Make meaningful impact

Insights into proving your travel program's value.

Introduction

Corporate travel is at an inflection point.
Why does it matter?

"Everything" can be managed online now.
Why invest in TMC travel tech?

Travel managers need to make a convincing case.
Why should stakeholders care?

Suppliers are changing how they address corporate travel.
How do travel managers evolve?

There are a lot of questions facing travel managers, but they all boil down to one important concept: proving corporate travel, and a travel program's, value, now and in the future. It's easy for stakeholders to see business travel simply as a red line item on a balance sheet – money that goes out that doesn't seem to come back in. But as a travel manager, you know the value your program brings. You just need a way to show it. And the secret to finding value may be hiding in plain sight within your corporate travel technology (and if it's not…then it may be time to start moving in another direction.)

As we go further, we'll break down key value points of a corporate travel program and point you towards the actionable reporting insights that will help you back it up.

So don't sweat it – the next time you're at a stakeholder meeting, you'll be ready.

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Part I:
What's the ROI of business travel?

...and how actionable insights aided by technology help you prove it.

We wish there was an easy answer. Like some magic formula that provides a one-to-one correlation between a business trip and an increase or decrease in investment. But the truth is that to get to the nitty-gritty of your travel program's value, you need to piece data together from across your entire program's operations. And you don't want to get blindsided by focusing only on savings - your travel program still exists without them. Find abstract value elsewhere.

Much of this data should be found within your travel platforms and apps, but some of it you may need to start tracking yourself, or cross-reference with reporting from other departments. Let's break it down.

Employee retention

According to [Gallup](#), it costs anywhere from 50% to double an employee's salary to replace them. In countries like the U.S., this amounts to a US$1 trillion loss across all employers. This is the cost of voluntary resignations. And in the same Gallup report, the conclusion was that this loss was mostly "self-inflicted" by the employers.

You may not think of your travel program as a tool for employee retention. However, for the employees that are classified as "road warriors" the efficacy of your travel operations can 100% be a make-or-break when it comes to deciding whether they should stay or go. And even when it comes to employees that don't travel as much (or at all), travel can be an excellent incentive.

Here are a few ways to leverage your reporting tools to measure your travellers' wellness and thus improve your employee retention:

Actionable insight: Tracking red-eye flights

Late-night and overnight flights are sometimes simply unavoidable, especially when it comes to long-haul flights. A well-travelled employee may tolerate a few of these flights in a short time. But truthfully, too many red eyes can lead to traveller burnout, which may lead them to...you guessed it! Quit.

Track when your travellers are flying by running a red-eye flight report in your TMC's reporting and analytics tool. This will break down how many red-eye flights a traveller has taken within your chosen time frame. The report will flag travellers who have taken too many red-eye flights within your chosen time frame, and you can set the number of red-eye flights that can trigger a warning.

Actionable insight: Length of trip report

According to a report by [Zippia](#), the average length of a domestic business trip is three days, an international trip is 5-6 days, and approximately 26% of business trips are just a day. When you analyse your length of trip report, you can glean some insights into how a traveller may be faring.

A short trip can be just as detrimental as a long trip depending on the traveller's circumstances. Work trips where you need to fly in and out in the same day can be very taxing on travellers. So, if you see that people are taking a lot of these trips, consider adjusting your policy to allow them at least one night in a hotel to rest before flying home.

Another way to de-stress travellers on close-to-home trips is to encourage taking the train if and when possible. Trains often come with wider seats, free Wi-Fi, a dining car, and less stressful boarding procedures. If someone needs to be in and out quickly, a train may be the right call, for your company's bottom line and for your traveller's mind.

Actionable insight: Number of trips

This one might be a no-brainer, but it's always important to see how many trips each individual traveller is taking. In your report, you can set the number of trips that will cause a flag.

