



# TRAVEL

AND TRANSPORT

**PARTNER SOLUTIONS GROUP**  
How Healthy is your Travel Program

## How Healthy is Your Travel Program? 10 Prescriptions for Success

Just like maintaining your health, the modern travel management program requires regular “check-ups” to ensure that everything is running smoothly and efficiently. Travel and Transport’s Partner Solutions Group has put together 10 “prescriptions” that will help you to maximize savings in your travel program.

### **1. Success may come in “Small Doses”: Supplier Small Business Programs – Are they for you?**

Most airlines, car rental companies, and hotel companies offer small business programs. If your company has been unsuccessful in negotiating discounts based on benchmarks or has a contract that is under performing, consider enrolling in supplier small business programs to deliver additional savings. These programs vary by supplier; your travel management company can help you determine which options best fit your needs.

### **2. Follow the directions: Negotiated programs aren’t effective when travelers don’t use them.**

To maximize the value of your negotiated programs, make sure that every traveler in your organization knows and understands the value of vendor contracts by offering training and policy adjustments. Your travel management company can set-up the online booking tool to bias preferred vendors. Alerts can be setup to proactively notify travelers and managers when preferred vendors are not being used. By knowing your travelers and monitoring their travel patterns, you can gain an understanding of which contracted supplier programs are being used and which aren’t. A best practice for successful travel managers is to analyze travel data regularly so that you can adjust your program as behavior changes. Your travel management company should offer products include pre-trip notifications and dashboard reporting to provide critical information at your fingertips when you need it.

**3. Read the label: Negotiated programs aren't effective if your travelers don't understand them.**

A major key to keeping your travel program healthy is ensuring that your travelers thoroughly understand the program and its features. Is breakfast included in your hotel rate? Is insurance included in your car rental program?

Do travelers know to set-up frequent flyer accounts with preferred vendors in order to drive compliance? Make sure that your travelers are familiar with or aware of these inclusions in order to eliminate unnecessary travel expenses. A simple, yet effective way to communicate key components of your negotiated programs to your travelers is through a centralized travel portal.

**4. What are your symptoms? Know what your travelers buy and why.**

What do your travelers like and use in terms of value-added services? What do they not care about? In what classes of service do your travelers normally fly? Knowing and understanding the natural behavior of your travelers will assist you when negotiating value-added services. Optimizing these amenities and inclusions will make your program more traveler-centric and increase compliance (see Prescription #2). Often the best way to capture the opinions and practices for your travelers is through internal surveys or social networking.

**5. Green may be lean**

Should your traveler rent a car or use their personal car? The answer isn't quite as obvious as you might think. Rental cars are typically newer than personal vehicles, and because of this, tend to be more fuel-efficient. In addition to helping keep the world well by supporting green initiatives, it can also be a big money saver for your travel program. Green may also be lean! Depending on the length of trip, it may also be less expensive to rent than to reimburse for mileage.

**6. Be a good patient: Consult your suppliers regularly.**

Be a good patient! Don't just wait for your annual review. Work with your suppliers on creative ways to meet your share goals. Let your suppliers know what is happening in your company, and consult with them on any new initiatives that can help you hit your targets. Your travel management company should have dashboards and reports available to track and show

usage of preferred vendors. Programs including rental car chauffeured service, as well as internal corporate to leisure programs, group travel, park n' fly programs, long-term project-based travel, etc. can be good inclusions to help you attain your goals. In addition, some airlines offer amenities to travelers in order to drive usage, including upgrades, status nominations, and status matches.

## **7. Cancellation**

Just like you would avoid a fee for missing your doctor's appointment, you can help your travelers to avoid those costly travel cancellation fees! Address cancellations in your travel policy to make sure that travelers are committing to the travel that they have booked. Hotel cancellation requirements can be a moving target, so emphasize the importance of reviewing the details and setting up reminders to alleviate unnecessary fees. Travel and Transport offers reporting that captures reason codes for cancellations and assists travel managers in influencing travelers' behavior.

## **8. Review your bill**

Just like you would check over the bill you get from your doctor, you should make sure that discounts, amenities, etc. are being properly billed. You should train your travelers to assist you in this as well. If a supplier continues to not live up to their negotiated agreement, it might be time for a change! Travel and Transport can assist in tracking this information by offering traveler surveys and by conducting rate audits.

## **9. Don't be afraid to get a second opinion**

Your travel management company's consultant department can serve as a second set of eyes to study the value of your independent supplier programs. An effective consulting group will be able to provide real-time benchmarking, as well as insight into areas where suppliers will be lowering rates and fares. Information and data provided through your travel management company's consulting department will prove invaluable in preparation for your mid-year vendor negotiations.

## **10. Reverse check-up**

Don't just be the patient – be the doctor! Check up on your suppliers too. A hotel rate audit is a great way to ensure that you are receiving the discounts that you have negotiated.



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