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So what about China?

Well, so *what* about China? I glanced bemusedly at the book so entitled wondering why the author had deigned to use this title for a manuscript examining the evils of carbon emissions and how it was that the travel sector is such a terrible offender.

Reading the book unfortunately left me no closer to finding the answer to that question. What it did do, and quite effectively, was suggest innovative ways to introduce 'greener' travel options and urged travellers to change their behaviour, always examining whether it was entirely necessary for them to travel.

And it's a similar question travel managers are now having to pose as the worst effects of the global economic crisis begin to hit SA corporates. As Monique Swart, regional director Middle East and Africa Acte, (featured in this month's Insight column), suggests, demand management is likely to be a big part of 2009.

Travel managers will have to think twice about travel, asking themselves whether the aim of a trip can be accomplished without getting on an aircraft. Of course, it's about breaking bad habits, says Swart. Breaking from the mantra, 'let's travel because it's how we've always done things'.

But whether your motive is going green or having to slash your travel budget, it doesn't mean you need to close the door completely on travel. You need to be creative, and perhaps like for Group Five, and group travel manager, Mandy Diggle (featured in this month's Profile), that could mean combining budget (low-cost) and traditional (more flexible) options.

Large corporates and SMEs are both looking for savings and travel managers in this environment therefore need to access low-cost, low-budget travel options. Access to this content is an absolute must-have requirement in self-booking tools (see page 14), which experts say have evolved dramatically over the past year to include more aspects of travel spend.

So access to more options, more creativity, and more insight will be critical to your success as a travel manager this year and we believe BTN will be there to help guide you.

Unfortunately, it is with a sad heart that we say goodbye to a creative, insightful member of our BTN team, Tessa Blane, who will be leaving the BTN team this month. Tessa has been a champion of the travel manager's needs since starting work on the publication and it is mostly due to hard work that you have a publication today that aims to provide direction for those learning to get to grips with the complicated world of travel management. ■

NATALIA THOMSON

Brought to you by Now Media, Business Travel Now is a professional travel publication aimed at South African travel procurement decision-makers in travel-buying companies. This publication aims to reflect an unbiased perspective of the corporate travel industry offering insight and tools encouraging readers to manage their travel spend better.

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PUBLISHER David Marsh **MANAGING EDITOR** Natalia Thomson **CONTRIBUTORS** Tessa Blane, Denise Slabbert, Max Marx, Chana Viljoen, Kim Cochrane, Jeanette Phillips, Liesl Venter, Kate Els, Natasha Toppel, Sue Lewitton, Hilka Birns **DESIGN & LAYOUT** Dirk Voorneveld

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER Kate Nathan **SALES REPRESENTATIVE** Sharon Richards-Lund, Diana Comninos **ADVERTISING CO-ORDINATOR** Neo Matonkonyane

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Now Media Centre, 32 Fricker Rd, Illovo Boulevard, Illovo, Johannesburg, PO Box 55251, Northlands, 2116, South Africa.

Tel: +27 11 327 4062, Fax: +27 11 327 4094, e-mail: btn@nowmedia.co.za, web: www.btnow.co.za



Is this a sign of worse to come?

THE start of the year has seen several airlines and tour operators ceasing their services in SA. Could this just be the start of SA feeling the effects of the global economic climate?

Among the victims is Virgin Nigeria which, just two months following the bilateral air services agreement made additional frequencies available between SA and Nigeria, suspended its flights between Lagos and Johannesburg on January 27. It also stopped its flights between Lagos and London, Gatwick. The airline says this is due to a review of its entire long-haul operations. It says its focus is now on "consolidating and continuing to expand [its] profitable domestic and regional flight operations".

The airline claims once the long-haul product review has been finalised, it will reinstate the long-haul routes.

Meanwhile, Air Travelmax has also taken the fall and suspended most of its flights with the last Mozambique flights having ended in January.

The airline's gm, **Anja Coetzee**, says: "Although we did our best to run an efficient and reliable airline, the current challenging economic times have made it impossible for the airline to survive along with the devaluing rand, fuel costs and lack of passenger travel

due to airfare price."

But the airline has not thrown in the towel yet and says it is exploring certain options. Coetzee says: "We are looking at other ways to continue the service and will advise accordingly should something change in the future."

Air Travelmax's scheduled flights from Lanseria and Vilanculos were suspended on January 10 and the Lanseria to Inhambane flight on January 22.

Tony Birkholtz, marketing manager of Barra Resorts says the demise of this option out of Lanseria means the focus has to shift to OR Tambo and LAM. "LAM has shown faith in our route to Inhambane by offering four weekly direct flights and have also introduced a larger aircraft on the route. Our efforts will now be deployed in this direction and we are certain the route will continue to grow."

Iata has its say

Iata has predicted a 'slightly worse' outlook over the next 12 months for airlines globally. Losses on fuel hedging and softening demand are cited as the main causes of the decline in profitability.

"The impact of financial market turmoil and resulting recessionary forces is beginning

to be felt while the full effect of the rapid decline in fuel prices has yet to benefit many airlines given their hedging activity," Iata said in a statement.

"The impact of financial market turmoil and resulting recessionary forces is beginning to be felt."

According to Iata, passenger load factors are also coming under pressure which is not good news for the profits in the period ahead.

"A combination of factors including falling fuel prices, weakening demand and marketing efforts to hold yields steady has led to a wide range of reported yield impacts in the last three months, although it is very clear that the prospect of any yield increases in the 12 months ahead has weakened sharply."

This reflects the further reduction in fuel surcharges in the months ahead as well as the deterioration in global economic prospects affecting demand and the likelihood of overcapacity placing further pressures on unit revenues.

Is Thai set to chop SA?

If Thai Airways pulls out of the country it will leave a fairly large gap in the market, say operators in response to the airline's announcement that it is suspending its flights between Johannesburg and Bangkok.

Thai Airways has cancelled all its flights from January 18 until March 28. Flights after March 28 are not open for sale, but country manager, **Bundit Saralamba**, said he could not confirm whether or not the flights would resume in the next traffic programme (after March 28) because at the time of going to press there had been no communication from head office.

Noorjehan Vadachia, director sales and marketing for Avocatur Wholesale Tour Operator, says: "It will leave a big gap as Thai is the only carrier that flies direct to Bangkok." She says Thai was often the first choice as it was the shortest flights with excellent connections within Thailand.

Although the final decision is not yet known, Saralamba says the route has never been profitable for the airline since it began in October 2006, despite the strong support from South Africans. Saralamba says this is due to a lack of support for traffic into South Africa from Thai Airways' other destinations. He says the forward bookings were quite low but that this was due to the South African market making last-minute bookings.

Saralamba says the recent protest action has also worsened the situation. Thai Airways, he says, lost around THB500m (R143m) a day in

revenue alone during the protests.

Thai Airways passengers booked to travel after January 16 and who have already been ticketed, should send their tickets in for a full refund.



Bundit Saralamba, SA country manager Thai Airways, could not confirm or deny whether Thai Airways is dropping its SA route



Air Mauritius feels the burn

AIR Mauritius is doing its best to stay afloat after a rather dismal financial report was issued by the airline in January. The airline appears to be suffering the consequences of having hedged its fuel price at about US\$105 a barrel for the next two years, the impact resulting in estimated losses of €18m (R240m) at the end of December 2008 and projected losses of €23m (R305m) at the end of March 2009. The airline's board of directors said it is reviewing its network in light of the reduced demand and will look at restructuring and strengthening relationships with trade partners to stay in the game. The board is also appealing to the Mauritian government for fresh capital.

It's Meetings Africa time!

THE Sandton Convention Centre will again be a hive of activity this year as Meetings Africa takes to the floor from February 25 to 27. Meetings Africa is a one-stop shop for anyone in the business tourism industry – event planners, professional conference organisers, incentive travel companies, venue managers and suppliers.

200 exhibitors will be present for the three-day event with over 3 000 local and international delegates expected to attend.

Roshene Singh, chief marketing officer at South African Tourism, says there will be a strong focus on attracting local corporate buyers this year. "SA Tourism's plan is to grow Meetings Africa into a top international business tourism marketing platform, but in order to achieve this we need to have a solid base of local delegates at the show, in response to the needs of the industry."

For more info on the event visit www.btnow.co.za and click on the Meetings Africa icon or visit www.meetingsafrica.co.za.



LH A380s for Johannesburg?

JOHANNESBURG may well be one of the first African cities to see the A380, says Lufthansa.

The long-awaited 550-seat aircraft, of which the carrier has ordered 15, are expected to be delivered late this year.

Head of the airline's A380 entry-into-service project, **Joachim Schneider**, says: "The market has to justify the use of the A380, because of its capacity." He said that although the list of cities to which the aircraft would operate had been reduced, Johannesburg was still in the running.

Schneider commented that Johannesburg had been quick to cater for the large aircraft and with current construction he couldn't see why Johannesburg wouldn't be a good route for the

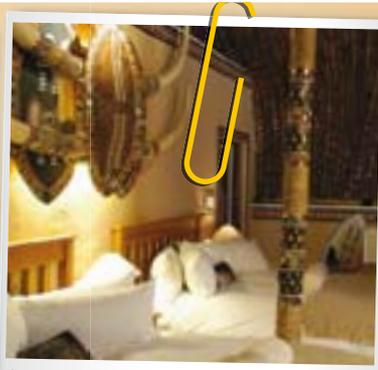
aircraft to operate on.

Construction at the OR Tambo International Airport that began in 2006 saw R218m budgeted for the development of nine new aircraft stands; four of these are able to service the A380. "[The stands] will be equipped with dual air bridges to facilitate the simultaneous boarding and disembarking of passengers through both the upper and lower levels (two decks make up the A380) of the aircraft at the same time," said Airports Company South Africa (ACSA).

Schneider mentioned that the A380 aircraft could be ideal for use during the 2010 World Cup because of its carrying capacity.



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Zambian Airways scraps Livingstone route

ZAMBIAN Airways is to cancel its Johannesburg-Livingstone flights with immediate effect. This follows the launch of this route in May 2008.

The airline will be re-accommodating those passengers who have already paid for tickets on to the services of BA Comair.

In other route changes, Zambian Airways now offers the following regional services as of early January:

- Lusaka to Johannesburg – daily flights

- Johannesburg to Lusaka – six flights weekly
- Ndola-Johannesburg-Ndola – five flights weekly
- Lusaka-Dar es Salaam-Lusaka – two flights weekly

The new schedules are a direct result of the current global aviation and financial situation. Zambian Airways' domestic schedules will also be adjusted to match the new regional network, as well as focusing on the key domestic business routes between Lusaka and the Copperbelt and Solwezi.