Remember, even your road warriors need a break. If you notice someone has undertaken a lot of trips in a short time, reach out to them and ask how they are feeling. If they express stress or exhaustion, investigate pushing their next trip further or seeing if another employee can cover for them. Your traveller will thank you for the understanding, and compassionate steps like this can motivate employees to stay with your business longer.
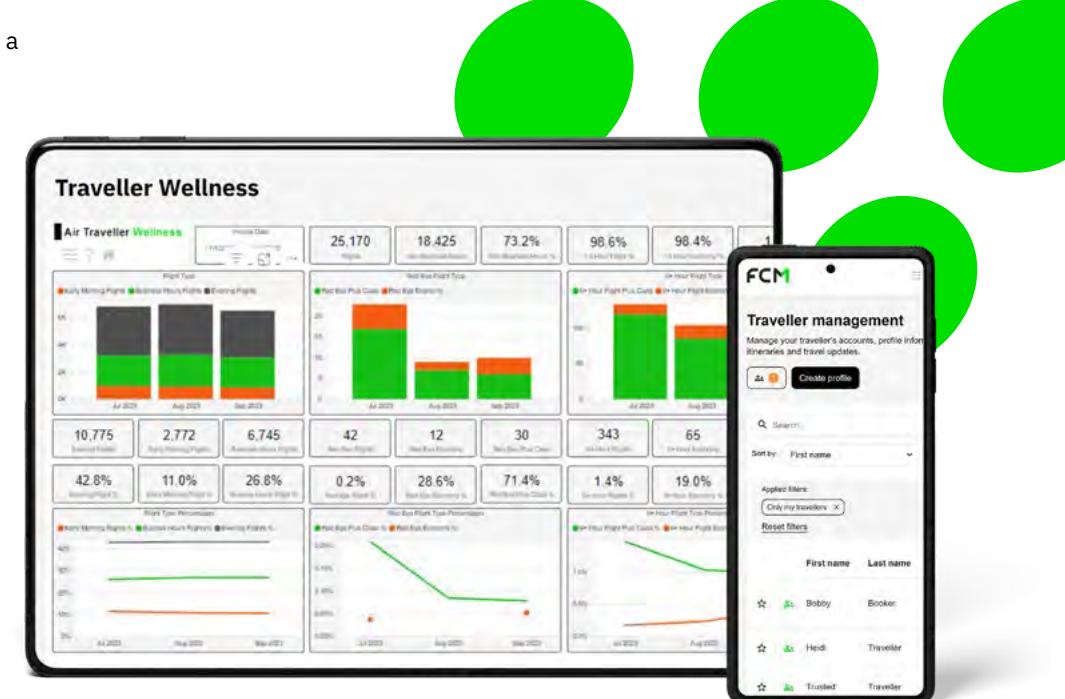
Employee productivity

One of the major arguments for return-to-office plans and business travel is that in-person collaboration is more productive and better for employees' mental health and socialisation. **In a 2021 report by Owl Labs**, 78% of employees who returned to office in any capacity (full-time, flexible, or hybrid) said they felt "more included."

However, to be transparent, 83% of those surveyed said that they are as productive or more productive working from home than in the office. This presents a unique opportunity for your travel program. The team at FCM Meetings & Events has seen a surge in small meetings management, meaning businesses are investing in gathering their remote teams together a few times a year to collaborate. But how does this measure ROI?

Actionable insight: Compare and contrast

To gather this actionable insight, you'll need to collaborate with HR and your boots-on-the-ground team members to get the full picture. Ask one of your teams to gauge the productivity of a project they handle fully remotely: how many planning sessions did it take, what was the time to deliver, how many iterations and revisions were needed, etc. Then directly compare these results to that of a project where you fly everyone in for at least one meeting. Which scenario had better stats? If it's the one where you allowed a group meeting to occur, then you can take this back to your stakeholders and show them the benefit of business travel.

