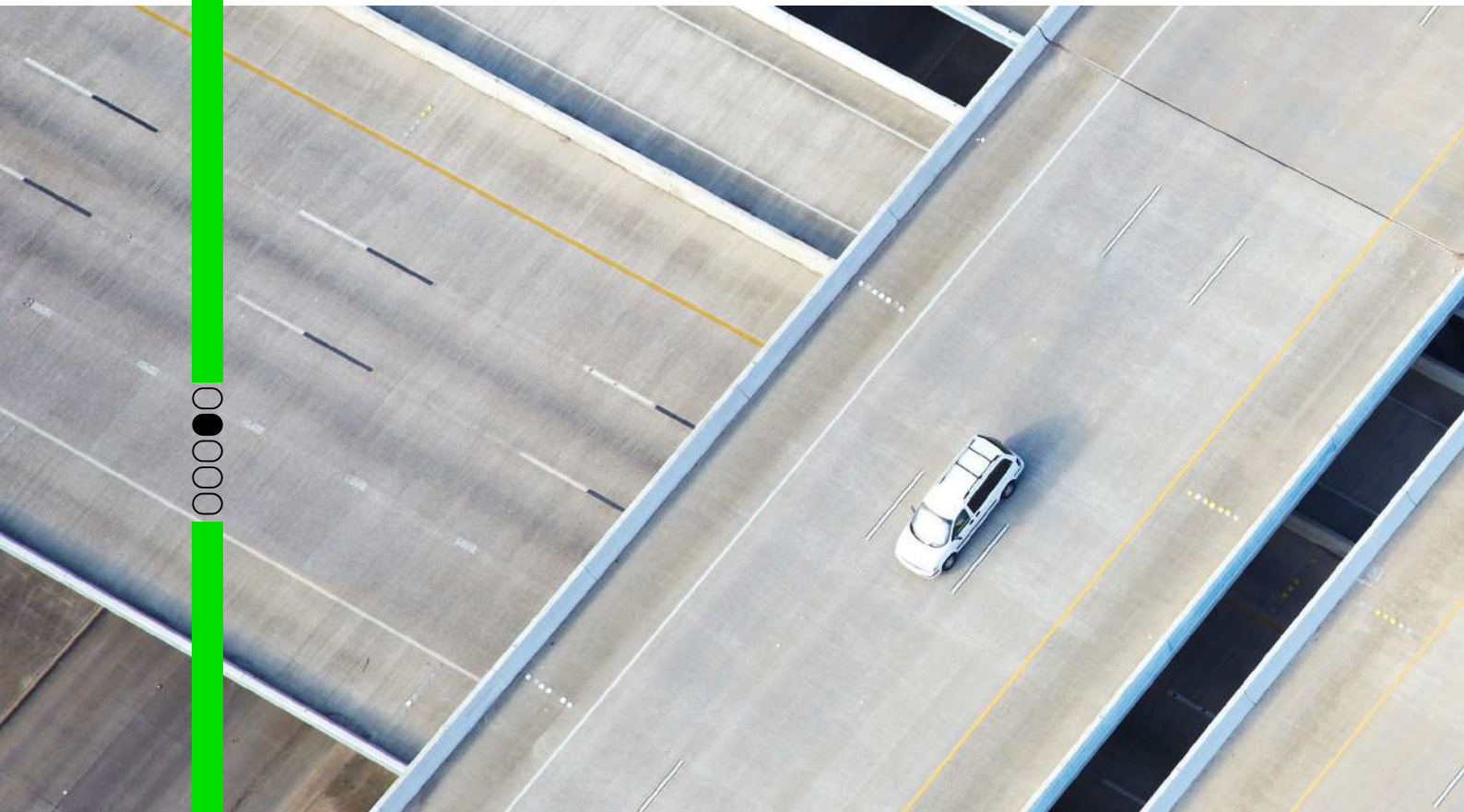


Choosing the right business travel partner: key considerations





Find the travel agency that suits your needs.

Business travel agencies do much more than just book and modify flights for your employees. They can offer you reporting solutions, recommend the best travel policies and support your traveller safety measures. When it comes to cost optimisation, they have the strategy to help, and can negotiate agreements with airlines on your behalf,... amongst many other services.

All these services are tailored to the specificities and objectives of your company.



5 key steps to finding the right travel agency

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02
03
04
05

Preparation

Pre-selection

Decision

Research

Evaluation






1 Preparation

Preparation is key to determine whether switching agencies is the right choice, to define what you're seeking, and to initiate meaningful conversations with potential suppliers. If your business isn't already engaged with a travel agency, this preparatory phase becomes crucial as it allows for a clear understanding of your exact needs.

