

MANAGING MOBILE

Why pioneering a mobile policy could benefit you and your business

GO TO ANY BUSINESS TRAVEL CONFERENCE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD and two subjects are sure to come up: the inexorable rise in the importance of using mobile devices; and the challenges of making sure corporate travel policy is fit for purpose and meets the company's key objectives.

Strangely enough, these two increasingly important elements of managed business travel have so far been mostly left in isolation from each other. Many firms already have some sort of policy about how staff should use their mobile devices, but this tends to be from an IT perspective and does not specifically relate to how mobile should be used within the travel process – both in the pre-trip phase and when staff are on the road.

Sari Viljamaa, managing director of the Finnish Business Travel Association, made the case for corporates to start deploying specific mobile policies around travel during the CAPA Aviation Summit in Helsinki last autumn. "More companies are developing mobile policies, but they are usually about devices and data security, and are part of IT policy," she says. "Sadly, travel is not included, nor even thought about, in this context. And yet, who are the people who carry mobile devices – phones, pads, laptops? The travellers."

"The travel manager, or category manager, should be advocating for a

mobile policy, and not only wait and react after a policy has been published – probably with no mention of travel at all."

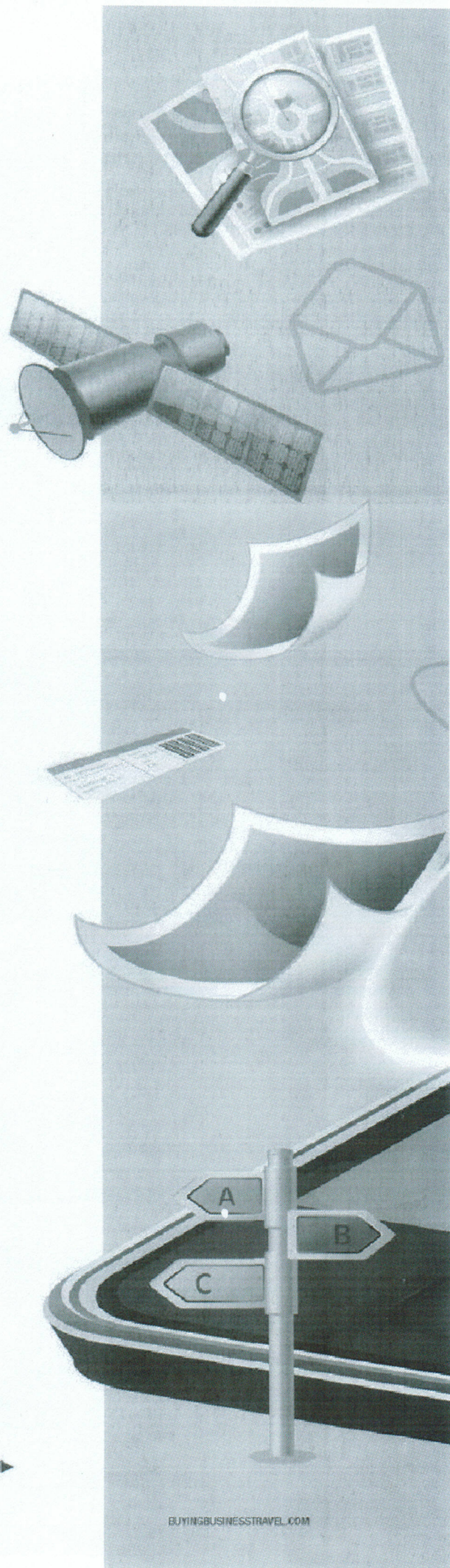
BCD Travel, in its white paper *Mobilise Your Travel Programme*, argues that travel buyers can enhance their own careers and reputations within their companies by taking a lead on developing a strategy that marries up travel policy and mobile use.

"Travel is a corporate activity where mobile services are a great fit, so you may easily find yourself pioneering mobile strategy for the whole of your enterprise," says BCD in the report.

Matthew Pancaldi, global client management director at HRC, says that developing mobile policies is "still in its infancy" among clients. He adds: "Gradually, corporates are tackling mobile strategy. Some have embraced it while a lot are starting to think: 'Where do I start and is the company ready?' I think a lot more will tackle it in the next year or so, and there will be a lot of engagement around mobile strategy being part of travel programmes."