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Organisational ESG

Sustainability: a term that was labelled as buzz word that has since proven its staying power...and its significance. Everyone from investors to job seekers are inquiring about how organisations are giving back to people and planet (while also staying in profit), and travel programs are not exempt from the conversation. **But while 81% of companies have formal ESG initiatives**, only 50% of those companies believe they are performing effectively against their plan. Is this because they are missing their targets, or do they just not know where to look for the information?

Actionable insight: CO2 segments

It's true that there are so many other important things to discuss other than carbon reporting, but there's no denying that it's the most important place to start. Your TMC's reporting tool should include your carbon breakdown by key travel segments: air, hotel, and car.

You can drill into these reports to find out if you're tipping the scales into concerning carbon territory – and if you're finding any alarming numbers, you can cross reference other reports, such as preferred vendors, to try and identify which supplier is the carbon culprit (and on the flip side, find out which ones help you travel greener). But once you know which vendors are more sustainable, how do you get the message out to your travellers...?

## Actionable insight: Just-in-time comms

This actionable insight doesn't come in the form of a report, but instead of a virtual megaphone. Have you invested in decision support software for your travellers yet? If so, you may be missing out on filling a very important gap. Decision support tools meet your travellers wherever they are in the booking process, and can serve up timely, custom, and engaging notifications to nudge them in the right direction (or simply remind them of your policy rules).

Building on the sustainability information you gleaned from your reports, you can craft custom notifications to remind travellers to book with more sustainable vendors. You can then measure how often travellers are interacting with these notifications, and then cross-reference your bookings to see if there is an uptick in more sustainable bookings.

Putting it all together

It may seem difficult at first, but proving your travel program's ROI just takes a little elbow grease, a bit of teamwork, and a whole lot of vision. These actionable insights we've listed here are only the tip of the iceberg – make sure to work with your Account Manager and expert consultants to map out a reporting matrix that will work best for you.

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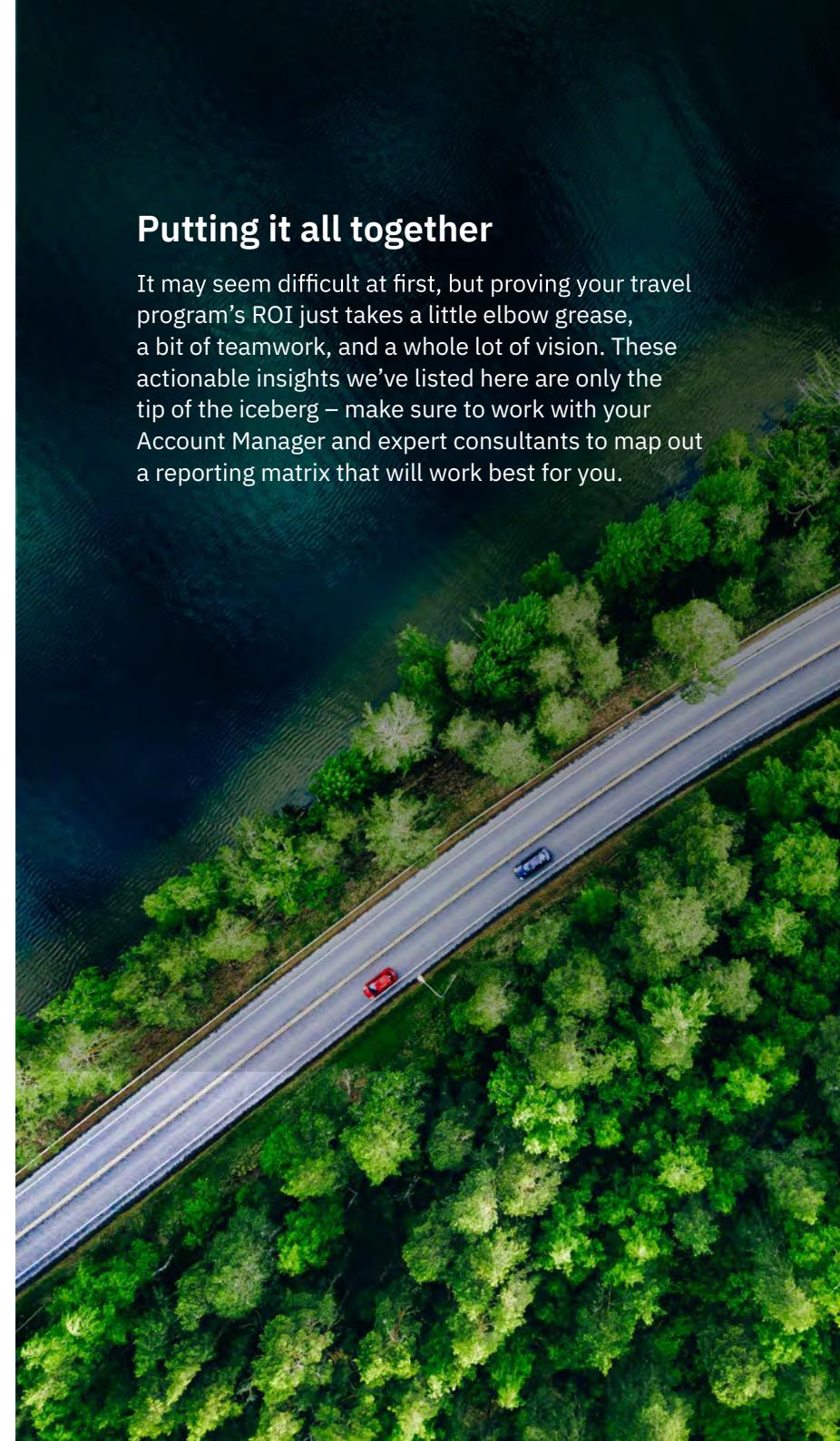
Part II:
Navigating business travel variables