By articulating your objectives, requirements, and data accurately, the agency can then provide a tailored solution that best fits your business and its employees.



Identify your challenges

What areas of your travel management could use improvement? The objective is to streamline your colleagues' experiences and fulfill the goals of each department (HR, security, finance, CSR, travellers, VIPs...) while also saving both time and money. Although this initial step might require some time investment, it's crucial for the long-term success.

Your colleagues' insights are invaluable and a key part of your strategy. Talk to various departments within your company, engaging with individuals who are involved either in regularly booking travel, or are connected to what you might implement such as IT and security. Their feedback means you are more aligned with your company's goals and challenges, and it will make the introduction of a new travel partner easier. Given the uniqueness of your objectives, it's crucial to identify and document them accordingly.

Here are some of the reasons why companies are looking for a new agency:

- Travel costs are increasing and need to be better controlled
- Too many users are booking outside of their policy or outside of their tool
- Your particular itineraries need expert intervention
- Your travellers going to high-risk destinations need expert advice
- Technology is not up to par
- You don't know the figures of your expenses and traveller behaviour
- You are not sure how to best support travellers during their trip

But first and foremost, it's about taking a step back. Is your company really ready to change agencies? If employees are generally satisfied and there are only minor improvements to be made, it may be wise to keep your current agency. After all, you'll need strong arguments to convince all members of your company to make this change.

Defining the needs

After identifying your objectives, it's time to focus on your company's needs, from technology and integration, to processes, travel policy, approval circuit, reports, Account Management, deadlines, payment... the list goes on.

Potential suppliers need to understand your travel habits, data and overall processes so they can tailor their offering with the most suitable tools and services.

Again, your colleagues can help you define specific needs to obtain a set of clear requirements to determine your choice.

Here are some of the most common needs:

Company:

- An implementation schedule and methodology
- An available and proactive Account Manager to optimise your programme
- Detailed statistical reports
- A traveller risk management programme
- Control and reduction of your carbon footprint

Booking Manager:

- An easy-to-use online booking tool
- Dedicated travel consultants who respond quickly and with expert knowledge
- An efficient approval process

Traveller:

- An easy-to-use online booking tool
- 24/7 emergency assistance
- A mobile application with all the essential travel-related features

Setting out to find the data

Gather as much data as possible about business travel at your company to better understand your travel expenses. Here are some starting points:

Air transport: transactions, expenses, top routes and top suppliers, negotiated airfares. Break down volumes between domestic, European, and international flights.

- Hotels: transactions, expenses, and overnight stays per site. Frequently booked hotels. Existing negotiated rates.
- Rail: transactions, expenses, itineraries, and travel classes.
- Car rentals: transactions and expenses. Frequently booked suppliers. Negotiated rates.
- Booking methods: % of services booked on the online booking tool.
- Number of bookers and travellers
- Travel and expense policy

2 Research

Choosing your supplier and tools will be influenced by relationships, capability and services offered. While agencies may appear similar at first glance, each has its unique culture and strengths. By familiarising yourself with the team members and watching or booking demonstrations, you'll gain a better understanding of what a long-term partnership could look like.

Here are a few ideas to learn more:

- **Read articles from specialised press** in business travel, such as Travel News. Associations like NBTA also share information about the sector through their events, blogs, and social networks.
- **Check the websites and social media of agencies:** an agency's website provides information about its products and services, but also gives you an idea of its culture and vision. By subscribing to their newsletter or following them on social networks, you'll get an idea of the information and support you'll receive as a client.
- **Participate in events** like the NBTA trade show or the Matka Business Travel Forum provide excellent opportunities to connect with agencies and explore their newest technologies.

Additionally, you'll engage with professionals in similar positions, gaining valuable insider insights and recommendations. Consider attending webinars and online events organised by agencies as well.

- **Meet suppliers in person:** if the agency is going to be your right-hand for managing travel, it's better that you appreciate the people who work there, their ethics, and their values. The meeting doesn't have to be formal and can be done during a visit to their offices or over lunch. Ideally, you should meet as many people as possible.



3 Pre-selection

After a few meetings, it's time to establish your initial selection. That way, you can evaluate a limited and reasonable number of written proposals.



If you're having trouble selecting your new business travel agency, you can initiate a Request for Information (RFI) to determine which agencies meet your minimum requirements. At this stage, you're seeking an overview of the available products and services and verifying references. It involves a questionnaire with yes/no answers or brief responses. This allows you to easily compare and choose the suppliers with whom you wish to continue the conversation.

