

Business Travel: Is It Time To Redefine Duty Of Care?

Once upon a time, travel programme managers ensured that corporate business travel was booked and recorded in a way that complied with their corporate travel policies, ensuring travel costs were managed centrally. 'Duty of Care' meant having mechanisms in place should an employee need support while abroad for incidents like national disasters, medical emergencies or other security or safety concerns. The risks were both physical and very tangible but it was, in many ways, a simpler era.

However, the story of duty of care is ever-evolving. Immigration, tax and regulatory authorities are now increasing their efforts in the business travel space and are increasing their focus on both individual and corporate compliance obligations. We are witnessing an increase in the volume of international travel, and a tightening of legislation globally. With advancements in technology, the sharing of data between authorities is becoming more common place. In the UK, for example, we have seen the Border Agency sharing travel data with HMRC to facilitate the active pursuit of tax liabilities. Authorities are also increasingly sharing information with their counterparts in other jurisdictions. There have even been cases where social media has been used to identify travel and travellers.

One of the most recent developments impacting the behaviour of country authorities', and sending business travel programme managers scouring their systems for data, is the revised European Posted Workers Directive (PWD) which has created far more scrutiny of the mobile workforce. Authorities are actively auditing companies to ensure that pre-travel notifications have been submitted, and labour law requirements such as minimum wage, working time, vacation and health and safety standards are being upheld in the receiving country. This convergence of factors has in many ways redefined the duty of care.

The compliance obligations arising from business-related travel fall on both the employer and the employee, but employees often expect support from their employer to help manage their compliance responsibilities. So what does this mean for business travel compliance programmes? A heady mix of

greater scrutiny, potential audits and more stringent reporting requirements mean travel programme managers are increasingly focused on ensuring employees' right to work (immigration, regulatory etc.), the need to meet local tax and social security requirements, as well as managing other risks associated with business travel. The challenge arises in demonstrating compliance in each of these complex areas, without loading additional administrative burden on employees.

How Is This Extended Definition Of Duty Of Care Shaping Business Travel Programmes?

Organisations are trying to get their arms around busy, time-challenged and often tech-savvy mobile employee populations. Today's business travellers expect support to enable travel at short notice; compliance should not be time consuming and must never detract from 'the day job'. Employees expect supported business travel and managed compliance.

In extending the definition of duty of care, it is recognised that there are three essential elements in delivering "turbulence free travel": Compliance, Experience and Value. All three coalesce to deliver the optimal approach to duty of care. Getting the balance right can be complex, but it is critical.

Compliance

If, as an organisation, you have already accepted, or are on the road to accepting, that the duty of care remit has expanded, how do you best

convert this new aspiration into reality? How do organisations transform a business travel programme that was historically focused on 'spend and security' into a contemporary one, aligned with the broader compliance challenges organisations face today? In future-proofing your business travel programme you will need to prioritise your challenges and define a roadmap of enhancements as well as educating the stakeholders required to support these processes.

A common challenge when developing or evolving a business travel compliance programme is defining and engaging the stakeholder group, and the ultimately responsible party, to enable effective change management. Having a broad stakeholder group approaching business travel compliance holistically, sharing the management of this population, may be the best approach. They can better help identify, assess and prioritise compliance areas throughout the business travel lifecycle that impact both employees and the business. Whilst every business is different, the stakeholders typically include the topics in the chart below.

The role of the stakeholder group is to design and implement practical solutions within your business to manage an expanded duty of care. Business travel programmes vary in complexity, and solutions need to be aligned to the size and scale of your travelling population. Many organisations start by looking at data sources within the business to understand risk. They may go on to implement technology solutions



and create data ecosystems, to connect the travel booking process and broader compliance obligations (from identification, assessment to downstream compliance activities), allowing for greater governance and reporting.

Takeaways:

- Identify key stakeholders for a business travel working group
- Define your Duty of Care ambition
- Understand your global travel risks and obligations
- Develop a roadmap of programme enhancements.

Experience

Business travel programmes' success is dependent on simple processes that maximise traveller engagement, typically centred around a great traveller experience.

Business travellers often have to navigate numerous pre-travel and on-travel activities, and adding additional self-service steps are likely to be met with resistance. Where travel programmes have relied upon employees entering data for travel booking and risk/compliance assessment purposes, adoption rates are often lower than expected and compliance objectives are not delivered on to their full potential. Technology is now enabling businesses to remove additional employee input, seamlessly utilising travel booking data to run the compliance assessment in the background. This allows organisations to put employee experience at the heart of the process, thereby delivering on enhanced duty of care with minimal disruption for travellers.

The corporate user – i.e. those responsible for overseeing business travel compliance – can often be overlooked when considering 'employee experience'. Building processes and protocols that allow corporate users to efficiently access data, make assessments and take action, enables them to focus on the prioritised risk areas, and can be critical in ensuring the success of your programme.

Takeaways:

- During the design phase of your programme, place the employee at the heart of the process
- Seek opportunities to seamlessly connect data, embedding your programme into existing processes
- Consider how the corporate user will engage in the process.

Value

A redefined Duty of Care and broader approaches to business travel compliance management may mitigate risk for your business and deliver a positive experience to your travellers, driving value for your organisation.

There are multiple ways in which this additional value and business performance can be realised:

How best to develop a more holistic business travel programme, encompassing the broader



definition of a Duty of Care is a question many organisations face as they redefine their approach. The size and scale of the user groups, including both the travellers and the corporate users and the impact of experience should not be overlooked. Designing and implementing a human-centric experience may determine the success of any solution and alongside effective compliance management will help drive value for your organisation.

The story does not end here. It will continue to be ever-evolving with new forces and obstacles emerging to challenge organisations, from the introduction of new legislation and regulations, to the changing needs of travellers, and future advancements in technology, there will be many further chapters to this story. Constantly monitoring and challenging the definition of duty of care enables organisations to deliver compliance... without turbulence.



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