...and how technology can support your future agility

No matter how well you figure out your reporting, there are many things in the world of corporate travel that sit outside of your control. A part of proving your travel program's value is demonstrating how well you can work with the things that are outside of your control, and work to ensure they cause as little disruption to your travellers (and your bottom line) as possible.

Let's take a look at three things that may be haunting the modern travel manager.

NDC

Have three letters inspired more ire than these? New Distribution Capability (NDC) is far from a new concept. It's been making the rounds in conversations for a decade now. But finally, we're seeing the promises of NDC start to come to fruition, with dynamic pricing, bundling, and personalisation making waves across the industry.

But innovation isn't without its hiccups. **According to Florian Mueller**, Global Air Practice Lead at FCM Consulting, "NDC ready" means different things to everyone – suppliers, TMCs, and buyers. And at this point in time, 85% of the world's airlines haven't announced an NDC program. So how do you prepare, and how do you ensure it brings positive value?

The best thing to do is conduct a pilot program. Listen to your stakeholders and

travellers about what they are looking to solve, and work with your Account Manager and key suppliers to find out how NDC could solve those problems. It's important to take baby steps – Rome wasn't built in a day, and the corporate travel industry can't change on a dime. But you can take control of your program and show value via its adaptability – and NDC is primed for this opportunity.

Airfare pricing

Airfares globally are expected to **rise 3-7%** in 2024. And while there's nothing you can really do about this – airlines, and suppliers in general, will change their prices to what they want – you can gain actionable insights from a full air supplier review with expert consultants.

Do a deep dive of your air program. What airlines are your travellers flying the most? What routes and city-pairs bubble to the surface? You will quickly find that there are savings to be had by just making small adjustments to your travel policy, and providing decision-making support for your travellers so they make the best choices.

By making these adjustments, you can safeguard your program's value in the eyes of your stakeholders by saving money or keeping costs status quo, despite the rise in prices.

Constantly shifting travel needs

Post-pandemic, there was a shift to more small meetings as hybrid teams get together. But in countries like Australia, **they are seeing 2024 trend** toward larger scale events at international destinations, especially for conferences and incentives.