Queensgate opens new CPT property

QUEENSGATE Hotel Management has announced the opening of a new addition to its portfolio, The Rockwell Executive Apartments. The hotel, in Greenpoint, Cape Town, offers "a casual, yet sophisticated real 'Capetonian' way of living with a premium level of security," says Queensgate management.



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Third runway at Heathrow gets green light

FOLLOWING the announcement of the UK Government's decision to add a third runway at London Heathrow, Iata director general and ceo **Giovanni Bisignani** has issued the following statement:

"The third runway allows Heathrow to grow and it will be an enormous economic catalyst by better connecting the London and UK economies to global business."

Bisignani continued to say that growth must be environmentally responsible as the environmental restrictions on the third runway are challenging.

"Iata's four-pillar strategy on climate change – focused on improved technology, effective operations, efficient infrastructure and positive economic measures – is delivering real results.

British Airways has also voiced its support for the government's approval of the runway.

"This is the right decision for jobs and investment in the UK. Heathrow is our national hub airport and Britain cannot succeed in a global economy without the capacity for excellent air links already built by our international competitors," said BA ceo **Willie Walsh**.

Walsh, however, expressed his disappointment at the rejection of mixed-mode, which he said would have reduced Heathrow's vulnerability to delays.

Expansion on the cards for 1time

1TIME seems to be preparing to grow its routes this year and has even purchased additional aircraft for the expansion.

The airline has agreed to purchase two MD82 aircraft from Aergo Capital to be delivered this month. The aircraft were previously leased to ailing Italian airline, Alitalia.

1time ceo, **Glenn Orsmond**, said the aircraft would be utilised to expand its current domestic frequencies. BTN believes this includes its flights between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town and Durban. With this purchase, 1time's fleet comprises 11 MD80-type aircraft.

Further, Orsmond said 1time had applied for rights on the Johannesburg-Livingstone route, which he hoped would be granted in the first quarter of 2009. 1time also hopes to introduce flights from Lanseria. "Further expansions are planned from Lanseria once the Competition Commission rules on the fairness of our exclusion from Lanseria," said Orsmond.

Safair has reportedly taken over 18 of the 25 MD82 jets leased to Alitalia by its parent Aergo Capital. 1time acquired a 77,5% stake in Safair Technical from Aergo last year. ■



Glenn Orsmond, 1time ceo

Virgin extends direct CPT service



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VIRGIN Atlantic has extended its seasonal direct service to and from Cape Town until April 17. Flights during this period depart from Cape Town every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

Emirates confirms Durban flights

EMIRATES has confirmed that it will launch its daily flights to Durban from October 1.

The airline says it has resolved the problem of aircraft shortage which was the cause of the suspension last year. **Fouad Caunhye**, regional

manager Southern Africa, says the airline wants the trade to know that it is maintaining its presence in South Africa. He adds that from the beginning of October the airline will serve all the major cities in the country.



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Africa alert

Looking for some guidance and tips before sending your travellers to African countries? Vicqui Welton, of Fulela Trade and Invest 80, offers some insights...

A glimpse at Ghana



Vicqui Welton

HAVING done many trips to Ghana over the last six years I have watched with interest as the country has grown and developed. A country's development barometer to me is its international airports and hotels and Accra has certainly developed both.

Ghana was the first sub-Saharan country to gain independence in 1957 and although it has been through its course of ups and downs it has certainly developed dramatically in the last three years. Ghana has a population estimated at about 23m and the capital city at first point of international entry is Accra. If you are lucky enough to make the flight to Accra during the day it is fascinating and quite sad to look out the window and to see the "Gold Coast" with slave forts dotted along it.

Accra is relatively well serviced by both SAA and Kenya Airways out of South Africa. Of course like many of these points in Africa demand often outstrips supply and fares can be expensive and seats difficult to obtain especially in business class. SAA has four flights a week to Accra and KQ has reasonable daily connections from Nairobi to Accra and return. On certain days flying via Lagos is an option with Accra being only a short one-hour hop

from Lagos but I don't suggest this as the best option given some of the challenges at Lagos airport.

Accra airport has recently been upgraded and particularly the departures terminal is now top-notch.

Visas are required by South African passport holders and whilst it's always better to get a visa prior to departure they can be obtained with relative ease on arrival although you may have to wait a while. Visas cost about US\$100 on arrival.

There are plenty of hotels of various standards including some very nice B&Bs available in Accra. My personal advice is stay close to where you are doing business.

Getting around is not too difficult but I wouldn't suggest you drive yourself. It is safe to go out at night.

Recommended restaurants

There are lots of great restaurants serving West African and Chinese cuisine.

Recommended attraction

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Innovation and adaptability will keep you afloat

Monique Swart, regional director Middle East and Africa ACTE, says corporates will need to be savvy with their business travel to survive a possibly more challenging 2009.

Being inventive makes all the difference

So you think 2008 was a challenging year? 2009 looks like it will be a year of change and challenge unlike any other experienced in the travel industry in a very long time.

Why do I say this? In times of economic crisis finding inventive ways of cutting costs and adding value is the difference between companies and individuals that survive and even thrive and those that do not.

Never before has innovation and the investigation and adoption of local and global trends and best practices been more vital and this year will see travel professionals being called to step up to the plate and deliver value.

Conventional saving strategies

2009 will see corporate buyers initially looking to more conventional ways of spending less, including increased usage of low cost carriers, budget hotels and accommodation alternatives.

Hotel supply and demand will only become more challenging for buyers and the trend to use alternative accommodation options will reach its peak in the coming year. Low cost carriers may see an upturn in business as more buyers use this option for internal and domestic flights but a key challenge with this option is the lack of data when using low cost alternatives. But then again, the industry consensus seems to be that no matter what suppliers are used, data integrity and availability is a challenge across the board. Unfortunately this is one of the few things that will more than likely not be changing in 2009.

Demand management

When thinking of less conventional ways of saving money, I foresee demand management grudgingly being looked at as a possible source of cost savings. Why grudgingly? Because it is a concept that will truly ask travel managers to step far out of their comfort zones and let go of their immediate preconceived idea of 'This will not work in South Africa'.

Demand Management requires us to start asking the questions 'Why do we travel?' and 'Can the aim of this trip be accomplished without getting on an aircraft?'

Travel managers will need to get back to basics and start seeing individual trips as

either a good investment that assists the company in reaching its goals, or a bad investment that does not.

Of course, improved efficiency of pre-approval systems and the adoption of meetings technology are vital aspects in ensuring the success of this concept. Savings are certainly there for the taking if companies can get out of the habit of travelling just because it is 'how we have always done things'.

"The importance of value-add will be a consistent driving force and we will see an increase in companies looking at adopting global trends in order to be competitive."

Value-adds more important than ever

The importance of value add will be a consistent driving force and we will see an increase in companies looking at adopting global trends in order to be competitive and to add even more value to their employers, clients and travellers.

Maximising the use of technology and getting to grips with environmental sustainability will gain a lot of focus in 2009, but the most important aspect of travel deserving far higher priority in the year ahead is that of traveller safety and duty of care.



Monique Swart; regional director Middle East and Africa ACTE.

Duty of care shake-up

The terrorist attacks in Mumbai at the end of 2008 again highlighted the sad fact that often we only look at the issue of traveller safety and duty of care after an attack or disaster of monumental proportions has affected our company and travellers. 2009 will be the year to shake ourselves firmly out of this lethargy. The world is becoming a less safe place and travel managers have a duty to ensure, within reason, the safety of their staff who make daily trips. I foresee this responsibility being taken far more seriously in the year ahead.

With all this upheaval, education will be of paramount importance to ensure personal and collective success in the new year.

ACTE will continue to deliver a locally relevant platform for learning and idea sharing and we look forward to an exciting year ahead. ■

About ACTE

The Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) represents the global business travel industry through its international advocacy efforts, executive level educational programs, and independent industry research. ACTE's membership consists of senior travel industry executives from 82 countries representing

the €463bn business travel industry. With the support of sponsors from every major segment of the business travel industry, ACTE develops and delivers educational programs in key business centres throughout the world. For more information on ACTE, please go to www.acte.org.



Group Five cements the blocks

With significant growth in business and the recent appointment of a new TMC, travel is a talking point at Group Five, and group travel manager, Mandy Diggle, is using this hot-list status to boost travel awareness and education. By Kim Cochrane

SINCE taking up the newly created position of Group Five travel coordinator in 2004, and later in 2006 as group travel manager, **Mandy Diggle** has focused on using the building blocks of travel management to cement a solid foundation from which to work going forward.

This has proven beneficial, particularly now, following a significant increase in travel spend as a result of the group's overall growth in its different geographies including Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

In support of this growth trajectory, travel spend has doubled – even trebled – over the years Diggle has been with the company. “With new contracts in Africa, we’ve had to recruit labour from the Far East as well as

“Meetings with Amex can be tense and intense, but we are transparent and they know if I have a problem I won’t hide it.”

from South America, the latter in support of a new joint venture with a French company. From October 2007 to October 2008, Group Five spent R50m on travel (excluding MICE spend). Of that, at least 70% is air spend and of that, 20% is domestic.” When Diggle was interviewed by BTN in June 2006, the spend was around R23m per annum (90% of that air spend, only 10% domestic).

Encouragingly, however, is that despite the increased spend, with the support of its recently appointed TMC, American Express Travel Services (Amex), Group Five has still managed to achieve savings of over 45% against published fares, according to Diggle.

“This is more than we were saving in the past and it has to do with smart travel management and more discipline from business units and their travellers. Amex joined officially in August 2007 (setting up in-houses at Group Five’s Rivonia and Boksburg premises) and has been proactive and assertive in terms of supporting our preferred partners. One example of this is passengers flying down to Durban on a low-cost carrier and returning with SAA, which enables the flexibility of changed departures if travellers are not sure of their return times when booking.”

People are a priority

With people her priority, Diggle’s view is that even though she and the TMC work for different companies, at the end of the day, they are one travel team hoping to achieve



MARK JACSON/MOS

“My goal has been to encourage personalised service and creative consulting.”

greater efficiencies in the travel process. “The six consultants who work in the TMC make the difference. They’re the reason we have one TMC as opposed to another.

“It’s about continually improving processes and systems to adapt to our changing needs so as to achieve greater efficiency, without losing the personal touch.”

My goal has been to encourage personalised service and creative consulting: think for the passengers, communicate with them, pre-seat them, include their frequent flyer programme details, make the travelling experience more pleasant etc. With our spend on the rise, personalised service has been increasingly difficult to achieve, so Amex has engaged learners to help with processing and brought in an additional accounts person. I now also have an assistant, Gugu, to help Group Five

stay on top of issues and to eliminate problems at source.”

