



2018 Travel Policy Do's and Don'ts

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One of the easiest ways to monitor and control your business travel spend is to implement a travel policy. This useful set of guidelines will give both you and your business travellers a clearer idea of what can be booked and within what budget, streamlining your bookings process and saving you a lot of time and effort. It's important to review and update your travel policy each year to ensure it's still working to support your business objectives.

Before you begin

But before you put pen to paper, it is important to consider the objectives of your travel policy. Although your policy will likely be first and foremost a cost control exercise, you might also be looking to encourage your staff to book with your preferred suppliers, increase staff productivity, or back up your duty of care policy.

It's also a good idea to consider your company culture and its values. If you're a fun start up then implementing a draconian travel policy is unlikely to be the correct course of action. Think too about how you will communicate your travel policy to your travel bookers and travellers. You might choose to publish

it on your intranet, on a staff networking site, or through an online booking tool for example.

Finally, don't forget to take your booking process into account. How will your travellers request travel and how will it be approved? You might decide that all travel must be arranged through assigned travel bookers, or perhaps allow your travellers to book their own travel online, maybe through a booking tool, and you'll want to keep your approval process as straightforward possible.



Once you've considered the above, it's time to start writing. Travel policies don't need to be complicated, and are in fact best when they are clear and concise, avoiding room for misinterpretation. To help you to decide the specifics, we've put together some travel policy do's and don'ts below:



DO:

Consider your class of travel

While on the surface, booking the cheapest cabin class might be the best option for saving money on flights, there can often be hidden excluded costs with the cheapest fares, such as checked in luggage. Therefore, think about what type of travel your staff are most likely to partake in and adjust your policy accordingly. You might state that all flight bookings must be within 10% of the cheapest class in order to ensure that luggage is always included. Permitted cabin classes might vary depending on the length of flight, or depend upon how senior your employee is within the company.



DO:

Think about your preferred suppliers

If you've negotiated deals with certain suppliers, whether airlines, accommodation, car rental or rail companies, then ensure that staff book with these companies as a first priority. This will help you to achieve volume discounts, giving your company the best value and ensuring a good travel experience for your staff. Dealing with fewer suppliers will allow you to negotiate better rates for your preferred options and save you money.



DON'T:

Forget to tell your staff about your hotel programmes

if you've negotiated rates with specific hotels based on your volume of room nights, then in order to continue using your discounted rate, you'll have to meet the minimum number of booked nights per year. Therefore it's important that your staff use these rates, both to make the most of the discounts and also to keep in line with your duty of care policy and locate your travellers quickly in case of an emergency.



DO:

Encourage your travellers to book in advance

set out how far in advance travel should be booked in order to take advantage of advance booking rates. The further travel is booked in advance, the lower the fare you'll pay, so it is crucial to encourage your staff to book responsibly. For example, booking 28+ days in advance to Europe is 55% cheaper than booking 0-3 days before departure. Likewise, booking 28+ days in advance for long haul travel is 25% cheaper than booking 0-3 days before departure. Educating your travellers is therefore crucial to lower the cost of each trip and maximise your budget.



DON'T:

Forget about public transport

Taxis are not always necessary. If cost control is important, then be clear on whether your staff are allowed to use taxis or whether all travel should be done via public transport, except for specific circumstances.



DON'T:

Allow your travellers to be swayed by loyalty schemes

While it's a nice perk for your travellers to be able to collect personal frequent flyer points for their business travel, it's wise to specify that loyalty schemes are not allowed to sway their decision to book outside of preferred suppliers, or to book a more expensive option. Perhaps consider a rule where all bookings should be made within a certain margin of the cheapest available option. This not only keeps costs down but also avoids.



DO:

Keep an eye on staff bleisure travel

Make sure you give clear guidelines as to how your staff can extend their business trips for the purpose of leisure travel, nicknamed 'bleisure' travel, to reduce queries and misuse. After all, you wouldn't want all of your staff extending business trips at the same time.



DO:

Specify if staff can travel with personal companions

Are personal companions, for example a friend or spouse, allowed to accompany your travellers and if so can they stay in the same room/hotel? This question often crops up so it's a good idea to set out the rules.



DO:

Make provisions for medical emergencies and security

It's important that your duty of care policy is robust enough to cover your travellers while they're away on business. Whether you work with an expert security company such as iJet, or you manage your own emergency response in-house, it's important to explain the procedure in your travel policy. For example, it can be useful to give your travellers a small card with your emergency numbers on it, or include them on their itinerary. They'll also need the details of any medical insurance and travel insurance policies your company has in place.



DON'T:

Assume your staff will handle their own visas

Make sure you are very clear about whose responsibility it is to arrange staff visas, and how they should be arranged. Perhaps your staff will arrange their own visas, or you might decide to work with a specialist company to arrange them on your behalf.



DO:

Encourage your staff to consider their travel health

Staying fit and healthy while travelling is important for your travellers' wellbeing and productivity. Encourage your travellers to check whether they require any immunisations before travelling.



DO:

Give clear limits on daily expenses

To regulate your travellers' expenses and control costs, give clear spend limits for daily meals, both for individuals and for if they are entertaining guests, and ensure you state whether or not alcohol is covered.



DO:

Liven up your policy to encourage adherence

Travel policies do not have to be dry, wordy documents, so think about ways to make them more palatable. Gamifying travel policy adherence can make it fun for your staff to follow the rules; perhaps you could give a prize to the top 'follower', such as a free flight or hotel stay.



DO:

Ask your tmc for advice

When creating your travel policy, ask your travel management company for advice and support. They can not only help you to write it, but can review your travel spend data to identify trends and areas where you could make savings by changing your behaviour. For example, here at Corporate Traveller we help our clients to get better value from their annual travel spend by driving advance booking behaviour and revising cabin classes allowed.



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