



The TripActions 2018 State of Business Travel Report



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Executive Summary:

The TripActions 2018 State of Business Travel Report

When it comes to establishing and growing the strong relationships that drive businesses forward, there's simply no substitute for connecting in person. Ultimately, the importance of these face-to-face connections is the very reason business travel exists.

To make the most of the opportunities business travel affords, travelers should arrive at their destinations feeling rested, focused, and ready to connect. But corporate business travel programs are largely outdated, frustrating employers and employees alike. This is all in contrast to consumer travel sites and apps, which have made advancements that are simple, user-friendly, and modern. This disconnect between the consumer travel experience and business travel experience is aggravating people simply trying to travel for work.

Business travel is a \$1.5 trillion industry ripe for disruption, but moving confidently into the future means truly understanding the present. To get a better idea of the state of business travel in 2018, TripActions surveyed 2,900 travelers in June 2018 to get their perspectives on current travel programs and find out how they would like to see their business travel experiences evolve.

From identifying travelers' biggest pain points to looking at how Millennials are reshaping business travel, the following report digs into what we learned from our traveler survey results and offers advice to help your business travel initiatives move more confidently into the future.

Ariel Cohen

- Ariel Cohen, TripActions CEO & Co-founder



The 3 Big Insights

1. In-person Connections Fuel Company Growth

Over 90% of those surveyed said that business travel is essential to company growth and prefer to close important deals in person, even if it involves getting there by plane. While conferencing technology is ingrained in the day-to-day for many, employees are often frustrated by technical glitches and believe it's difficult to truly connect with someone via phone or video call.

2. Needs of the Modern Business Traveler Are Evolving

As Millennials and Gen Zers flood the workplace, they're bringing with them different expectations and needs around how they travel for business. This generation views travel as a potentially empowering part of their jobs and values flexibility, on-the-road health and wellness, and opportunities to personalize their business trips.

3. Legacy Solutions Aren't Meeting Business Travelers' Needs

Employees have grown accustomed to the user-friendly experiences of consumer travel sites like Kayak, and are increasingly frustrated by the lack of inventory and support that come with many corporate travel management solutions. In turn, employees are "going rogue", or booking outside of approved tools, making it difficult for companies to track and manage travel spend.



1. In-person Connections Fuel Company Growth



Employees Want to Close Important Deals In Person

Business travel isn't a nice-to-have for companies looking to grow — it's an essential driver for that growth.



90% believe business travel is important in driving company growth.

91% prefer to close a deal in person, even if it means they have to get on a plane.

Business Travel Tip:

Reassess the role employee travel plays in your company's growth strategy and figure out where you can use in-person meetings to grow or strengthen business relationships. Empower your employees by giving them the opportunity to connect with prospects, customers, and colleagues in person when those face-to-face interactions will really count.