If anyone understands the TMC point of view, it’s Diggle whose strong travel background enables her to be hands on in her role. After obtaining a National Diploma in Tourism and IATA/UFTAA certificates at Pretoria Technikon, Diggle started work in 1989 as an assistant in a travel agency (Keiser and Gentry). She has worked for various retail and wholesale travel organisations including Gundelfingers (later Rosenbluth International), Holiday Travel and Rohde Reisen (now CruiseMasters). She was approached to run the in-house at Group Five (with Leading Travel) in 2001. At the time, the Group Five travel account was split between at least 20 agencies and senior management had no knowledge of true spend. The in-house was taken over by Harvey World Travel in 2002 and after three years of leading the team, Diggle was offered the travel coordinator position.

A perfectionist, Diggle has a passion for data. A joint achievement with Amex she’s particularly proud of is what they’ve built from a reporting perspective. “Our travel management report (TMR) is almost perfect – our data integrity improves all the time – and we now produce variants for each of the 13

Greater efficiency with a personal touch

Mandy Diggle believes that people should be a top priority

business units. It's encouraging to see the units now requesting their TMRs, utilising the information and becoming more aware of the costs they're actually incurring. We've gone backwards and forwards over the past year just tweaking parts of the TMR and I've probably driven Amex crazy with all of our requests."

Recouping costs

To recoup travel costs internally, Group Five tried the option of adding a service fee onto each invoice which the TMC collected on its behalf (and off-set against the management fee), but this created more administrative hassles than benefits so the idea was scrapped. "What we do now is bill each unit from our Shared Services Finance department."

One payment concern that has come to the fore, however, is that because Group Five doesn't provide accommodation establishments with its lodged card details, the amounts are billed to the TMC which then manually raises an invoice and swipes the card against that, incurring merchant fees.

"Successful travel management is more than just making the reservation; it's the entire process from booking initiation to the payment of invoices and closure on that specific transaction."

"On the air spend side, the airlines absorb this so there's no cost to us, but on land arrangements the cost – about R30 000 a month – is added to our management fee and as the Supply Chain department, we take that knock even though our unit doesn't travel much at all. We're working with Amex to prepare a breakdown of how the merchant fee is comprised so we can bill the respective business units."

Diggle believes the team's achievements in consolidation, savings and meaningful reports have contributed to travel gaining more visibility within the group as well as recognition and buy-in. "I have a quarterly slot at our Shared Services management forum as well as a platform at senior level."

And although she is shy and quietly spoken, Diggle is not afraid to take up matters at the highest echelons of her working community to continue paving the way for an enhanced travel management programme. ■

Technologies & tools – successes

- "We've implemented a register of tickets that have been submitted for refund, as well as unused tickets, so I can identify tickets not refunded within a reasonable period and see which ones still need to be utilised.
- We've introduced a logging system with tracking numbers for accounts queries. This enables us to get a monthly report on queries logged and when they were closed.
- We've implemented Diners Club Advantage and now send out our Diners Club statements as well as our invoices electronically. Billback invoices with supporting documentation are sent by hand, but the bulk of our transactions are air so this is easier to manage.
- I'd like to enable consultants in the TMC to be more productive through a web-based technology that displays different fare options on one screen.
- Group Five is still using a manual approval process and assessing various electronic authorisation alternatives, including Fraction, which Amex is currently rolling out. This system would serve two functions: forcing pre-authorisation and order numbers, as well as serving as a tool for measurement of response times from both Amex and Group Five."

Group Five fact file

The diversified construction services, materials and investment firm celebrated record year-end results to June 30, 2008. Operating profit before fair value adjustments was up 62% to R636m and group revenue increased by 16% to R8,9bn. Going forward, Group Five has a record one-year construction order book of R8,5bn, a 76% increase from the previous year. Other key areas for the group include investments and concessions, construction materials and manufacturing (travel falls within this sector, with Diggle reporting to the Group Supply Chain director).

Group Five employs about 14 000 people (around 6 000 permanent employees) throughout its regions. There are two main types of travel: travellers based in SA visiting sites and those who travel between the sites. There are about 150 travellers and 30 VIPs, with another couple of hundred travelling between the sites.

Regional destinations: Angola, Burkino Faso, DRC, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania.

Eastern Europe: France, Germany, Hungary, Poland.

The East (incoming traffic from the Philippines and India).

Also: Australia, UK and the US.

Preferred partners: Amex; 1time, Air France/KLM, Airlink, Lufthansa, SAA, SA Express, SWISS; Budget Car Rental; City Lodge Hotels, Three Cities Group, Protea Hotels and various B&Bs.

Pearls of wisdom

"I'd encourage buyers to join forums, read up as much as possible and network with peers. For access to new tools, I've attended business management courses. Also useful, is visiting Group Fives' various sites and locations, particularly those in Africa. For example, a hotel in Lagos may be 20km from the airport, but it takes you three hours to reach it because of traffic – and travelling is not permitted after 18h00.

Traveller behaviour is something we should influence, particularly since their behaviour dictates airline behaviour (i.e. no-shows or airlines wanting to charge agencies for holding seats and not cancelling bookings). There's tremendous pressure on agents to manage bookings and not hold too many options. A way to assist is to streamline travel policy – look at the options, traveller time/convenience and also cost. Consultants should be empowered to make these decisions on behalf of travellers."



Coming to the party...

Is consolidating data from low-cost carrier flight and B&B bookings into a corporate's reporting tools challenging? The panel responds...

By Liesl Venter

FEW can argue that successful businesses run on successful systems. Regardless of how big or small, under-estimating the value of a good system will sooner or later affect the bottom line, something most can't afford in the current economic downturn.

Contrary to popular belief travel expenses are one of the largest controllable expenses after salaries and information technology, but data systems are vital – not just for the corporate but also its suppliers.



This month's Business Travel Now Power Panel looks into the challenges of receiving and consolidating travel reports from low cost carriers and B&B's where a lack of systems often hamper the process.

"More often than not it is a costing and manpower issue with the low cost suppliers not having the platforms to support data collection," says **Monique Swart** regional director Africa and Middle East Act. "Reporting is vital, amongst other things, to assess for budget purposes what has been spent and saved and for supplier-negotiation leverage."

But the history of the low cost supplier industry is not corporate, says **Heather Hunt**, president of the National Accommodation Association of South Africa. "Unfortunately this industry started off ad hoc, stats and record keeping were, and still are considered time

wasting and not essential. Most B&B owners do not come from a corporate background."

This is further exasperated by the small accommodation industry being unique in that most operators live on the property and wear a variety of different "hats" during the course of a day from porter to human resources expert.

"Often we find people decide to start their own business in the hospitality industry and suddenly need to be conversant in all aspects of a business ranging from bookkeeping to marketing, labour law, greeting guests and even cooking breakfast," says Hunt.

"Arranging airport transfers, training staff, hiring and firing, stock control, the list of things to do goes on and on. Now to ask these very busy people to give reports to which they can see no value to themselves becomes a huge challenge and one in which they will not participate. We are all small businesses and most of our hours are spent on promoting our own business, and endeavouring to make a living."

Nico Bezuidenhout, ceo of low cost carrier Mango, believes the challenges experienced by corporates in consolidating travel spend reports from low cost suppliers relates to the fact that these types of travel services are typically not reserved via a GDS (Global Distribution System).

"Most low cost carriers and B&Bs are typically not available on systems such as Galileo, Amadeus or Worldspan, resulting in disparate booking sources. Corporate users typically rely on reporting interfaces between their back office administration applications and GDSs for purposes of consolidating and generating travel spend and activity reports."

Are these reports really necessary?

Simply put, knowledge is power, says Swart. "Reporting is vital. Information and data from suppliers for monthly, quarterly and annual reports have to be systemised to keep track of travel spend, to ensure travel policies are being complied with and that budgets are correct and up to date."

"Travel represents a substantial expenditure item for businesses in South Africa and as such accurate reporting is a management imperative," says Bezuidenhout. "Given the substantial variances in prices for what is in essence a homogenous service (at least as far as short haul air travel is concerned), substantial cost savings are possible through strict enforcement of the travel policy. In this regard post-event reporting plays an invaluable role."

According to Hunt the need for the consolidation and receiving of reports is even more important in the run up to 2010.

"New businesses are opening up daily with 2010 and beyond as their focus. In order to receive funding or financial assistance to get their businesses off the ground they have to provide statistics relevant to their industry

including aspects such as occupancy levels, percentages of local, corporate and overseas tourists. Statistics now play a major part in planning and development of businesses. Without them, comparisons of percentage occupancy, cash flow forecasts and business plans are almost an impossible task."

It is therefore imperative that the low cost supplier ensure they are able to provide reports to the travel manager.

What can be done to improve consolidation and receiving of reports?

A: "The small accommodation establishment owner needs to see a value and reason to submit reports. They have to be educated about this, given a really good explanation for the time spent writing the reports and how it will enhance their business. Educate the B&B owners to realise that the statistics they are gathering for the reports will play a major part in the planning and development of their businesses." **Heather Hunt**

A: "The first step is to ask for the reports! Buyers need to be clear on what they want, if they are willing to pay for the info and of course, if preferred partnerships are in place with low cost alternatives. MIS must be included in the RFP. If this is not possible due to costing, manpower and technological constraints, determine what can be offered and if there is any way to work within these alternative boundaries." **Monique Swart**

A: "Availability of low cost carriers and B&Bs on GDSs, provided the cost implication for the travel service provider can be minimised, is the obvious answer. In addition, the reporting burden may be lessened by making low cost suppliers' booking services available via electronic procurement platforms. By service providers making reporting interfaces (directly between the service provider inventory systems and corporate user administrative platforms) available to the corporate user the system would improve" **Nico Bezuidenhout**

What is the impact of not receiving reports from low-cost carriers and B&Bs?

A: "Without statistics and research reports it is almost impossible to give the answers to basic business questions. The lack of reports whether it is a new enterprise or an existing enterprise makes forward thinking, forward planning and the need for change, growth and sustainability difficult to predict. Small businesses do not realise the importance of knowing where they were last year and being able compare it to this year and then link that information to



Heather Hunt, president of the National Accommodation Association of South Africa



Monique Swart regional director Africa and Middle East Acte



Nico Bezuidenhout, ceo of low cost carrier Mango

projections for next year. Without reports we are unaware of market trends, how the industry is coping, where the main markets are, what corporates need from us and where to market our businesses successfully." **Heather Hunt**

A: "Not receiving reports has various problems attached to it. Firstly, one cannot operate a managed travel policy without having the data to support that management. Also, one cannot measure exactly how much is actually being saved and even though savings may be obvious due to the low cost aspect, budgeting for future spend is very difficult to do without current spend figures. Additionally, if buyers ever reach a stage where they can look to open negotiations with their low cost suppliers, this is not possible to do without understanding usage and spend."

