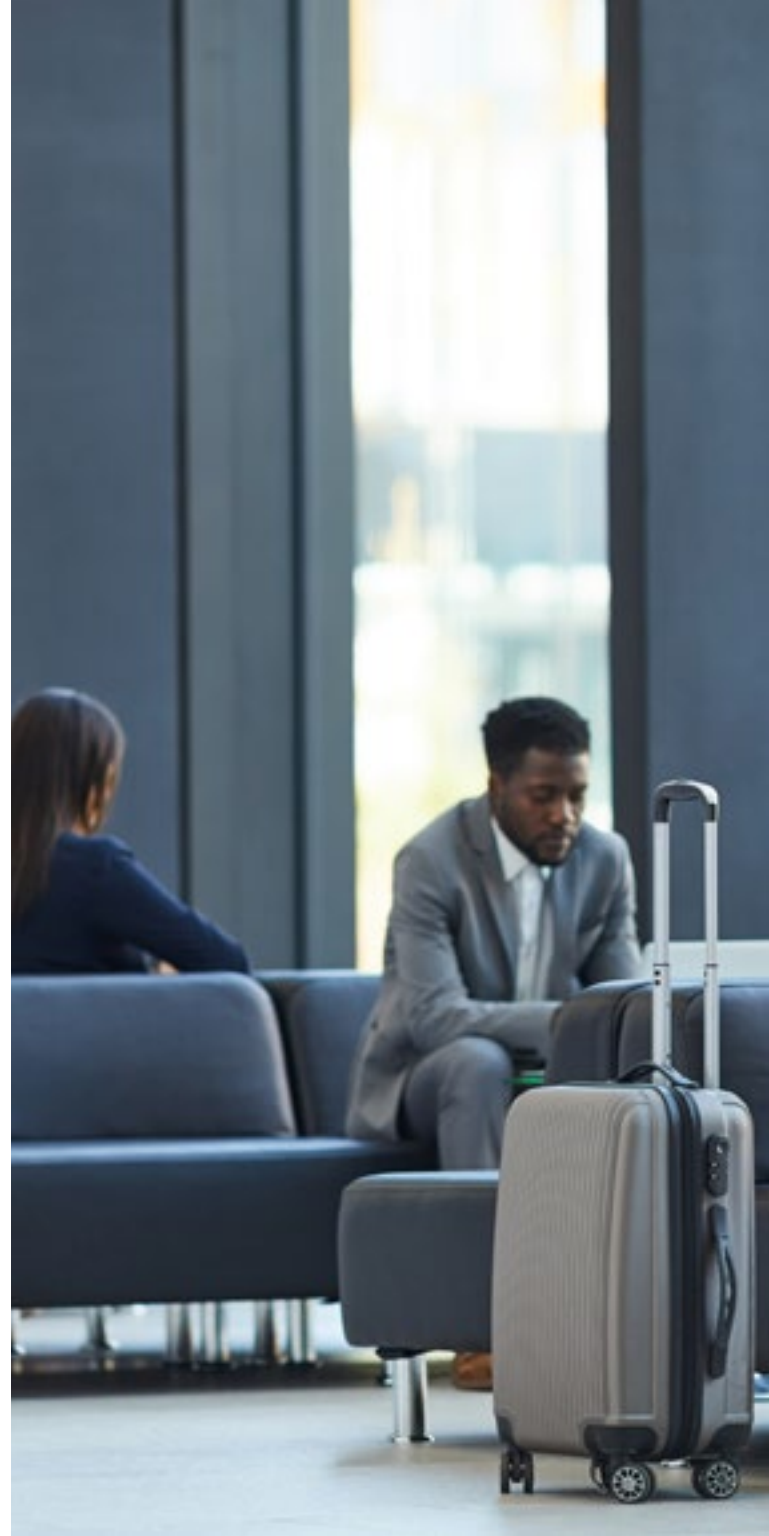
Bring together the top minds in your organization from HR, Security, IT, Procurement – anyone who is a stakeholder should be at the table. Collaborate to identify the virtual and hybrid meeting tools and contactless payment offerings that can make your program safer and stronger. Build your team, get them started, but know there's no finish line. This is an ongoing cultural challenge, and your program and plan need to be sustainable – which means they need to be adaptable – as we all go forward.

Establish clear sources of truth for safety information.

Decide which safety assessments you'll follow – whether they're from the CDC, the WHO, or another recognized organization. Then assess your travel landscape (the countries and cities you visit) and maintain an active evaluation of regulations, restrictions, and requirements. Travel will become the center point for data sources and policy, and you'll want easy-to-consume guidance for travelers. This includes decision-tree tools that ensure travelers are aware of all the elements now involved in travel – including how to get additional information from their travel program.

Make sure you have the technology to get the information to employees.

These can be health and safety details, so you need to put them at people's fingertips – through apps, push communications, two-way sync, or whatever means you have. Everyone in your organization needs to know and clearly understand your processes, requirements, etc., and you need to make the rules and regulations easy to access and follow. This is paramount – to work, it has to be effortless. Again, employees will need a simple source of truth for all the travel requirements and rules their destination demands.



Get comfortable ceding control.

Employees know what feels safe for them, and they need to be able to make in-the-moment decisions about what they're comfortable with. So be sure to build flexibility into your program, just not so much that you can't keep people safe if they make choices that could put them in dangerous situations.