Some examples of questions:

- Where are you located, both in Nordics and globally?
- Where will the team handling our account be based? How will the team be structured?
- Will we have dedicated contacts for bookings?
- What are your business hours?
- What are your response times for booking requests?
- Do you offer a 24/7 emergency service?
- How do you manage the import of traveler profiles?
- What content sources do you use?
- What measures do you implement to ensure service quality?
- What services will we receive from your Account Manager?
- What types of statistical reports will you be able to provide us?
- Can we access the reports ourselves and export them online?
- What online tools do you offer?
- Can we apply our approval process and travel policy with your tools?
- Do you have a mobile application for booking and viewing itineraries?
- Do you have a risk management solution?
- Can you provide a service for visas, subscription cards, and groups?

Plan for 3-4 weeks for the agencies to get back to you and follow up on your RFI.



4 Evaluation

You've completed your initial selection process. Now, it's time to send out your request for proposal and then assess the responses you receive.

When you've had the responses back, it's time to gather a panel to evaluate them. Bring together representatives from key departments such as Procurement, bookers, IT, HR, Finance, CSR, among others. Prepare a list of both essential and desirable elements to determine which agency best fits your needs.

You can start by evaluating the offers from both operational and technical standpoints, before moving on to the financial considerations. Keep in mind that agency pricing typically hinges on transaction fees, but there are other factors to consider. The lowest-priced offer may not necessarily result in the lowest annual travel cost. Agencies charging higher fees often provide additional technical and consulting services that could lead to long-term savings for your company.

Additionally, it's essential to ask candidates numerous questions, whether during presentations or in separate discussions, to gauge their capabilities, accuracy, and level of motivation in their responses.

Need more information from agencies?

There may already be a candidate that stands out from the others. But before making the final decision, you could take additional steps:

Presentations: You can ask the top three or four agencies to come to your premises and make a presentation to the panel. Let them know if you want tool demonstrations and what specific topics you want to address by providing an agenda. Prepare a list of questions tailored to each supplier.

References: Ask each agency for the contact information of current clients so that you can contact them and get reliable feedback. Talk to other buyers or travel managers about their recent experiences with their travel agency.

Financial negotiations: Review the numbers. Also, consider the agency's ability to save you money through consulting and fare optimisation, without neglecting the agency's stability and quality of service.

Final deliberation: Gather the panel to ensure that your decision takes into account all the objectives and needs of your internal clients, and also respects your legal requirements.