Monique Swart

A: "Overall enforcement of travel policy, directly by corporate users or by travel agents on behalf of their clients, becomes impossible or very time consuming. Even excluding the aforementioned inefficiency/governance considerations, basic functions like reconciling credit card statements becomes very labour intensive and accordingly costly. Mango's services, with product offerings customised for the corporate travel market, are available through platforms which allow for consolidated reporting." **Nico Bezuidenhout**

Improving relationships between low cost carriers and B&Bs with corporates?

As in most industries communication remains key to the improvement of relationships between the low cost suppliers and the corporate travel manager. "The small accommodation sector needs to have report back from the corporate travel market about what their expectations are, what they see as value for money in terms of tariffs they are prepared to pay for services rendered and what exactly do they require in terms of reports for their systems," says Hunt.

Bezuidenhout agrees adding that work also has to be done in correcting and improving perceptions about low cost suppliers. "Low cost is often equated to low class or poor service in the mind of the business traveller. Perceptions exist that low cost carriers are not punctual, that service offerings are sparse or that they are using antiquated aircraft. The reality is, however, that in Mango's case for example, the newest aircraft of its type is being used, the airline had the best on-time record of any airline during 2008 and has many products aimed at providing to the

specific needs of the corporate traveller."

According to Bezuidenhout meeting the needs of and appropriate communication with the corporate travel market positions the low cost supplier to better service an important segment of the overall travel market.

This, says Swart, is extremely important as the trend to use more low cost alternatives grows. "The requirements of the corporate sector will need to slowly but surely be addressed by the low cost suppliers. When a good portion of their income starts coming from preferred deals in the business sector, these suppliers will have to come to the party and develop systems that can answer the corporate requirements." ■

Next month...

With the usage of internet bookings, SBTs and other online tools ever growing, the panel will discuss what channels travel managers are using to get the best travel deals.

Birthday celebrations



Turning 30 is a celebration of our achievements as a successful and proudly South African car rental company.

A big thank you to all who have supported Imperial Car Rental for 30 years and who continue to support us as we venture into our next exciting chapter as Europcar.



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DEAL DETECTIVE



STOCKXCHANGE

1. LONDON

Emirates Airlines. "Super London fare"
- special economy-class fares to London
Gatwick from R5 955 ex-Johannesburg.

Minimum stay is three days and the
maximum stay is one year. Valid for sales
and departures until April 30. Offer includes

airport taxes but excludes fuel surcharges.
business- and first-class specials are
also available.

2. EUROPE & NORTH AMERICA

Lufthansa German Airlines. Group special
ex-Johannesburg to selected destinations in
Europe and North America. The weekend
fare is R3 960 and the midweek fare is
R3 470. Valid for sales until the end of
February. Travel is permitted from April 1 to
October 31. Minimum stay is three days and
maximum stay is one month. Minimum group
size is 25 passengers.

3. EGYPT

Azure Travel. Egypt 'Price Crash' specials
from R5 380 per person sharing. The
rate includes five nights' all-inclusive
accommodation at Stella Sea Club Hotel,
return flights ex-Johannesburg and return
transfers. Special expires March 23. Add-ons
ex-Cape Town and Durban are also available.

4. KENYA

Sun & Sand Tours. Seven-night packages are
available from R5 678 per person sharing. Rate
includes flights ex-Johannesburg, hotel-airport
transfers, accommodation with daily breakfast
and dinner. Special is valid during May, June
and November.



PROTEA HOTEL

5. CAPE TOWN

Protea Hotel President. Rates are from R490 per person sharing and include breakfast. The
weekday offer includes a one hour free internet voucher and the weekend offer includes a free
boat cruise. Minimum three nights' stay from Monday to Thursday and minimum two nights'
stay from Friday to Sunday applies. Not valid for groups. Special is valid until March 31.

Linda van der Pol, Travelinfo's editor, is our Deal Detective, bringing you great specials from Travelinfo, the online travel information system in daily use by travel agents all over SA. Almost every airline, hotel group and car hire company is on Travelinfo, and information and specials are regularly updated. These specials are available to all staff, even for personal use. Just book through your TMC, and tell the consultant it's a Travelinfo special. To get connected to Travelinfo, e-mail lindav@nowmedia.co.za



6. ARGENTINA

South African Airways. Inaugural fares to Buenos Aires – R2 750 ex-Johannesburg and R3 550 (NAD 3 550) ex-Windhoek return. Offer is valid for sales until February 28. Travel is permitted from April 1 to June 30. No minimum and maximum stay restrictions. Special business-class fares are also available.



7. ITALY

Ski Travel. Livigno Valentine's deal – rates are from R9 499 per person sharing. Package includes transfers from Zürich Airport, seven nights' self-catering accommodation, self-catering starter pack, welcome dinner, bum boarding, snow carting, ski excursion and resort discount card. Offer is valid February 14-21.

8. PARIS

Travel Vision. Disneyland Paris – "Mickey's Magical Party: kids fly, stay and play for free". Rates are from R9 579 per person sharing. Package includes return airfare ex-Johannesburg, three nights' accommodation with breakfast and unlimited admission to Disneyland Paris Parks. One child under 12 only pays departure taxes. Valid for travel until April 2.

9. EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST, FAR EAST & AMERICA

Egyptair. Special airfares to Cairo from R1 730, to Europe from R1 960, to the Middle East from R1 840, to the Far East from R2 300 and to America from R2 880. All fares are return economy fares ex-Johannesburg. Valid for sales and travel until March 23.



10. EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST

Olympic Airlines. Special fares to Greece, select European and Middle Eastern destinations from R3 500 ex-Johannesburg. Minimum stay is seven days and the maximum stay is one month. Offer is valid for sales and departures until March 31. Add-on fares ex-South Africa domestic points, Windhoek and Gaborone are available.

11. RÉUNION

Air Austral. Special fares to Réunion from R2 700. Valid for sale and travel until June 29. There is no minimum stay restriction, maximum stay is one month.

12. ZANZIBAR

African Encounters. Low-season specials from R7 960 (for four nights) and R9 815 (for seven nights). Rates are per person sharing ex-Johannesburg. Package includes return flights, taxes, four-star accommodation with daily breakfast and dinner. Rates are valid from April 16 to June 15. ■

Self booking tools (SBTs)

SBTs have become increasingly popular as a way to cut down on high-touch services from TMCs. Some corporates are even going it alone opting for SBT tools that are not TMC linked. Max Marx investigates...



MARK JACKSON/MOSS

A global perspective

Booking tools have evolved dramatically over the past year to include more aspects of travel spend, according to US-based Ross Atkinson, vp of technology solutions for BCD Travel.

In a recent article in *In Motion*, BCD Travel's online publication, Atkinson said: "We are in the third phase in the evolution of booking tools since their launch in the mid-1990s. This phase

has seen the expanding usage of the tools for more varied and complex purposes including booking inter-continental trips, multi-sector and open-jaw itineraries, and rail travel, and booking flights for meetings."

Atkinson attributes the wider use of booking tools to the increasing maturity of clients' travel programmes and of the tools themselves.

"Moving online lowers both purchasing and

processing costs, and also improves compliance, so clients are eagerly embracing the expanded options being offered by the tool providers." However, Atkinson cautions, maturity levels vary from client to client and from market to market.

According to the article, the online adoption average increased to 19% in 2007, up from 14% in 2006 across all BCD Travel's EMEA customers.

Corporates' SBT wish lists

Must haves:

- Be policy driven
- Available online
- Independent of the TMC
- Full GDS level inventory access
- Low-cost carrier web access with "ghosting" to PNR and back-office capability
- Nett/negotiated fare access
- User-friendly interface

- Detailed MI capability
- Well-structured authorisation and request process flow
- An itinerary construction component
- Traveller profile database
- Access to all flight options including LCCs, hotels, and cars
- Reporting tools and human backup for when things go awry

Nice-to-haves:

- The ability to integrate corporate card data to ensure straight through processing from request to expense
- SMS notification
- SAP
- Oracle interface
- Messaging systems
- Change of booking capability

Q&A

What are the latest trends and developments in self booking tools internationally?

- **Jim Weighell**, corporate manager Sure Travel: The user fraternity is maturing and the expectation versus delivery gap is closing. Once corporates understand the functionality and objectives behind SBTs, the process flows far more effectively.
- **Julian Curtiss**, ceo Transaction Technology Solutions: They're essential in placing the traveller in control of their own requirements.

Is South Africa following international trends in SBTs and how are bandwidth limitations here impacting access to technology?

- **Weighell**: We are somewhat behind the developed markets in implementation of SBTs, but interest is continuing to grow.



Julian Curtiss, ceo Transaction Technology Solutions

Bandwidth is a problem but broadband facilities are capable of handling SBT transactions.

- **Curtiss**: Most SBTs in SA are provided by TMCs. This limits companies should they wish to change TMCs. Bandwidth is not so limited anymore with 3G services and WiFi access points.

What travel are corporates in South Africa booking using SBTs?

- **Weighell**: SBTs are limited with regards to Round the World travel which is still largely constructed manually and in which potential pitfalls are numerous. Usage is generally for international and domestic trips of one to four flight segments per booking.
- **Wally Gaynor**, md Club Travel: Public and corporate sites have not yet got multi-sector international bookings right. Club Travel's Internet site www.flightsite.co.za has the ability for passengers to submit a multi-destination request online with a consultant fulfilling the request.

Are corporates using SBTs provided by their TMCs or are they opting for independent ones?

- **Curtiss**: SBTs are mainly provided by TMCs and travel consortiums.
- **Weighell**: The nature of a SBT (not to be confused with an Internet booking engine) is that they cannot be operated without TMC ticketing fulfillment and they comprise a significant level of management functionality. Corporates sometimes do select the SBTs to be utilised by their TMCs, but generally the TMCs are involved in the selection process.

What kind of savings can be made using SBTs?

- **Curtiss**: Depending on the extent to which the SBT manages the entire value chain, this can be between 6% and 48%.
- **Weighell**: Savings will be variable by client, depending on size of the account, adoption rate by travellers and travel arrangers,

quality of and adherence to travel policy, and initial set-up suitability. The terms low-touch and high-touch are increasingly being used in contractual agreements, with costs being determined to a large extent by the amount of human intervention on bookings. Savings are also determined by the efficiency of the travel programme prior to inception of a SBT. With a poor or fragmented programme prior to SBT and revised policy set-up, savings in excess of 20% can be managed, but this can also be achieved without an SBT in many cases. Deployment of an SBT is not a silver bullet solution – a detailed needs analysis must be carried out.

- **Gaynor**: A good consultant is hard to beat and the savings made through such consultants far outweighs any fees payable for their service. The problem is there are so many so-called travel consultants that know less than their clients and don't look at all options. That's one reason clients want to do it themselves. SBTs reduce consultant intervention and TMCs therefore charge less in fees for the service.



