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5 COMMON PROCESSES
TRAVEL AGENCIES CAN AUTOMATE

In today's environment, travel agencies need to use every possible advantage to compete. Agencies can no longer afford inefficiencies or dated processes running their activity because of pressure from data volume, complex 3rd party systems. Travel agencies with the vision to embrace technology in their advantage can use these kind of tools to gain competitive advantages over their competitors.

Many travel agencies still have independent systems for reservations, invoicing, reporting or other operational systems. This way of working can be translated in some big disadvantages for travel agencies such as:

- **Inefficient procedure**

- **Increased costs and decreased productivity**

- **Unable to respond to changing needs**

The lack of integration and processes adds layers of inefficiency and in the end can hide true operating costs for the agency.

Given the increasing competitiveness of the travel industry, workflow problems will always be costly in terms of: money; customer relationships; growth and employee resources. Only you can judge the severity of its impact on your own: financial strength; profitability; market position and growth trends.

It goes without saying that in today's fast-paced, global travel industry, the ability to conserve time, resources, and personnel is key to leveraging a competitive advantage in a crowded field. With this in mind, here are 5 common processes travel agencies can automate using a travel ERP system.

#1. THIRD PARTY BOOKINGS

Rather than depending on human intervention for tracking bookings that have been made using 3rd party systems, an effective ERP system can automatically process these external bookings and integrate them with your larger database of bookings. Since travel ERP software is already aimed at helping integrate different types of information (bookings, for instance) from different sources, this is a key area where manual workflows can be made obsolete. Travel agencies can import services from 3rd party systems such as GDS systems and generate local files that are automatically imported from 3rd party systems with own remarks. Reservations can be taken over by the system according to auto process rules by a defined set of criteria: company, systems, services, date.

#2. CUSTOMER PROFILES

When it comes to corporate clients, there can be a lot of information to keep track of. Data about travel policies, service fees, and discounts need to be made available to anyone attempting to work with a given client, or else the resulting transactions will be slow, and inefficient. A process defined in a travel ERP system can automatically track corporate policies and other relevant information in order to create a unique client profile that users can refer to as needed. The value added in cases like these can be significant, as having automatically tracked information so readily available can have a positive impact on many different workflows.

Travel management companies can easily define specific rules for commissions, discounts and service fee. For a certain corporate customer, the agency can define a rule with a certain service fee that has to be applied, if the offer meets some predefined criteria: it can be applied for a certain service, travel supplier, segment or a certain airline company.

#3. INVOICING

Invoicing is yet another area where travel ERP process automation can help to prevent the delays and inefficiencies caused by manual workflows. By automatically selecting information from a series of connected databases, it is possible to generate and process invoices with virtually no need for human intervention. Not only can this add value, but it can also reduce the possibility of human errors, as users will at most need to check invoices for correctness. Invoices can be automatically created from the system, using defined rules per company, per segments.

#4. REPORTS AND ALERTS

One of the most time consuming activities is creating reports because there is a big amount of raw data. In order to present information about key performance indicators in a useful and readable way, it is necessary not just to access and digest large amounts of data, but also to fuss with formatting and visuals—all of which could instead be done by ERP software. Not only that, but travel ERP software can send e-mail alerts on its own, freeing up travel agencies to expend their resources in more meaningful and creative ways.

#5. CREDIT LIMIT MANAGEMENT

If an agency's corporate clients have credit limits that need to be monitored, ERP software can not only monitor that credit limit, but can integrate credit monitoring with other areas like billing, invoicing, and enforcing travel policies. In this way, ERP software can add tremendous value by creating new workflows that promote automation as a means to integration. Yes, automatic credit limit management will directly save man-hours and therefore money—but it can also make the work that cannot be automated more efficient, enabling users to go about their daily tasks with a renewed sense of the impact that their work can have for their agency. Travel agencies can set automatic alerts and therefore they can be announced when a certain company has reached 80% from their defined credit.

ERP SYSTEM FACILITATES GROWTH, AGILITY AND MAINTAINS COMPLIANCE

The prevalence of workflow problems in the travel industry and their potential to undermine sales growth and profitability is a major reason why travel enterprise resource planning (Travel ERP) systems have seen rapid growth in popularity and adoption. They deliver on the promise of reducing operational costs with automation; making better decisions with more accurate reporting; and supporting sales with better travel partner integration.

Many processes are dependent on human intervention, fact that translates into errors, are time consuming and costly. All these inefficiencies are eliminated through the automated processing provided by an ERP system that facilitates growth, agility and maintains compliance. Simply put, travel companies can allocate time, resources, and materials to other areas when they're not preoccupied with double-checking manual processes or correcting errors which may implicate several touch points of the value chain.

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