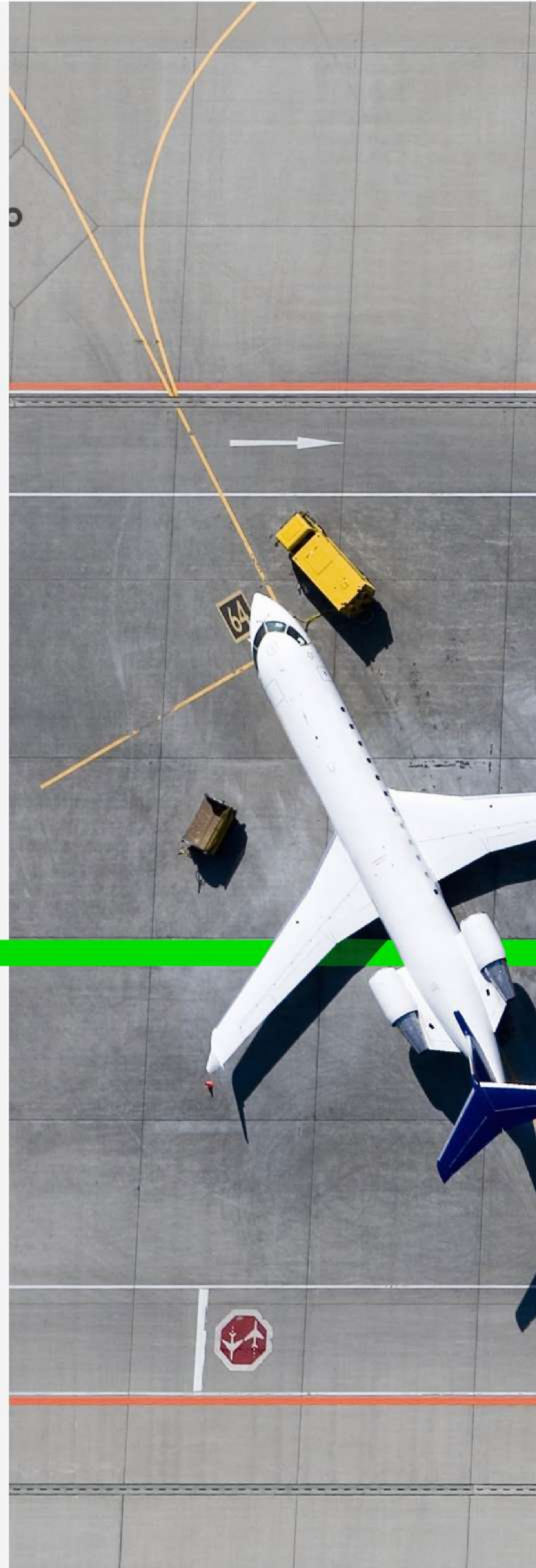


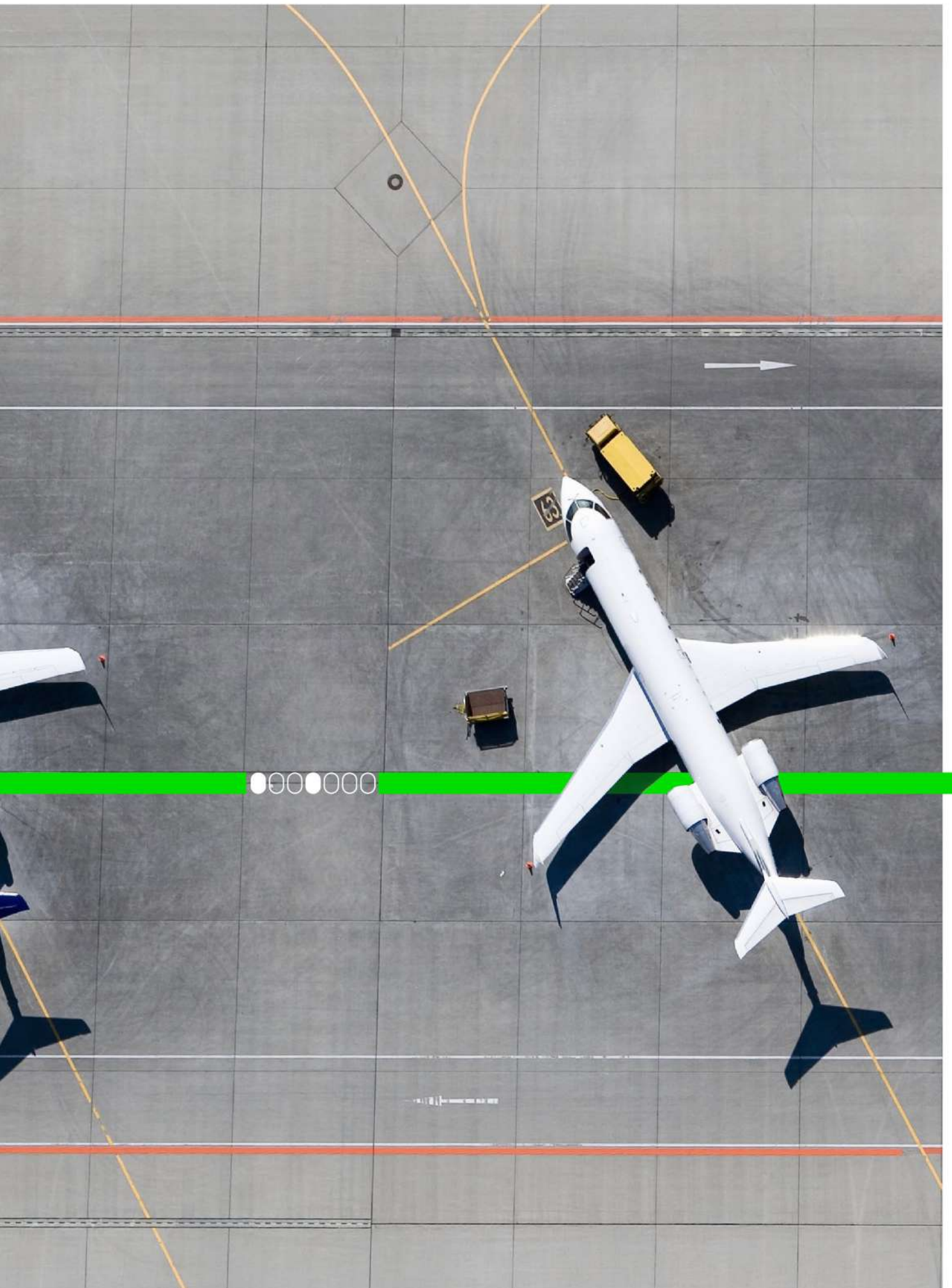
5 Preparation

We've reached the moment! It's time to announce the selected partner with whom you'll collaborate.

Additionally, make sure to inform those who were not selected. Candidates who put forward proposals for your company dedicate considerable time and effort and deserve candid feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback helps foster continuous improvement within the industry.

Best of luck! We look forward to seeing you soon at an upcoming event or presentation.







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