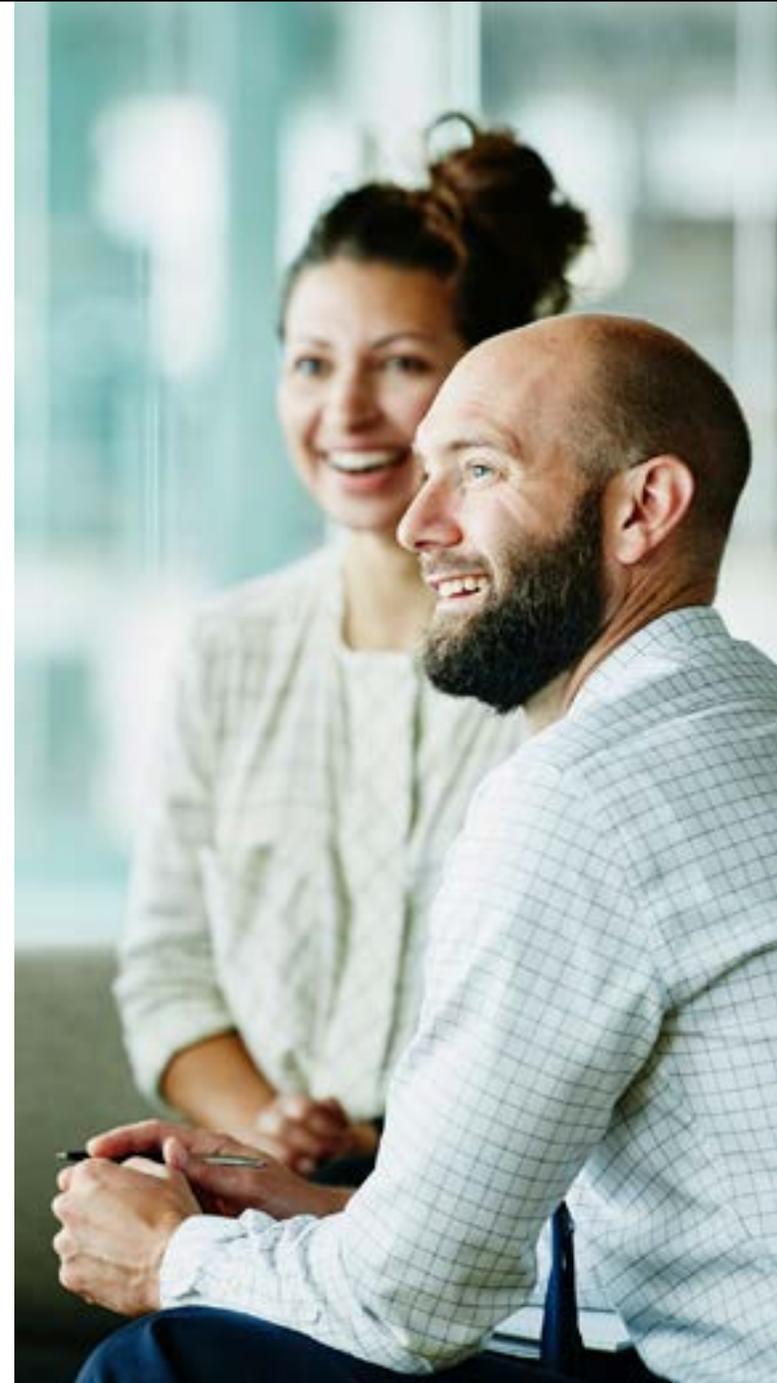


TripActions Insight: Employees Want to Close Important Deals In Person

It's clear that business travel plays a crucial role in a business' growth, and the preference to travel when it comes to closing an important deal was overwhelming (91%). It's important to note that this is true of companies from across a wide-range of industries, from technology to manufacturing and beyond. It appears that wherever you find business, you're sure to find business travelers.

This is because closing a deal (or growing an existing deal, or maintaining a business relationship) comes down to trust. And being together in the same room allows us to establish that trust. Other factors are of course at play, but it's a person's physical presence – steady eye contact, a tone of voice that inspires confidence, a shared laugh – that can ultimately help seal the deal. Furthermore, making that effort to meet in person signals to prospects, customers, and clients that you truly value those relationships

In the short-term, it's easy for companies to virtually connect for the sake of convenience. But taking a careful look at when those face-to-face opportunities are essential can help fuel and maintain business growth over the long-term.





Technology Can't Replace Connecting In Person

Technology allows us touch base with people all over the world, but often falls short when it comes to building and maintaining important relationships.

67% agree it's difficult to build business relationships over video.

A majority of employees feel frustrated and disconnected from their audience over video.

And for good reason — everyone admitted they daydream, check email, or do other work during video calls.

Business Travel Tip:

Allow employees to approach meetings strategically so they can build and maintain the relationships that are most important for your business. High-value meetings should be held in person, while technology can do the job in the case of quicker check-ins or cross-functional one-offs.