Jim Weighell, corporate manager Sure Travel

E-procurement options

OPTIONS like electronic procurement systems are entering the market wherein travel arrangers can follow pre-structured procurement processes without having booking access to inventory,

says Weighell. "This may suit smaller companies which cannot justify the initial outlay on an SBT and monthly rental costs."

There are also more cost-effective non-

GDS aligned SBTs available that may meet the needs of SMEs .

"SBT applicability must be measured carefully in terms of real cost to benefit ratio."

The future of business travel

The fundamentals to driving costs out of corporate travel powered by the internet

Unstable economic conditions are forcing business executives and managers to reduce costs wherever possible. Travel is a key strategic business requirement and while businesses may find it difficult to cut down on business travel, the obvious drive is to find cost effective solutions to reduce total costs.

Realise up to 30% savings by implementing mymarket.com

About mymarket.com

Established in 2000, mymarket.com is an e-procurement solutions provider, delivering innovative solutions to industry using world-class processes and technologies. With a passion for delivering value, mymarket.com is at the forefront of innovation and e-commerce. Being internet based, no software is installed at clients' premises dramatically reducing IT costs. mymarket.com is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Bidvest Group Limited which employs more than 106 000 people worldwide on four continents.

A seamless web based solution that integrates with existing systems

mymarket.com's online travel solution utilises cutting edge technology to provide corporate clients with a holistic travel management solution. Recognising the fundamentals of procurement best practice and founded on the key objective of driving savings, the mymarket.com travel offering is a world first in integrated, internet based travel solutions.

We achieved a remarkable 82% online adoption rate within the first two months of trade at a leading South African bank.

Client interactions confirm that the online travel solution ensures the realisation of significant cost savings per client, enabling organisations to manage and control their specific travel requirements. The system is custom built to meet the local needs of the South African market without compromising its world class functionality or standards.

The online travel solution is backed by the market leaders in the travel industry, BidTravel, ensuring minimum risk to the customer moving online by offering corporate customers the best of both worlds; the tried and tested traditional TMC's powered by the speed and benefits of the Internet.



Achieve massive savings using the following six pillars:

Access the internet to make your own bookings

- View all airlines, car hire and hotels/B&B's from a single screen (e.g. SAA, BA, Kulula, 1time and Mango)
- Reduced agency fees, no unnecessary manual intervention
- Faster bookings 24/7

Book at the lowest fare/price (visual guilt)

- The system will advise users that the lowest "in-policy" booking has not been made.
- Corporate rates and web rates will always be used

Corporate policy enforcement

- System will enforce company travel policy/rules
- All bookings are electronically approved using user friendly sms and e-mail technology

Eliminate manual paperwork and processes

- The automation of the entire travel procurement process from travel requests to the generation of e-purchase orders to feeding of e-invoices into existing ERP and accounting systems

Business intelligence and reporting

- Comprehensive library of real-time reports to analyse travel behaviour and travel trends and highlight savings opportunities

Supported by SA's leading TMC's

- BidTravel accredited travel management companies support all bookings to ensure a safe and hassle free trip

A word from Rod Ward, Ellerines Holdings Limited group procurement

The partnership between mymarket.com and Ellerines, started in July 2007.

"To date our experience with mymarket.com and the relationship that is being forged between the parties is proving to be of benefit. The advice and support we receive is excellent. We are finding the tool of great help in not only assisting us to pursue our stated maxim of "lowest relative cost" but also to ensure that the expenditure incurred is both accounted for and leveraged according to the Group's stated procurement goals and objectives.

"mymarket.com has been taken on-board as an e-procurement channel through which the requirements in bespoke commodities and services are routed and channeled to a myriad of different suppliers and service providers across the spectrum of commodities and services utilised in Ellerine Holdings Limited."

A word from Philip Katz, managing director, mymarket.com

Creating the future and translating business requirements into a cost savings virtuous circle is our business; and 2009 will be a very exciting year for the company and for e-commerce in general.

Major new customers partnering with mymarket.com include Edcon, Ellerines Holdings Limited and FNB who join our existing client base of over 150 corporates. A large number of potential partnerships with major blue chip and JSE top 40 companies are in progress.

Tremendous technology enhancements now allow for advanced travel functions to be performed online e.g. multi-leg bookings and post-ticketing changes including the rapid deployment of the travel solution into large customers.

Exciting new suppliers integrated into the one-stop travel solution included the low cost carrier, Mango, as well as over 700 B&B's and guest houses.

Strong growth both locally and increased international interest means that mymarket.com is well placed for business in 2009.

A word from Linette Mulder, Edcon travel manager

The partnership between mymarket.com and Edcon, started in August 2007.

"We chose to use mymarket.com because – after doing extensive research on what possibilities were available - we found the majority of them were effectively plug and play options, which did not allow any room for customisation.

"The nice thing about mymarket.com is that they were willing to come to the party, and would customise elements as requested. Being a local company they are immediately available if there are any problems with the system"

Contact us:

Wayne Muirhead

Sales director

+27 (11) 731 7600

waynem@mymarket.com

1st floor, 158 Jan Smuts Ave (cnr Walters), Rosebank

Mymarket.com offers cost-effective solutions

IN the current global economic environment businesses have no option but to drive down costs, says Wayne Muirhead, mymarket.com sales director.

"And while many businesses may find it difficult to cut down on business travel, the obvious drive is towards cost-effective solutions."

Muirhead says the Mymarket.com travel procurement and management system offers the perfect toolkit to realise this strategic savings imperative.

As an e-procurement Internet solution the entire travel procurement process from

requisition to integration into existing ERP and accounting systems is automated. This means minimum time and effort spent managing travel administration and inaccuracies arising from human intervention are eliminated.

This online self booking tool offers customers all available booking options and fares on a single screen and the widest range of suppliers both locally and internationally.

It offers instant booking confirmation, benchmarking against lowest available rates, rigorous adherence to travel policy and the ability to track declined savings over time.

Its compliance component shows cost savings

realised through policy endorsement and integrated approval workflows using SMS and email. Pre-negotiated corporate rates and private fares are monitored and booked and overall compliance and financial budgets are managed as is the approval workflow functionality unique to the Mymarket.com system.

From a reporting and business intelligence perspective, Mymarket.com has the ability to identify maverick behaviour, offer pre-and post flight information, track travel and booking trends, report in real time and analyse spend.

Mymarket.com is a subsidiary of the Bidvest Group.

Case study: Ernst & Young

ERNST & Young (EY) introduced a SBT at the company last year. The tool selected was not provided by EY's TMC.

Terri Bowyer, EY's former travel manager says the aims of introducing a SBT was to maximise cost efficiencies, establish a travel booking process that was aligned with the EY global travel policy, focus on effectively managing spend, streamline back-office processes and reduce travel costs by using low-cost carriers.

"Going direct means we can effectively channel our spend to our suppliers, which gives us more control as to which carriers our people are using, and negotiate better deals."

Among the features EY looked for in selecting the SBT were: real time and exception reporting, quality management information, traveller profile management, the ability to book B&B accommodation and repeat trips and the ability to process changes and cancellations, as well as good infrastructure support and backup.

Bowyer says thus far major benefits have been the taking of full control of the company's travel spend (R30m annually - 70% domestic) by implementing its own travel office complete with dedicated travel manager.

"We expect to see savings at the end of our financial year as we are still refining the model

"By managing traveller discipline we hope to increase our savings by pushing the use of low-cost carriers"

to suit our current business requirements."

The project has enabled EY to gain a deep understanding of its business travel needs and Bowyer feels EY is now in a good position to develop the most effective travel management solution for its business.

"By managing traveller discipline we hope to increase our savings by pushing the use of low-cost carriers, which is where we see the greatest



(from left) Ernst and Young's Nonhlanhla Rabolele, junior travel consultant, Terri Bowyer, former travel manager, and Buhle Mbuyisa, intern travel consultant, see the SBT in action every day and enjoy using the system. "It is quick, convenient and easy to use," said Mbuyisa, "we can access information instantly and check flights' status easily. The system definitely works for me."

saving potential."

The booking tool is used to book domestic air travel only, accessing the Worldspan GDS to do so. Although it has the functionality to book accommodation, car hire, transfers and coaches, these are booked directly with suppliers, either telephonically or through supplier websites. Bowyer says payment challenges are the reason for this.

International, multi-sector and regional travel is still managed by EY's TMC. Bowyer says there will always be a need to utilise the services of a TMC.

"We need their expertise and support structures, especially with EY travellers going into Africa, and our global interests."

She says the decision to acquire a SBT had nothing to do with trying to save on TMC management fees, which have not changed much.

Thus far, the company has shown limited cost savings due to fuel surcharges and, to some extent, a lack of traveller discipline. "We understand however that it's the nature of our business which often necessitates last minute travel. We're also working towards managing and thereby minimising the high volumes of travel changes."

How the SBT and booking process works

The SBT has not been rolled out to EY's travellers and their traveller bookers (EY employees) but is managed in EY's dedicated travel office with travel co-ordinators managing travel requisitions.

EY has a self-developed high-tech travel requisition system that is used to manage all travel requests. The system links directly into EY's accounting package and each trip cost is assigned to the relevant charge codes and business units. The system houses the approval process where only a handful of approvers may approve travel. They are responsible for confirming trip validity, the business reason for the trip, carrier selection, policy compliance, and that the correct charge codes have been allocated.

The SBT is EY's booking engine and once a travel requisition is received, travel is booked on the engine and the internet.

The requisition is then populated with the actual costs and sent off for approval. Once approval has been received through the booking database, the consultant is authorised to confirm all travel arrangements and charge our lodged card. EY has lodged cards with both its travel office, and its TMC. ■

Corporate air charters – what you need to know

By Tessa Blane

THE recent spate of air charter accidents in SA has heightened the level of awareness among corporates as to what travel managers should know when booking a charter service.

Jeffery Pooler, a B777 captain for Korean Air, addressed the ITMSA forum recently and shared his expertise in this area. He is not only a captain but also an aviation advisor for corporates with regards to air charter services, private jets and general aviation regulations.

“Air travel is still the safest form of travel. The recent incidence can only be attributed to human error, the guy behind the controls is the weakest link. However corporates can protect themselves by knowing what to look for in an air charter company and what to avoid.” Air charters, he says, offer

many positives for corporates and managed in the correct way can enhance the travel experience of employees.

Finding an air charter company that is reliable and resembles the ideal organisational structure (see diagram) is what travel managers should be making a priority. As far as Pooler is concerned ExecuJet and NAC (National Airways Corporation) most closely resemble this structure. “They employ their own aircrew, manage all the aircraft they operate, have airline-type training and maintenance policies in place and generally have much greater control over all the entities than do the smaller air charter companies.”

What travel managers need to know

The recent air charter accidents involving

corporates has made travel managers aware that they should be checking and reassessing their travel and insurance policies to protect the corporate and travellers.

