



Case Study

Simplifying travel post-merger for education provider



x2

Staff when organizations merged



300+

Ways of booking travel



1

New overarching policy

Merging of minds

This global education provider is at the heart of education research and resources. Its expertise range from qualifications and academic publications to shaping curricula and education systems around the world.

Approximately 35% of its 6,700 internal staff travel for work, alongside thousands of external contractors. With operations in 170 countries, no trip is ever the same. Travel choices are often varied too, sometimes including accommodation such as farm stays in rural areas.

Michael Strange, Global Corporate Travel and Risk Manager, joined in January 2021. The education provider had just merged with another, and naturally that meant the merger of culture and processes, including the travel program.

#1 goal? Capturing data

Staff essentially doubled in the merger, with different travel programs. As staff in countries such as India, Philippines, Spain, France and South Africa saw teams join each other in the same building, it meant travelers could be sat side by side, but were booking with different TMCs. Some were even booking with our sister brand Corporate Traveler. Michael estimates that there are more than 300 different ways to book travel within the organization, considering all the online and offline options.

And with all those options, comes data challenges. “It’s hard to actively track who has or hasn’t traveled because the history of our travel program has been a little bit convoluted. Some countries may be working with a high street shop or a little back street travel organizer, so it hasn’t always been possible to get travel data. Trying to capture that data historically has been my number one goal when coming into this program,” said Michael.

With some countries booking through a sister brand to FCM, Account Manager Laura Saville keeps it in the family by working closely with her counterpart at Corporate traveler to present the big picture. “We’ve allowed the organization to continue with the status quo and aligned where possible to ease the pain while they go through these changes,” said Laura. “It’s a unique set-up, but Michael has FCM and Corporate traveler data in one place, so he can pull reports from one set of data.”

Michael’s message to the business when asked for a report is that the data is only as good as the information that’s being fed into it. It’s part of his push for one global TMC and centralized reporting, so that when he’s approached by internal departments and stakeholders for the numbers, they’re as close to complete as possible.

Ripping up the travel policy

Another priority was the travel policy; Michael “pretty much erased the policy and started again”.

There weren’t just different booking channels, but different policies too. Company variations. Regional variations. Even department variations. Michael took the reins; asking regional directors and global stakeholders what worked, what didn’t and what needed to change. Then with a blank piece of paper, he rewrote an overarching policy asking travelers to adhere to:

- Risk assessments.
- Environmental considerations.
- Certain booking practices, such as using a TMC where available.

There is still autonomy for each region, which has received good feedback.

Peace of mind, trust and security overrules any discussions about cost.

“Ultimately when something does go wrong, having these systems in place that are working effectively and constantly will allow us to help our travelers and help our staff when we really need to,”

said Michael. He regularly sound-boarded the policy with Laura and the team to ensure it was on the right track.





...with a stellar team by his side

“The FCM team have been legendary. We’ve had our own shortfalls and problems internally which have restricted us being able to progress through certain areas. The team have been massively patient and understanding with that. I couldn’t not do any part of what I do without them,” said Michael.

He called out Account Manager Laura Saville and Paul Jarvie, and program Optimization Director Graham Ross for helping Michael understand the possibilities. Whether it’s a domestic issue in the UK or a problem in India or then to South Africa in the next email; they’re always there with solutions, work arounds or honest truths. While travel volumes may have been lower recently, Laura said the long-term partnership has developed over the bigger picture projects.

Michael is also appreciative of the operational team, who he describes as patient and proactive. “We’ve had an exponential increase of travel requests and those guys are doing what they can when they can. I’m grateful for them,” he said.

Michael also praises the FCM Trip Checker for its accuracy and usefulness.

“The COVID tool that FCM have provided us have been my lifesaver. That is firmly ingrained front and centre on our global travel hub internal page and I direct people there frequently.”

The future is in more consolidation

Michael is approaching his program with a fresh mindset with stronger stakeholder engagement. Having fought off internal requests for an RFP due to his confidence in FCM, Michael is focused on his mission to implement one single global TMC.

“My mission with our rather fragmented and discombobulated travel program is aligning, continuity and consistency, which Laura and the team are helping me with. There’s a lot of work currently sitting in the background about processing and progressing forward with a single global TMC, which is becoming a very close reality. The FCM team have been inspirational in providing solutions that I’ve put forward to sell the prospect and potential of that single TMC internally,” explained Michael.

Where his travel team have been taking bookings, Michael wants to alleviate that so they can focus on internal training, risk management, finances and insurance expenses, leaving FCM with the travel expertise. And while Michael has HR, finance and email issues that hinder his efforts, he’s confident that with FCM, his job will be a lot easier.

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