

NBTA's Small Business Guide to Corporate Travel

The smaller the company, the more critical it is to keep a tight rein on costs. Yet small businesses typically don't have travel managers to oversee travel spending, nor do they have the negotiating clout of big corporations that put thousands of "heads in beds" in exchange for discounts and other perks.

So how can small companies still manage to create some pricing leverage? The answer is to seek out airlines, hotel companies, online travel agencies and car rental companies that have special marketing programs designed specifically for small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs).

American Airlines, for example, offers the Business ExtrAA program that enables small businesses to manage business travel while travelers still earn award points. Other airlines with similar programs include Continental Airlines, whose RewardOne Travel Manager allows companies to set air, car and hotel purchasing parameters, earn

corporate RewardOne points and enable travelers to earn points; AirTran Airways (A2B), British Airways (On Business) and Northwest Airlines (Biz Perks).

Self-bookings mean savings, too

Rather than use mega travel agencies that charge hefty transaction fees for bookings, many SMEs are turning to the big three virtual travel agencies—Expedia Corporate Travel, Travelocity Business and Orbitz for Business—which charge as little as five dollars for online bookings while offering business-friendly rates.

Prefer the full-service approach of a traditional agency? American Express, Carlson-Wagonlit and BTI have divisions that handle only SMEs. Among their services: reservations portals customized for each client and its employees, allowing only in-policy bookings to be made.

Use self-bookings for group travel and your company will save even more. Starwood Hotels' new Meetings in a Moment product is designed for single-day meetings of up to 25 attendees. This online tool enables meeting planners

to secure a meeting room, order food and beverage items, and order audio-visual equipment. Meetings in a Moment currently can be used to book meetings at 22 Starwood hotels in New England, Florida and Atlanta.

MANAGING TRAVEL CAN BOOST PRODUCTIVITY, CREATE SAVINGS

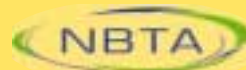
Employees who effectively serve multiple functions are invaluable, particularly in small businesses. But too much time spent on non-essential duties is a loss for the company.

For most companies, travel and entertainment expenses are in the top three highest costs. If employees spend a lot of time on their own travel needs, lost productivity makes travel costs even higher.

Many small companies are finding that they can boost productivity and create savings by centrally managing their travel programs. Travel management may look a bit different at a small business than at a large company, but the basic principles are the same:

- Set and enforce company-wide travel policies
- Make finding and booking travel quick and easy
- Aggregate purchasing of travel and related services in order to get the best value
- Centralize information on all traveling employees to facilitate rapid response to an internal or external crisis

The National Business Travel Association offers a Fundamentals of Business Travel Management course that is perfect for small businesses and people new to travel management. For more on the course and the value of travel management, see www.nbta.org



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