



Case study - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

ABOUT

The missionaries of The Church Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been travelling to far-flung, remote destinations for decades to preach their doctrine. While times have changed and travel has largely evolved, the challenges associated with such remote travel remain, especially in Africa where some 1,400 missionaries – many of whom have never travelled internationally before – are posted across 26 countries.

SITUATION

Unlike most corporates, the travel requirements of The Church are unusual in that large volumes of travel are conducted to areas business travellers rarely visit – remote villages that are largely inaccessible, with rudimentary travel facilities, including alternative accommodation, that are not bookable on a GDS or Online Booking Tool (OBT). The remote nature of the travel destination makes communication difficult and, as a result, the organisation's duty of care obligations often take prominence.

Prior to the partnership with FCM Travel Solutions, the online adoption of their OBT was low and they relied on booking with local travel agencies. The Church relied on a team of 14 people and several volunteers on the ground to arrange and book travel on behalf of its missionaries, with two communities provided for in its travel policy – Senior Church Leaders and Missionaries.

For many of the missionaries being posted across Africa, this is their first international travel experience. Their inexperience often results in complications during travel – missed flights or connections, late arrivals and last-minute changes.

With branches worldwide and over 72,000 missionaries posted globally, it was clear that The Church required a global solution

– one that featured a combination of quick and efficient personalised travel assistance through dedicated travel consultants and a global Online Booking Tool (OBT) that, unlike its existing OBT, had minimal downtime and the support of a personalised and professional team when offline support was required.



Testing was done from August 2016 and, from January 2017

The Church went live with FCM Travel Solutions – a global company with the wide network it needed to cover the countries in which it operates.

CHALLENGES

Travelling across Africa is a challenge for even the most experienced traveller. For the missionaries posted in remote villages across the continent, even more so.

Young and enthusiastic, the missionaries of The Church are often embarking on their very first flight. Despite this inexperience, they are also subjected to unconventional business travel – travelling to destinations that are largely inaccessible and isolated, using transport and accommodation that is often rudimentary and limited.

As a result, there are challenges that remain difficult to mitigate. Travellers get lost in airports, miss their flights and connections, and are difficult to reach and inexperienced in solving problems while on the road. Achieving travel policy compliance in a travel environment that was unconsolidated and reactive, with inexperienced travellers, was difficult.

In addition, travel bookers on the ground are required to operate in a challenging environment, where much of the travel product that needs to be booked cannot be done so through a GDS or normal booking and communication channels. There are areas where booking by fax still reigns supreme.



APPROACH

The immediate goal for FCM Travel Solutions was to provide the seamless integration of cutting-edge OBT technology and personalised attention. A dedicated travel team of Senior Consultants, as well as an accounts resource, were appointed, led by an Account Manager whose role it was to direct strategic planning, customer relations and supplier negotiations on behalf of The Church.

FCM Travel Solution's first steps were to consolidate travel under one umbrella, increase user adoption and to improve the reporting and tracking of their volumes and travel spend.

Consolidation efforts required a great deal of change management within the organisation, not just in terms of the resources on the ground who were booking travel, but also the inexperienced travellers being posted to remote areas within Africa, who rely on the TMC to advise proactively on any health threats or travel risks and potential challenges.

The introduction of an OBT resolved the decentralised nature of travel booking, empowering the network on the ground to book travel seamlessly. Meanwhile, the strategic input of an experienced Account Manager assisted in more favourable supplier deals and the creation of a consolidated travel policy.

With hundreds of credit card transactions that needed to be reconciled, The Church was also given the support of a personalised finance team for all statements and invoices.

RESULTS

FCM Travel Solutions has been managing the travel programme of The Church since January 2017, providing a global network that consolidates the organisation's entire network of officers under one travel solution.

"The service we are receiving from FCM is very professional. Their solution helps us serve people in many different countries." Sandile Makasi, Project Manager The Church Makasi describes FCM as not just a TMC, but a partner, which provides travel industry insights and helps formulate and implement strategies that help The Church achieve value for money.

The FCM team, he says, is dependable, helpful and competent. "They are well-versed in ticketing, the travel industry and their offering. They have a high work ethic and always go the extra mile to assist."

The strategic approach to travel management introduced by FCM Travel Solutions has not only resulted in travel planning and booking efforts being consolidated under one umbrella,

it has ensured that The Church benefits from better supplier rates and the supplier relationships FCM Travel Solution enjoys globally.

The FCM Global Airfares desk has also provided support for complex business routings and savings of up to 20%, over and above regular ticket prices, beating The Church's direct airline deals.

Consolidating all its Africa offices through AETM technology has proven hugely successful. Combined with this technical approach is the personalised and professional service of two dedicated Senior Consultants, available throughout the business day for any queries, an Account Manager for reporting and corporate deal negotiations, and a personalised finance team for all statements and invoices, which means on-time travel card reconciliation and card and statement balancing.

"Travel emergencies tend to happen after-hours and early mornings. We are grateful that FCM has such a strong online support team that's always ready to help us." Sandile Makasi, Project Manager The Church

Highlights of FCM Travel Solutions' travel management approach on behalf of The Church:

- A thorough understanding of the organisation's unique requirements, company culture and challenges. This means that The Church receives flexible, dedicated service that is shaped to suit their specific needs.
- Seamless integration between technology tools and personalised service through an OBT and dedicated team.
- Strategic direction helping to shape travel policy and the ability to leverage the global supplier relationships held by FCM Travel Solutions.
- Experience in organisational change management and the implementation of a consolidated travel programme.
- Global network to cover the organisation's entire network of offices under one travel solution.
- Provides booking efficiencies, accuracy and last-minute changes seamlessly.
- Expertise for travel to remote destinations across Africa.

"The unconventional nature of business travel conducted by The Church and volume of travel to remote destinations by inexperienced travellers has proven an exciting challenge for FCM. Since the partnership with FCM began in January 2017, The Church has benefited from our strategic approach to travel management and expertise in consolidating travel planning and booking under one travel solution. For customers like The Church that require an end-to-end travel management approach, integrating cutting-edge technology with the personalised, dedicated attention of a professional team is critical in creating and implementing a travel programme that delivers on the organisation's specific travel requirements, while ensuring value and peace of mind."

Nicole Adonis
General Manager, FCM Travel Solutions South Africa