Pooler outlines what travel managers should know when considering an air charter service:

- **Dealing with a charter company or broker**

Travel managers are entitled to ask charter companies or brokers for details regarding their service. This should include aspects such as its accident history, the issue and suspension date of the Aircraft Operating Certificate (AOC) and passenger & third party liability cover.

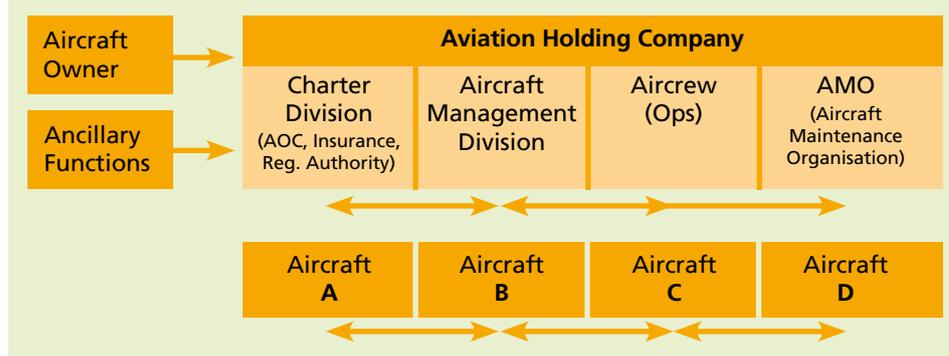
- **Find out about the aircraft management and maintenance organisation**

Finding out if the management and maintenance organisation is an in-house division of the charter company or is outsourced is important. Enquiring about the reputation and history of the Aircraft Maintenance Organisation (AMO) should also be a priority for the travel manager.

- **Do checks on the aircrew**

Question the air charter company regarding the aircrew and whether they are permanently employed or working on a freelance basis. Licences and a pilots experience should also be checked. Find out about training and how recently the proficiency of the pilot was tested.

Ideal structure of the air charter industry

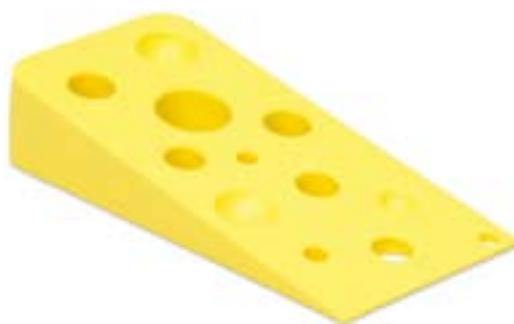


Mitigating risk – the ‘Swiss cheese effect’

“Accidents and incidents never happen in isolation,” says Pooler. In the industry this is known as the ‘Swiss cheese effect’. Pooler explains: “Imagine all the components that either have to work together in order for a flight to depart or that affect the flight: the fatigue level of the crew, weather factors, aircraft maintenance issues, Air Traffic Control, the pressure of maintaining an on-time schedule, security at the airport and on board the aircraft, status of infrastructure (navigational aids, runways etc).

“Think of each of these as a slice of Swiss cheese and like the cheese, a mistake or human error is equivalent to a hole in the slice of cheese. Combining all the above issues and components in order for the flight to depart is like stacking all the slices together, and where an error is allowed to occur without being recognised and rectified it is like two or more holes in the slices lining up with each other.

“An accident or incident occurs when all the holes line up or, in other words, where an error is not identified throughout the sequence of events. Should the final line of defense - the pilots - fail to recognise or



rectify an error that may have occurred days or months before and in a totally different department of the organisation, the potential for an accident is greatly increased.”

However, Pooler believes despite this ‘Swiss cheese effect’, travel managers can put certain processes in place to mitigate the risks of using air charter services. Here’s what to look out for:

- **Deal only with reputable charter companies or brokers**

- **Request information**

Pooler suggests sending an online or hard copy of a questionnaire to the charter

company. “As the corporate is paying the company for a service, they are fully entitled to request any information,” reiterates Pooler. He adds that once you have got the information you require, stick with a charter service and form a relationship. “In this way a trust will be built and getting regularly updated information will be easy.”

- **Make sure flights booked comply with aviation regulations**

If it is a legitimate charter company the tickets should be issued directly.

The company should also be operating in accordance with the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR), ensuring their pilots have a CAR Part 135 or CAR Part 121 license.

- **Never accept private flights**

Travel managers need to educate their business travellers on air charters and explain the risks involved in accepting flights that have not been authorised. “There are major insurance implications for corporates whose employees accept private flights i.e. passenger and third party liability.” ■

How to appoint a TMC

By Denise Slabbert

HENDRIK Du Preez, head of business development Africa & Middle East for Wings Corporate Travel, says there are a number of factors one should bear in mind when appointing a TMC.

"It is always beneficial to source a TMC with a global footprint. Not only should they have representation globally, but it is essential that the representation should be in strategic geographic locations across the globe."

He points out that it is important to research whether the global operations of the TMC are independent franchises or wholly-owned operations because, as he suggests, "independent franchises are more prone to compatibility and information sharing problems".

Advanced technology, he says, is also a critical factor in choosing a TMC. "The latest technologically-supported products and services allow for simple and safe travel management and travel-spend analysis that is vital for managing costs, especially in today's financial environment."

A 24-hour contact centre that is accessible worldwide is enormously beneficial, says Du Preez, but again he echoes that it's vital to establish whether the contact centre is outsourced or owned and managed by the TMC. "Being able to have immediate travel support, regardless of time zone or location, proves invaluable when travelling."

Strategy is all-important

"Before considering the appointment of a TMC you have to satisfy certain important criteria," says **Mike Gray**, ceo of Uniglobe Travel Sub-Saharan Africa.

"Pressures need to be looked at, meaning the external and internal forces that impact the TMC's market position and the future sustainability of their client service strategy and capability."

Looking at strategy is all-important, says Gray. "The strategic approaches that the TMC takes to leverage industry opportunities for the client such as service quality, cost containment and so on need to be considered." He also says that the TMC's business process and capabilities need to be carefully looked at such as online booking systems and the integration with client systems.

"TMCs with a good name in the industry should be considered. Doing reference checks and looking into the TMC's reputation is always a good idea."

Best practices or Best-in-Class practices also need to be examined very carefully. "Practices that are currently the best being employed by the TMC and which are significantly superior to the industry average is what you're looking for," says Gray.

Kananelo Makhetha, md of Connex Travel, believes appointing a TMC is not always as clear cut as it sounds and that companies should look at their various options and consider various factors. "Choose a TMC that has a proven ability to save costs, has a working and effective travel data management capability and a global network."

Makhetha advises that only TMCs with a good name in the industry should be considered and says doing reference checks and looking into the TMC's reputation is always a good idea.

"If you're looking for a TMC in Africa," Makhetha says, "it's important to consider a TMC that has a number of African locations and preferably a TMC that has representation in South Africa. We're more advanced in technology and systems and having representation in South Africa will add technical value and know-how." ■

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It helps to make a fuss at check-in to get an upgrade

Denise Slabbert investigates



REALITY

STEPHEN Forbes, spokesperson for British Airways, says absolutely not. "Shouting at some poor check-in agent is not going to help, they simply don't have the authority to upgrade," says Forbes.

He says that travellers really should make use of the technology available to make flying less stressful and that customers need to know the rules when it comes to upgrades. "I would suggest, if you do want an upgrade and if you're an Executive Club member that you use miles to upgrade. Or make use of the Manage My Booking facility online and purchase an upgrade. We would suggest these are the routes to follow instead of creating a fuss at check-in, which is really not fair on the other passengers or the airline staff."

Forbes says that an airline is a commercial organisation where travellers have paid good money for their seat and it doesn't make business sense to upgrade customers for no good reason. "It erodes the value of the product on the basis of who shouts the loudest gets the upgrade. Any upgrades we would provide are provided on vigorous criteria. Shout as much as you like, we're not going to bend the rules," he says.

"Airlines have become very strict with upgrades

and generally only do so where commercially or operationally warranted," said **Craig Thomas**, country manager Etihad Airways. However, in the case where flights are overbooked in economy class, passengers are sometimes upgraded. In this

"Airlines have become very strict with upgrades and generally only do so where commercially or operationally warranted."

case, it helps to introduce yourself to the check-in agent and mention that you are a member of the airline's frequent flyer programme, he added.

Glenn Lewington, marketing manager for Kenya Airways, says the airline has a very strict policy on upgrades. "The reality is that it doesn't help to make a fuss at check-in to get an upgrade. Our policy is no upgrades unless authorised by a manager of the airline – there are few of us that have this authority. In fact, in South Africa there are only two of us that have the authority."

Lewington says that upgrades can sometimes be done at the airport in certain special cases. For example if a flight is overbooked, a late passenger can become an involuntary upgrade. However, he's adamant that vocal behaviour at the check-in desk is not going to make one iota of difference. He says, "Screaming at the staff will not work and neither will: 'I have a sore leg', 'My guide-dog needs more room', 'Do you know who I am?', 'I'm very tall', 'I can't choose between chicken or beef' etc".

He reiterates what Forbes has said so clearly. "In a nutshell, to fly J-class, book it! Or use your Frequent Flyer to upgrade".

Christopher Romaniello (who has held positions as both business development manager at Singapore Airlines and airport manager with Virgin Nigeria) is rather tongue-in-cheek about the whole issue. He says, "It's very important to play down the elitist angle, ie: Do you know who I am/who I work for/how many miles I have? The answer is no, sorry, I left my crystal ball at home."

On a more serious note, Romaniello says one should keep it simple when approaching check-in, "Keep it factual, with names, dates and flight numbers and save the emotions (and the stories) for the therapist's couch". ■

It's crunch time

Experts say despite the credit crunch it may not be all doom and gloom for the MICE (Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) industry, explains Sue Lewitton...



Rick Taylor, CEO of The Business Tourism company

Economic recession bodes well for incentives

AS many companies in SA are forced to face the possibility of hard times ahead, it becomes more important than ever to keep staff motivated.

Kathy Nel, incentive and event manager for Rennies Travel, says to increase revenue, companies need to encourage sales, and incentives are an extremely effective marketing tool to do just that. "Incentives enable you to motivate your sales people at the rock face of your business and when the economy is down, the need to motivate these people is greater than ever," says Nel.

A well-structured incentive can go a long way to ensuring sales staff focus on the products that you really need them to push. Nel says the benefits of incentives don't stop there – there's the added plus that unlike other marketing tools, a company's incentive programme can end up paying for itself.