While it's important to take note of trends (they do hold merit), it's even more important for you to decide why your business needs to travel. Being able to present a clear picture to your stakeholders of *why* can often mitigate their concerns from the jump. Then, it's on you to make sure every trip that falls under your *why* brings value (psst: remember to use the tips and actionable insights we've already discussed!).

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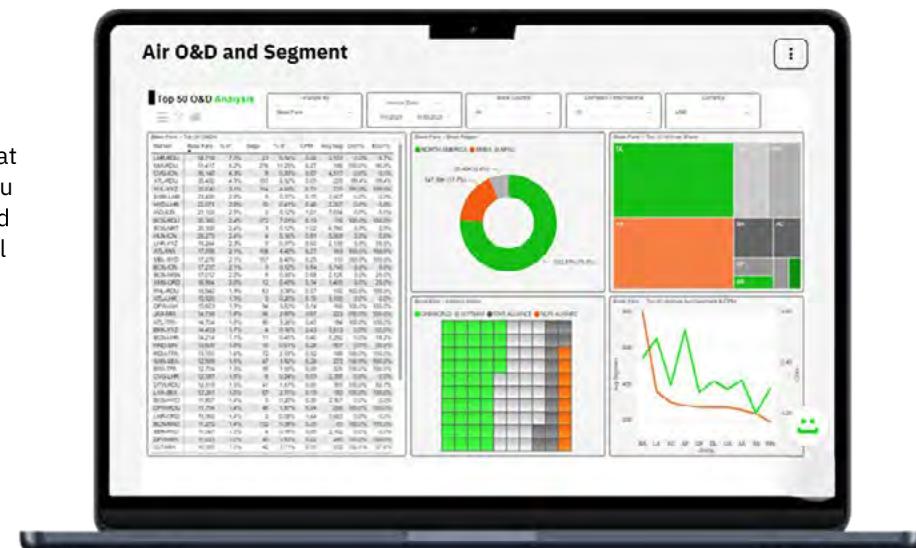
Part III:
So, what have we learned?

Business travel will always be valuable. Whether it's to strategise in a board room, fix a critical error on manufacturing equipment, or attend a conference, we all have our own definition of why. And all it takes to defend your why is to define the data points you need to prove your value, interpret that data, and then transform them into actionable insights that will safeguard and supercharge your travel program.

And if you're looking to take the next step...

FCM Platform has everything you need. Nothing you don't.

Build a powerful travel program with on-point reporting and always-on changes. Minimise leakage, maximise control, and make meaningful impact with supercharged travel technology.

Book a demo today.
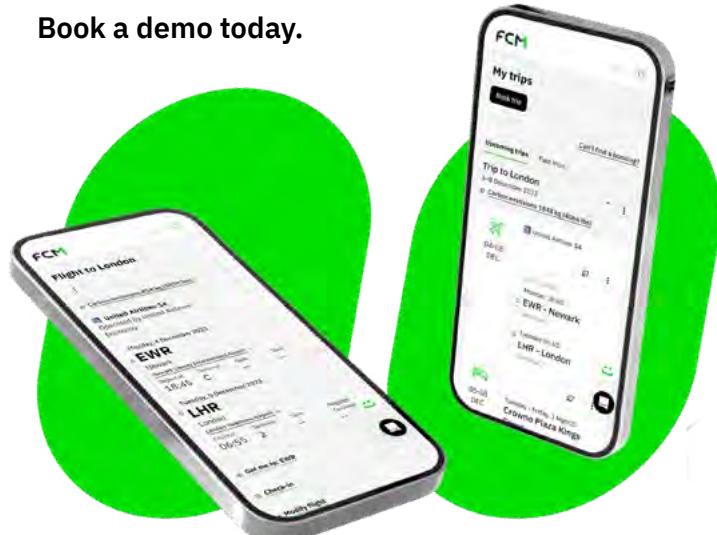
Supercharge your travel tech.

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