TRAVELLER SATISFACTION

Buyers already see the potentially positive impact of the growth of mobile use – an overwhelming majority (84 per cent) of buyers surveyed for the 2016 Business Travel Show said that mobile technology would help policy compliance, with only 16 per cent thinking it





would be a hindrance. Similarly, a study by Carlson Wagonlit Travel found that 92 per cent of travel managers are expecting mobile technology to have a "positive impact" on traveller satisfaction, as well as boosting productivity.

It's just as well that buyers see the mobile revolution as being such a positive development – because business travellers seem to have an insatiable desire to use their devices to improve and enrich their experiences. According to BCD's report, 97 per cent of all travellers take a mobile phone with them, while 87 per cent of business travellers "routinely interact" with multiple devices when planning trips, booking hotels and checking itineraries.

The incentives for business travellers in Europe to use their mobile devices on the road will rise even further as the European Commission first cuts the level of roaming charges that mobile firms can charge from April 2016, before abolishing them completely in June 2017.

Craig Palmer, sales and consulting manager for Amadeus, says: "A lot of the barriers in place for using mobile are being removed. Data roaming charges will be disappearing in Europe. More corporates are also paying for data roaming, so from the traveller perspective it's not going to be a barrier for them. They can also use wifi easily by going into a coffee shop. Connecting with travellers will be easier than it's ever been."

There has been much talk in recent years about the 'consumerisation' of business travel and this particularly applies to mobile services. The theory being that

The EC will have completely abolished roaming charges by June 2017

unless travel management suppliers start offering online platforms that can match the experience offered by leisure-orientated apps, then individual travellers will make their bookings outside the programme, which will increase leakage.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Most travel management companies (TMCs) and technology specialists can now offer some form of app to their clients. But, so far, these services have been mostly confined to offering itinerary-based tools, which allow the traveller to view their trip details, use mobile airline check-in and receive airport gate or flight information.

Evan Konwiser, digital traveller vice-president at American Express Global Business Travel, says: "There are currently many great tools for communicating with and supporting travellers on the road that fulfil important needs, such as itinerary

management, and basic messaging." But Konwiser admits that it is difficult for corporate travel apps to keep pace with consumer options. "Creating corporate travel apps is an inherently more complex process due to the data security, compliance and regulatory factors that impact the corporate side," he says. "Where corporate travel may have the edge, however, is in our strong relationships with suppliers and the policy and preference data we hold."

TMCs and other suppliers are continually improving the functionality of their apps, with new options being added, such as restaurant recommendations in the city they are staying in. Amadeus's Palmer says: "We can allow them to explore additional services, such as looking for a café or somewhere to have lunch through using an external supplier. This can also be linked to flight times, so suggestions can be made for lunch or breakfast, depending on the time they arrive."

"We are moving into booking by integrating taxis and hotels, which will allow travellers to book services on the move. The aim is to create happy travellers."

Carlson Wagonlit says that it updates the CWT To Go itinerary app every ten to 12 weeks with new functionality. Director of product marketing, Dan Kelly, says: "The latest version has the ability for travel arrangers to have a version of the app to be able to see how their traveller's journey is going – for example, if they are disrupted or there is a gate change, the travel arranger will also know and be able to take proactive steps, such as rearranging meeting timings."

Creating an integrated mobile policy

TRAVEL BUYERS CAN BE IN A STRONG POSITION to lead the process of implementing a mobile device policy, according to the Finnish Business Travel Association's Sari Viljamäa. She says that buyers are "usually are very well connected within the company", with existing relationships with key departments such as human resources, finance, procurement and IT, as well as senior management.

"They have a vast knowledge of what works and

what doesn't," she says. "A good mobile policy helps travel management with duty-of-care: knowing where our people are, and being able to assist when needed. Ideally, the HR solution should be aligned with IT and mobile so that, for example, traveller contact information can be uploaded to profiles automatically."

BCD Travel suggests that buyers should ask some basic questions such as: how does the company currently use mobile? What type of devices

do travellers have, and how do they use mobile before, during and after trips?

Once these questions have been answered, the company should look at how mobile can help to achieve key strategic goals around issues such as traveller safety and security, savings and cost control, traveller satisfaction and CSR (corporate social responsibility).

Mobile policy should specify when and how travellers should be sent targeted messages based on their

location, time zone and potential needs. BCD says it is also important to decide when to "push" information such as alerts to travellers – these messages are more likely to be read but there is a "risk of overload and resistance if you push too often".

Will Pinnell, BCD's vice-president of digital and product planning, adds: "Mobile finally offers you a chance to influence travellers on a global scale using a dedicated travel app."