Get ahead of regulatory requirements.

As working structures and travel requirements shift, so do your compliance, tax, sustainability and immigration requirements and responsibilities. So be sure you're equipped to understand what your responsibilities are and proactively manage them – getting everything from your data to your reporting and your controls in order.

Don't go it alone.

Charting your course through this new world of business travel isn't an easy task, but there is help available. Look for partners – from Travel Management Companies (TMCs) to business travel consultants to technology providers – who balance in-depth travel knowledge with the experience and learning that comes from working with multiple companies.

A man in a dark suit is seen from the side, looking out over a city skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The city buildings are visible in the background, and the man's hand is resting on a railing in the foreground.

None of us has been here before.

Travel in 2021 and beyond is like nothing any of us have ever seen, but it doesn't change the truth about why we need to take business on the road. We want to see our customers and colleagues again. We want to sit across the table. We want to collaborate on the next big idea. And we just want to feel normal again.

Travel makes all that possible, but before we go, we must put strategies in place that put the traveler before the business and health above all else. We must effectively gauge the value of travel and compare that to what we value as an organization. And we must act, not merely follow those who do.

Done safely, done differently, done right,
travel will take us places we've never been.

To find out more about where things are headed, visit [Concur.com](https://concur.com).



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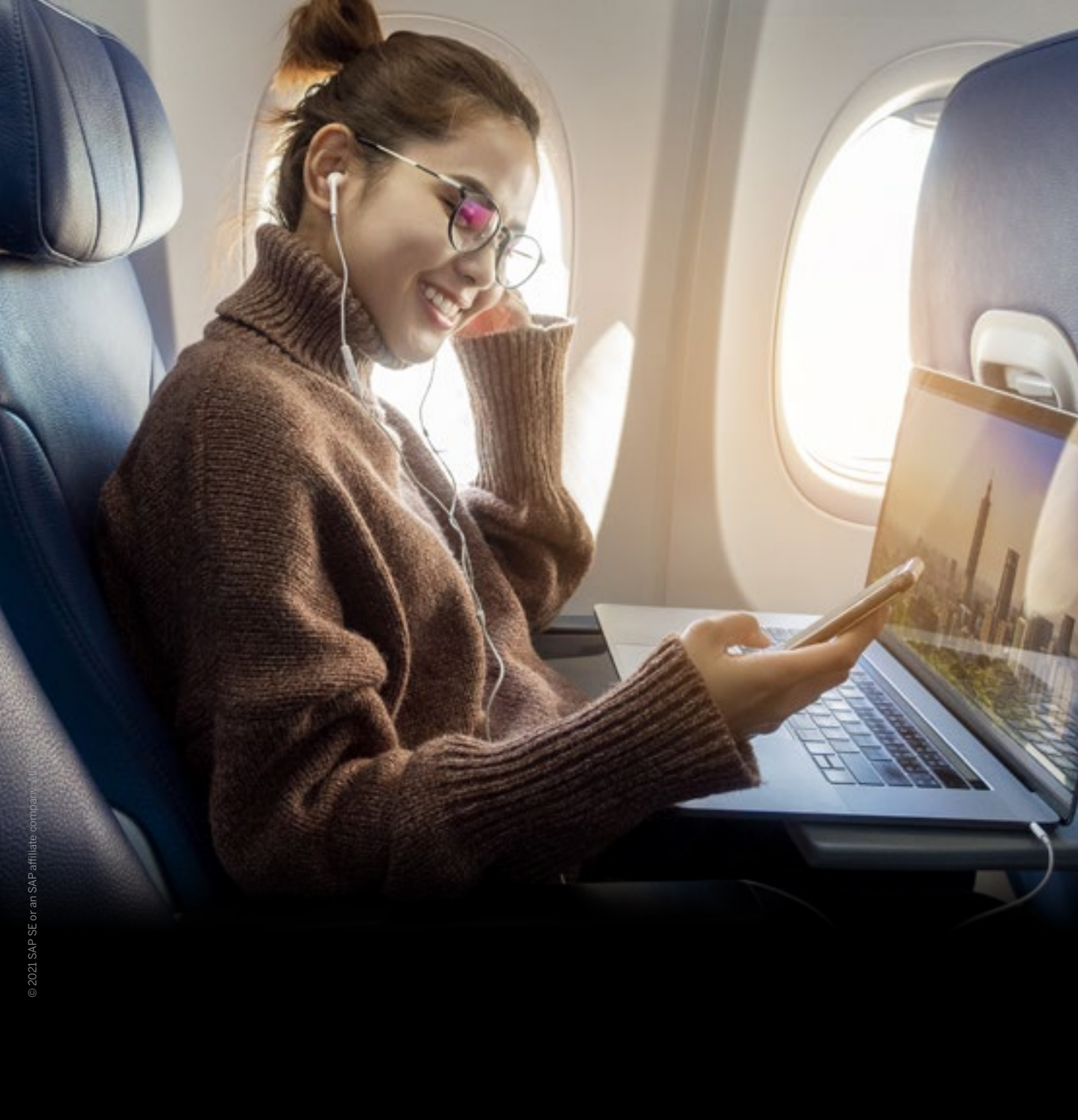
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