With regards to incentive destination choice, **Rick Taylor**, CEO of The Business Tourism Company, says he anticipates the popularity of Brazil, Russia, India and China will increase, as well as Indonesia and Bali. "Companies should be looking

for innovative destination choices that can add to their employee's experiences," says Taylor. "Some of the more traditional and expensive destinations like Paris should remain popular, simply for the reason that many people dream of going there and

"When the economy is down, the need to motivate people is greater than ever."

desirable destinations will work to motivate staff."

Nel agrees that some new destinations are emerging, especially in Asia and South America, like Vietnam and Argentina. Clients are looking for destinations where the exchange rate is more favourable so that their budget goes further," says Nel. She adds that she anticipates she may see clients shortening trips by a day or two or opting for more casual and inexpensive meals in order to cut costs.

The time to act is now!

CONFERENCE, meeting and exhibition organisers may have their work cut out for them in the foreseeable future if current economic trends continue on their path towards a major recession. Taylor says the conference and meeting agendas are going to have to be far more robust with a measurable return on investment (ROI) to encourage delegates to attend.

"The economic situation is actually fuelling the meeting industry"

"The recession is going to put pressure on PCOs and speakers to make the investment worthwhile for attendees of meetings, conferences and exhibitions," says Taylor, but he adds that if everyone can get their act together and deliver, delegates may view attendance at exhibitions as playing an important role in ensuring their company survives the crisis. He says that some conferences are looking at unusual ways of cutting costs, like room sharing or

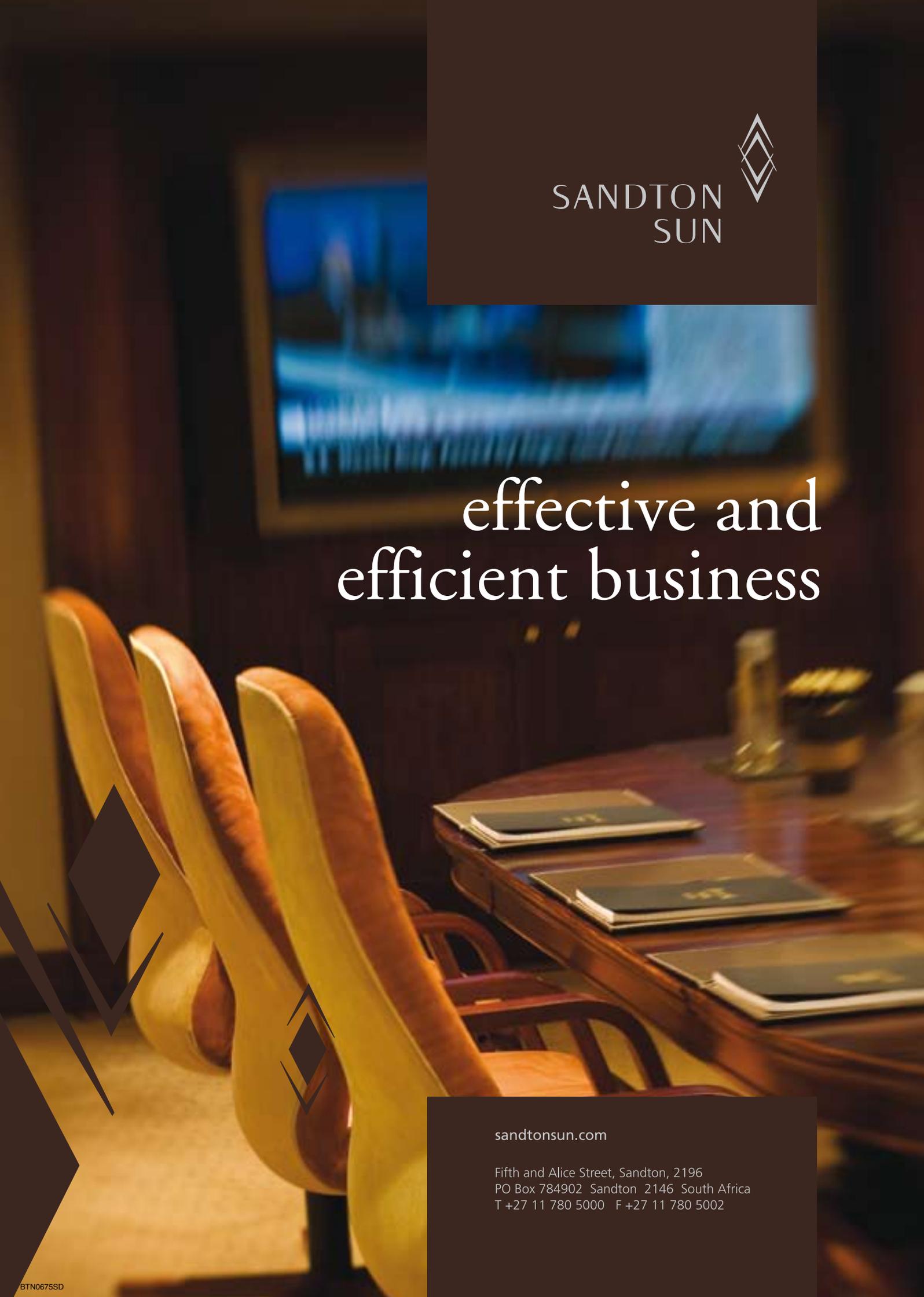


Meeting agendas are going to have to be more robust

opting for mid-market venues. However, he maintains that the magnetism of a conference remains an important factor in getting delegates to attend, so cutting costs may not always be the best route to go.

In fact, an economic crisis may even end up benefitting the sector as Taylor argues that the current recession could provide

ample opportunity for meeting planners to boost their business. "Commercially, the world is currently working out how it's going to be able to continue to tick – and this in itself has spurred many a meeting," says Taylor. "The economic situation is actually fuelling the meeting industry as resolutions need to be reached," says Taylor.



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PCOs keep it local to beat rate flux



Botswana offers incredible local incentive options, such as mokoro rides on the Okavango Delta

UNFAVOURABLE exchange rates are forcing incentive managers and PCOs (Professional Conference Organisers) to consider local destinations over those abroad. Nel says that as clients start looking for more cost effective trips, it makes sense to stay closer to South Africa as the region has a lot to offer incentive groups.

“It’s crucial that SA ups its marketing game.”

Taylor agrees and says that not only South Africa, but the entire SADC region is often under exploited and there is room for major growth in terms of introducing homebound components into the MICE industries.

He says Botswana has incredible incentive products, as well as Victoria Falls and Mozambique. “Even Zimbabwe is just waiting to pounce on the lucrative MICE market,” he adds.

Although South Africa offers an excellent value for money proposition, this is not always true of all countries in the SADC region, says Taylor. Fewer hotels and conferencing facilities means less competition and ultimately higher

prices, especially as many SADC countries’ pricing model is based on the dollar. “This could become even worse as many SADC countries move towards euro-based pricing,” adds Taylor.

On a positive note, Taylor says Southern Africa is seeing remarkable growth with regards to MICE from an inbound perspective. “New major convention centres, world-class hotels and remarkable value has put Southern Africa on the global map and it’s crucial that we up our marketing game to ensure we become more and more competitive in years to come,” says Taylor. “I predict that SA will remain in demand over the next year, providing we address some areas of concerns, like upping service levels and increasing air access out of Cape Town and into core markets.”

Did you know?

A major European Meetings Report presented at EIBTM by The Right Solution md, **Sally Greenhill**, revealed that SA was the seventh most popular event destination for organisers based in Europe. SA was beaten only by Germany, Spain, Italy, France, the US and the UK.



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MICE trends for 2009

It's not only economic factors that will influence the MICE sector in 2009. Here's the lowdown on some of the other trends that have come under the spotlight.

Corporate Social Responsibility

THE annual EIBTM Industry Trends and Market Share report, compiled by **Rob Davidson**, senior lecturer in Business Travel and Tourism at the University of Westminster, identified greener events, environmentally conscious venues and companies demonstrating higher levels of Corporate Social Responsibility as key trends over the past 12 months. Taylor says that green meetings are definitely catching on globally and incentives will probably continue to feature a strong Corporate Social Responsibility element going forward. "A lot of corporates want to leave behind a legacy, whether it's through education, alleviating poverty or building houses," says Taylor.



Corporate Social Responsibility is becoming a key element of corporate incentives

Technology

"We're 10 years into the 21st century already, so it's crucial that we remain innovative and creative in our approach," says Taylor. "In the past decade we've moved from an information desert into an information jungle and I predict that the next 10 years will continue along these lines," he adds. "Technology is here to stay and although it can't replace one-on-one interactions it will certainly play a growing role in the MICE industry." This sentiment was echoed in the findings of the EIBTM report which said that the use of technology shows no sign of diminishing with social online networking making its mark and wireless access at convention centres increasingly being requested.

Integration and consolidation

The EIBTM report also highlighted that the past year has seen the integration and consolidation of the MICE sector, reducing the number of small firms but enabling a more global approach to the management of meetings and events. The report states that the application of best practices has been expanded worldwide through the sharing of experience, knowledge and tools.

End of the small incentive house?

IN financially difficult times, smaller incentive companies may find it challenging to weather the storm. Nel says that if she had to spend R1m or R2m on an incentive trip, she would feel more comfortable working with a larger and more financially stable company. "Bearing in mind that incentive trips are booking and planned months in advance, deposits have to be paid well in advance too," adds Nel.

Nel says larger incentive houses, such as HRG Rennies Incentives, have the advantage of the HRG Rennies buying power. "Through the volumes that HRG Rennies books and the good relationships we have with our suppliers, we are able to negotiate favourable rates for our clients," says Nel. "We also have the financial security, extensive experience and a larger pool of resources within the company to draw from."

Thebe Exhibitions to manage helloAFRICA

THE Thebe Exhibitions and Projects Group has taken over the management of destination management company helloAFRICA. The Cape Town-based company offers incentive and corporate travel, meetings and event management in South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia. Its services include programme and event design, destination and accommodation management, conference registration, team building, speakers, promotional material and gifting.

Group md, **Carol Weaving**, says this step brings together two organisations that serve a very dynamic target market. "It makes good business sense to pool resources to the benefit of business tourism."

helloAFRICA's acting gm, **Adriaan Fourie**, says: "The expertise that the combined team will bring to the industry will definitely be a force to be reckoned with."



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What's hot & happening

Sandton Sun ups its conferencing offering



Southern Sun has introduced a new, fresh design to its bathrooms

FOLLOWING its R100m refurb in 2007, the Sandton Sun has commenced further developments to the sixth level of the hotel. These include new toilets, a soft refurbishment of the Terrace including a new kitchen and menu and the introduction of new boardrooms.

Work has also begun on the reconstruction of the areas occupied by the retail shops, which will be transformed into new meeting rooms and an executive

lounge area. The hotel also now has a new gym and two of the three existing presidential suites are in the final stages of completion matching them to the new look set in the initial refurbishment.

