

Temporary Accommodation

The need for temporary accommodation is an ever-growing one regardless of the continual changing landscape within the Global Mobility arena, and remains uncharted territory for many bookers and assignees. With questions being asked such as “what product is out there?”, “what are the benefits?” and “how do I book?” - the need for education, clarity and ease of booking continues. The utilisation of temporary accommodation feeds the differing objectives of both assignees and companies. The assignee focus is on finding a solution that will enable them to settle into a temporary home suitable for them, and sometimes their families, whilst carrying out an assignment. The location, facilities and amenities remain at the top of an assignee’s agenda, more so than the budget, unless their company is one of many now that operates a “lump sum” programme whereby the assignee will receive an amount of money in order for them to source and settle their own temporary accommodation. A company’s focus, however, is one of compliance, cost savings and data.

With increased focus and responsibility surrounding the importance of the mental health and wellbeing of assignees having to relocate for business, Serviced Apartments, Corporate Housing and Extended Stay properties continue to demonstrate their alignment around the supporting of this. Through the offering of these solutions all falling under the banner of temporary accommodation, it enables a space conducive for individuals to be able to work, live and operate their lives as authentically as possible whilst being away from home on an assignment or secondment. Having happy and settled assignees means higher productivity and for the companies who have instigated the assignment this can only be a good thing. However, there isn’t a one size fits all ‘process’ or ‘product’ in which to procure the most appropriate accommodation for both companies’ and their assignees’ needs, and many things need to be considered and not compromised. An example of this is the suitability of the type of accommodation booked, i.e. an extended stay product which offers a bedroom with

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a kitchenette and the on-site facilities of a hotel for an assignee relocating with his family for 6 months would not be considered a conducive living environment for a family for the length of time required for this assignment, or a cost-effective solution for the company. Sourcing the wrong type of accommodation can have detrimental effects and could potentially contribute to an unhappy assignee or spouse, putting the assignment itself at risk of early termination. In this example, a serviced apartment or corporate housing product would be deemed more suitable, offering the family the freedom, autonomy and space to live for a substantial period of time away from home with the least compromise to their well-being as both family and individuals. It is a minefield out there with lots of choice, rogue operators and variations of product resulting in many considerations that must be looked at when companies or assignees are deciding to book temporary accommodation. In these situations, to seek the help of an agnostic agent who has the experience and knowledge of the 360° view of temporary accommodation landscape and the product available globally would be an advantage. We have successfully been assisting companies and assignees alike

for over 35 years and can guarantee the task does not get any easier.

A newer concept recently introduced to the temporary accommodation landscape aimed at the single assignee and the upcoming generations is co-living spaces. These spaces encourage community living within the complex, usually offering a bedroom with en-suite bathroom and shared kitchen facilities, but with some properties including private kitchenettes. In terms of mental health and wellbeing this concept supports the opportunity for assignees to network and feel included and live within a community. The good news is that this is also a cost-effective solution for those companies, however, it should only be considered for a workforce that would be aligned to this type of product.

So how does one go about accessing the plethora of temporary accommodation available suitable for the needs of assignment they have been faced with? With instant gratification being prevalent in the busy world that we live in, along with the freedom of choice, it is important that the expectation and need for these considerations does not compromise the other factors that are important for an assignee and their family if they too are part of the relocation process. Extended stay products are easily accessible via online booking platforms however, can be both costly and inappropriate for the longer stay requirement of an assignee. It is important that the product offered to the assignee is the right product, at the right cost and commercial terms (i.e. leasing and cancellation policies) and falls within the health and safety and compliance expectation of the company facilitating the assignment. This requirement, usually the first part of the assignment process, is an important factor in terms of how quickly an assignee settles and with the least amount of stress to them or their family when embarking on a new project or assignment.

Compliance remains a “non-negotiable” for companies and a difficult task when dealing with operators of temporary accommodation across the globe, particularly those that fall out of the mainstream cities and locations into tertiary locations. Here the portfolio of serviced apartments can be limited or in some cases non-existent. There is an abundance of sources of temporary accommodation that will profess to offer compliant accommodation in these dense areas, however, it is advisable that before considering the service of these providers some form of vetting and onboarding process is carried out in order to ensure that they are indeed of the standard required by the company facilitating the assignment. There

are many components to consider in relation to whether a provider is deemed compliant and of an acceptable standard to welcome the global assignee and can have heavy implications if not reached. It is often a challenge to source accommodation within reducing budgets in a company's efforts to reduce costs, however, the long-term cost that could be incurred as a result of compromising compliancy would be far more costly and stressful for all parties involved.

This leads us to the question around health, safety and compliance in the case of "lump sum" buyers of temporary accommodation which has been on the increase in the recent years. To give the assignee the choice to make a decision around the temporary accommodation they use enabling them to shop and make the choice that is right for them has benefits for both company and assignee. However, for companies offering this, there still remains a question around who holds the responsibility of the assignee from a duty of care standpoint. Having visibility and knowledge that the assignee's choice is of a standard in line with a company's compliancy expectation helps to support any responsibility of duty of care by the company to the assignee whilst giving their assignees the freedom to make their own bookings. To support this, we ensure that all areas are covered by providing a booking process offering a varied choice of property available

to "Lump sum" programmes and "Managed" programmes which is delivered through a compliant and vetted supply chain only.

Data is knowledge and something that is required more and more by companies, and quickly. Data enables companies to gain a deeper understanding of their booking trends and spends within the temporary accommodation arena. To have access to data through the push of a button, particularly in relation to the whereabouts of their assignees in the event of global disasters, adds value to any company. We deliver data to companies in various forms, from raw data through to strategic reporting templates to make it easier for them to continue to book autonomously.

So, in summary, with the use of temporary accommodation on the increase, the ever-evolving landscape of temporary accommodation products globally, the assignee needs, and mental well-being, along with companies' need for cost savings, the task of procuring the right solution within the banner of short-term accommodation still remains a complex one. The education and support required in order to intelligently source accommodation for assignees or complex temporary accommodation programmes is available through the pulling on resources such as The Apartment Service who are able to work with companies or individuals to achieve their objectives.



MELANIE DEGAND

Managing Director, The Apartment Service
Melanie's in-depth knowledge of the serviced apartment sector as agent and provider has been developed over more than 16 years with The Apartment Service.

She has spent her working career in client-facing roles, focusing primarily on service delivery, solutions and developing strong relationships. Melanie has recently been promoted to Managing Director of The Apartment Service, overseeing the strategic growth of the company and continuing to develop the strong client relationships with existing and new clients. Prior to this she has spent her time within the roles of Director of Sales and Account Management. Visit www.apartmentservice.com for further information.

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