TripActions Insight: Technology Can't Replace Connecting In Person

Most of us know what it's like to spend the first five minutes of a call trying to dial — and then re-dial — into a meeting. We've all experienced the awkwardness of speaking over someone on the line as we deal with a slow internet connection. These distractions can be ignored during regular syncs or chats about routine tasks, but when it comes to more high-stakes meetings and conversations, those same technical difficulties can negatively impact your business. The simple truth is that it's difficult to convey professionalism and inspire trust when every other word of your conversation is garbled or cut off.

But it's not just the glitches. The majority of respondents said they're unable to truly connect with their audience via phone or conference calls. And this makes sense — nearly everyone we surveyed also confessed that without others in the room, they become more easily distracted, checking email, completing other tasks, or even just daydreaming.

67% agreed that it's harder to build or maintain a business relationship over video, which only reiterates how important it is for businesses to purposefully determine which meetings can be accomplished via phone or video calls, and which demand an in-person connection.



2. Needs of the Modern Business Traveler Are Evolving



Traveling For Work Is Viewed as a Perk, Not a Pain

Understanding that business travel is so important to company growth, employees are increasingly seeing it as an empowering opportunity to grow themselves professionally and personally.



90% see traveling as a perk of their job.

80% feel more excited about their job after traveling.

A majority of travelers feel excited and empowered when asked to travel.

Business Travel Tip:

Help potential employees see traveling as a perk by enabling your HR and recruiting teams to speak to your company's business travel opportunities during the hiring process. Make sure your employees continue to view business travel as a perk by checking in with them about their experiences and addressing their concerns about policies, procedures, and tools on an ongoing basis.



TripActions Insight: Traveling For Work Is Viewed as a Perk, Not a Pain

Given the vital role of business travel in the growth of many companies, it naturally follows that the modern business traveler has begun to view business travel as a potentially empowering experience that contributes significantly to their overall job satisfaction.

While this shift is being driven in part by Millennial and Gen Z employees – 39% of whom report* they wouldn't take a job that doesn't allow them to travel for business – employees of all ages are increasingly excited about the feeling of responsibility that comes with any given business trip.

Notably, this change in perception is also further emphasizing travelers' mental and physical health. Recognizing the stress that inevitably comes with travel delays, cancellations, and other factors such as inconsistent sleep or nutrition, more companies are doing what they can, where they can, to support their travelers' well-being.

* Hilton Hotels & Resorts Survey





Millennials Are Shifting Business Travel Standards

As Millennial and Gen Z employees flood into the workforce, they're bringing more modern travel expectations with them.

36% are seeking unique travel experiences by staying at boutique hotels or Airbnb-type accommodation.

21% of Millennials don't belong to any loyalty program and are less interested in loyalty programs in general.

Shared car services — not taxis or shuttles — are their ground transportation method of choice.

Business Travel Tip:

Consider Millennial and Gen Z preferences as you're mapping out or iterating on your travel policies. Give your travelers plenty of options, keeping in mind that new technologies are constantly changing how and where these generations book, and offer room for flexibility so that employees can book according to their personal preferences.



TripActions Insight: Millennials Are Shifting Business Travel Standards

Much has been written about how Millennials are spurring change in the broader cultural and technological sectors, and the same is true when it comes to business travel. Our survey results show that Millennials tend to see less distinction between their personal and work lives – they're mobile-focused and have come to expect the same kind of seamless experiences across devices offered by consumer sites such as Kayak from their company's business travel solution.

Another example of this expectation of seamless, consumer-like experiences can be seen in the Millennial preference for ride-shares as a method of ground transportation. And we can see this when it comes to accommodations as well – they're looking to stay in Airbnb-type accommodations or boutique hotels versus the big chains. This also helps explain why they're less likely to belong to loyalty programs, and when they are, they opt for the instant gratification of free upgrades instead of saving up, often redeeming points as much as 2-3 times a year.