The Sandton Sun also now offers complimentary WiFi access and laptop size safe in all the rooms, satellite conferencing facilities, an onsite business centre, conferencing and banqueting facilities that can cater for up to 1 000 delegates and safe parking.



RELAIS HOTELS

Cruise the canal

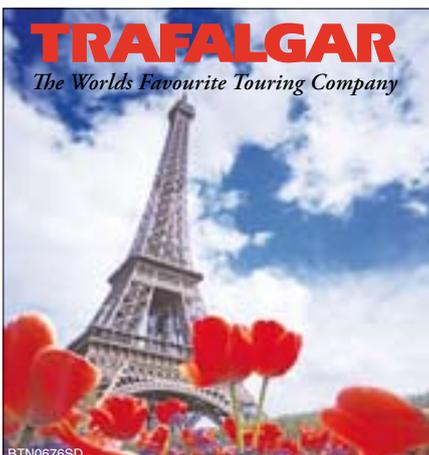
THE newly opened Harbour Bridge Hotel and Suites lies adjacent to the CTICC and guests can catch a barge from the hotel to the conference centre which is linked by the Roggebaai Canal. The barge also ferries guests from the hotel to the V&A Waterfront.

New name and game plan for Weekends Away

WEEKENDS Away is in the process of changing its name to The Balance of Work 2 Play. The company says the reason behind the name change is the way in which the business has evolved over the past seven years, from an adventure agency catering to the recreational marketing into a business tourism agency catering to the corporate market. The company

says it will not neglect is recreational clients and has placed a section on its website called 'Book It Yourself' where it will list its top recommended recreational venues along with contact details.

The Balance of Work 2 Play will now specialise in incentive travel, conferencing and teambuilding events, both locally and internationally.



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What's hot & happening

New incentive options from Royal Caribbean

ROYAL Caribbean International has announced several new incentive options on offer in 2009/10. The cruise line will launch its entry into Dubai with the deployment of *Brilliance of the Seas* in 2010. From January to April next year, the cruise line will offer seven-night sailings from Dubai. Ports of call will include Muscat, Oman; Fujaira, UAE; Abu Dhabi, UAE and Mina Sulman, Bahrain. Prices will start from US\$799pps (R7 966).

Another option, when she launches in late 2009, will be *Oasis of the Seas*, the largest cruise ship in the world. She will have 16 decks, feature 2 700 state rooms and carry 5 400 guests at double occupancy. She will be the first ship to tour the cruise line's new neighbourhood

concept of seven distinctly themed areas, which will include 'Central Park', 'Boardwalk', 'the Royal Promenade', 'the Pool and Sports Zone', 'Vitality at Sea Spa and Fitness Centre' and 'Entertainment Place'. The ship will sail from her home port of Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale. Prices will start at US\$999pps (R9 996).

Other options will include the cruise line's *Navigator of the Seas*, which will offer four- and five-night short western Mediterranean cruises, sailing from Barcelona, starting at US\$399pps (R3 989). *Vision of the Seas* will offer a four-night short break on selected dates in June, July and August. Ports of call will be Stockholm, Sweden; Tallinn, Estonia, and St Petersburg, Russia. Prices are from US\$514pps (R5 143).



Participate in adventure activities onboard the *Navigator of the Seas*

Meetings 'on track' with JB Train Tours



The conference car on Premier Classe seats 40 delegates and can transform into an evening function venue

JB TRAIN Tours has introduced its Premier Classe packages in conjunction with Shosholozza Meyl.

Corporates can now book meetings facilities to accommodate 40 delegates between Johannesburg and Cape Town. The packages include all meals on the train as well as a stopover in Cape Town. The meetings facilities can also be transformed to suit evening functions onboard the train set.

JB Train Tours is also offering to visit clients at their place of business to work out their specific meetings needs and arrange all the extras that may be necessary for the experience.

Passengers can choose to return via train or fly back to Johannesburg. The company says that the tours are designed for those corporates often "looking for something different to do".

Pezula incentives on offer



PEZULA Resort Hotel and Spa in Knysna is offering three incentive packages valid from April 1 to October 31. Apart from its world-class golf course, Pezula also offers a variety of outdoor activities and is close to a secluded beach, great for a relaxing getaway. ■

Packages	Inclusions	Price for single client per night	Price per person sharing per night
Package 1	Accommodation, transfers to/from George Airport, breakfast, tourism levy, on-site hydrotherapy area, 24-hour wireless Internet connectivity, welcome drinks on arrival	R1 625	R1 125
Package 2	As above plus a round of golf/ spa treatment (to the value of R525) /hike and canoe/ horse ride, use of the gym	R2 205	R1 705
Package 3	As above plus lunch and dinner, and use of the conference facility, refreshments, conference stationary and AV equipment	R2 885	R2 385

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Creating business opportunities and diversifying and improving the conditions of cross-border trade are just a few of the plans for the area, explains Max Marx.

Investors are becoming a priority

OUAGADOUGOU, the capital of Burkina Faso, is the political and commercial hub of the country. Although not rich, the country is politically stable and the economy relies mostly on agriculture.

Industry is not well developed but the government encourages the creation of thereof. Existing industries include food processing, textiles, breweries, leather, petro-chemicals and gold.

The craft industry and tourism also play an important role in the economy. The Ouagadougou International Art and Craft Fair is the biggest handcraft fair in Africa.

Private investments are generally profitable and many economic sectors are not yet fully exploited which creates good business opportunities for

those with an entrepreneurial spirit.

The government is supportive of private-public sector partnerships and in a recent development Burkina Faso's president Blaise Compaore initiated the Presidential Council of Investment which will hold its first session in the first quarter of 2009. The aim is to bring the experience of private non-resident investors to the community of resident business people. The government wants to create business opportunities, diversify and transform production, as well as improve the degree of openness of its economy and the conditions of cross-border trade.

South Africans generally travel to Burkina Faso for mining, although some are involved in the importation of cotton, gold, shea butter, crafts, and sesame – some of the country's exports.

New airport by 2011

Plans for a new airport in Ouagadougou were recently announced by Burkina Faso's government.

According to Internet media reports the airport is to replace the current Ouagadougou International Airport which has reached full capacity.

The reports say the €360m (R4,5bn) three-phase project will begin in 2009 – with

the first phase completed by 2011 when the airport will open to passengers.

The new airport will be located in Donsin, 35km northeast of the capital with the capacity to accommodate 1,5m passengers annually. It will also better meet international safety and security requirements, assist in attracting foreign investment and cater for increased tourist numbers.

Getting there

There are no direct flights from SA but Ghana Airways flies from Accra, Air Senegal International from Dakar, Air Ivoire from Cote d'Ivoire, Air Burkina – Burkina Faso's national carrier flies to all these destinations – and Ethiopian Airlines from Addis Ababa.

Flight information

Ethiopian Airlines' new services from Addis Ababa to Ouagadougou operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays via Lomé, and on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays via Accra and Abuja. The airline flies from Ouagadougou to Addis Ababa on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays.

The carrier offers 16 Cloud Nine business-class seats and 144 economy-class seats on the Addis to Ouagadougou sector using a B757-200 aircraft.



Daily flights operate between Johannesburg and Addis Ababa.

SAA flies twice daily from Johannesburg to Dakar (codesharing with Air Senegal International). SAA also flies twice weekly between Johannesburg and Abidjan and four times weekly between Johannesburg and Accra.



The Mercure Silmande 4

Top hotels

The average hotel room rate is US\$98 (R925) per night.

The five-star 210-room Laico Ouaga 2000 in the Ouaga 2000 business park has 600sqms of meeting space, a fitness centre and free in-room ADSL.

The 165-room three-star Mercure Silmande 4 overlooks a lake. Its business centre caters for 150 delegates. Guests can enjoy horse riding, golf, gym, mountain biking and tennis. ■

Fast facts

- **Currency:** CFA Franc.
(R1 = approximately 51 CFA Francs)
- **Religion:** Muslim 50%, African religion 40%, Christian 10%
- **Official language:** French
- **Health:** Malaria prophylaxis are recommended.
- **Visas:** South Africans need visas which take two working days to process. An original passport, two colour photos, a yellow fever certificate, and a letter about the visit or letter of invitation is required.
- **Visa costs:** R500 for three months single entry and R600 multiple entry, R700 for six months single entry and R800 for six months multiple entry.
- **Money matters:** The banking system in Burkina Faso is very developed. Credit cards are recommended for larger expenses.

What to see and do

- Explore Burkina Faso's history at the Musée Nationale de Burkina Faso.
- Learn about African music at the Musée National de Musique Afrique.
- There are also many urban parks. Bangr Weoogo was once a sacred forest and place of traditional initiation. Zone du Bois has good walking trails and a small zoo.

New CWT tools boost customer satisfaction

CARLSON Wagonlit Travel (CWT) has introduced new global tools into the SA market to ensure that customer satisfaction is taken to the next level.

CWT Resolve is a comprehensive global customer service tracking system. It utilises a web-based environment that allows CWT to streamline and improve the process of receiving feedback (both positive and negative) from travellers and travel bookers in any form, be it via phone, email or written correspondence. This in turn facilitates the monitoring and tracking of customer service issues and trends, including supplier-related issues, which leads to more efficient resolution and ultimately improved service and customer satisfaction. The tool is currently being rolled out to CWT's client base countrywide.

A further CWT global enhancement which is being introduced to the South African market is the **CWT Diagnostic Tool**, a sophisticated application which evaluates the effectiveness of a client's travel programme. The tool uses eight key areas of focus and scores the client's performance based on a number of critical factors within each focus area. The results enable CWT to assist the client in developing a customised and detailed progressive strategy for continuous travel programme improvement.

"Our commitment to customer care and service excellence is underpinned by our investment in people, products and processes," says **Ingrid Von Moltke**, national sales and marketing manager Carlson Wagonlit Travel. "CWT Resolve and the CWT Diagnostic Tool are two of the latest additions to our service toolbox, adding value to our clients' travel programmes." ■

WIN a two-night getaway for two

CWT, in conjunction with BTN, is offering one lucky prize winner a fabulous two-night getaway at any Southern Sun hotel or resort in SA for two people sharing (breakfast included) and three day car rental in a luxury Group F (automatic BMW or equivalent) from Budget Car Rental.

Question: What are the two latest additions to the CWT service toolbox?

To enter all you have to do is answer the easy question above and email your answer to kimcochrane@telkomsa.net. Entries must reach BTN no later than March 6, 2009. Please indicate your name, contact details, company and title clearly. Strictly one entry per person.

Terms and conditions: It is taken that the entrants agree to abide by the rules, which are: the prize is not transferable and may not be exchanged for cash. Staff members of Now Media, the host company or organisation sponsoring the prize, their advertising and public relations agencies, their immediate families, and travel agents may not enter.



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