Given Millennials are only going to become more entrenched in the workforce, we believe it's important to consider travel policies and solutions that keep their particular preferences and expectations in mind.



3. Legacy Solutions Aren't Meeting Business Travelers' Needs



Booking Travel Is Still a Pain Point For Many

For most business travelers, frustrations often start at the very beginning – while booking the trip.



50% don't use the corporate travel solution provided by their company.

#1 biggest frustration travelers face when using a company tool is a lack of inventory, followed by time spent booking.

83% report it takes them over an hour to book a trip.

Travelers consider price **last** when booking a trip.

Business Travel Tip:

If you're unsure about whether or not your current corporate travel management solution is meeting your employees' needs, consider running a [traveler happiness survey](#). The results will give you a better sense of how your policies and tools are really impacting you employees, and let you know if it's time to consider making a change.



TripActions Insight: Booking Travel Is Still a Pain Point For Many

Even though travel is essential for moving businesses forward, most current travel solutions are outdated and unable to meet the needs of today's travelers. And this isn't just true of Millennials – business travelers of all ages have come to prefer the vast inventory choice and user-friendly experiences they get with consumer travel sites. As a result, half of travelers are “going rogue” and booking trips outside of company-approved tools.

The user experience gap that exists between consumer and old-school business travel solutions is obvious even as early as when a traveler is booking his or her trip. The majority of our respondents said that they were frustrated by limited inventory options, resulting in a drawn-out booking process that routinely stretches over an hour; time they likely feel could be better spent prepping for the meetings they're traveling for in the first place.

This can lead many to altogether ignore company tools and policies as they look to personal preferences over the company dime, making it very difficult for businesses to track and optimize travel spend. In the long-term, offering a user-friendly solution that employees love is the clearest path to more effective business travel spend management and better visibility.



Travelers Feel Unsupported On the Road

Travelers feel like they're on their own when faced with unexpected travel difficulties.



64% of travelers feel like they have to fend for themselves when something goes wrong.

8% report that their travel agent proactively reaches out when plans unexpectedly change.

Business Travel Tip:

To help travelers feel like someone's got their backs when they're on the road, make sure your policy details a clear path of action in the case of a delay, cancellation, or other unanticipated bump in the road. Also be sure to communicate all available resources so that your travelers know who they can turn to when things don't go according to plan.



TripActions Insight: Travelers Feel Unsupported On the Road

Travel can be exhausting even under the best of circumstances. Given the key role travel can play in a business' growth, a calm, collected, and focused traveler is essential to success. Unfortunately, when faced with unexpected difficulties like flight delays and cancellations or overbooked hotels, 64% of business travelers reported they felt they were left to deal with those issues on their own, leaving them isolated, stressed, and distracted.

An ideal on-the-road experience should provide your employees with the same kind of support that enables them to succeed in the office. This means offering reliable resources that travelers can turn to when the unexpected does occur. New corporate travel solutions are able to closely track a traveler's trip, monitor changes, and proactively reach out with alternative solutions, such as surfacing convenient options to book a new flight.

Round-the-clock proactive support reduces stress for employees, giving them the ease of mind they need to better focus on the task at hand. And when travelers can focus on the business portion of their business trips, this translates directly to more productivity and success on the road.





Together Into the Future of Business Travel

Business travelers are evolving, and the business travel tools and policies we provide them with need to evolve as well in order to keep up.

A new generation of travelers accustomed to the seamless experiences provided by consumer travel sites and apps are demanding this same convenience, choice, and flexibility from their business travel tools. And companies are embracing more dynamic business travel policies and solutions that improve employee adoption rates by offering more personalized experiences and better support on the road, which saves both time and money for the company.

TripActions is committed to growing side-by-side with our customers as we embrace the future of business travel. To learn more about how our tools can help you, schedule a demo at the link below.

See how TripActions can power your business travel.

Let's go