eBook

Key issues TMCs should evaluate when considering CSBT alternatives

This eBook explores the most important facts and features that should be considered by the **TMCs servicing small and medium enterprises,** when looking for a **corporate self-booking tool.**

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In this dynamic travel industry, business travel is only going to expand; thus, the travel management companies like yours should stay competitive and differentiate themselves by offering premium service to corporate clients and their travelers.

Why corporate self-booking tools are important

Today it's all about value; now more than ever before. Everyone is constantly seeking value for money – and this doesn't necessarily mean buying the cheapest flight ticket or accommodation from an online travel website. Travelers are looking for much more than that – they are looking for convenience and delightful, tailored travel experience.

For **Travel Management Companies,** understanding the needs, expectations, and habits of their corporate customers is crucial to their future success. You, as a **TMC,** should fully understand your clients' travel patterns and do your best to provide them solutions that will drive efficiency. One of the strongest allies in this struggle to stay competitive and differentiate by offering **premium service** to corporate customers is the **technology.**

A glimpse at business travel behavior shows why technology tools have become an important factor for travel managers. Studies reveal that today most business travelers (over 62%) book travel services by themselves.

In this context, it's hard for companies to make sure their travelers are booking in policy when they have no idea what they're doing, so online booking tools are essential. Here comes again the role of **TMCs,** that should help organizations gain control and visibility over their business travel spend.

Today, **corporate self-booking tools** have become a standard part of mature travel management programs. These are specifically designed to meet a corporation's needs around policy compliance, reporting and preferred vendor usage. These tools also offer more autonomy and simplicity to business travelers while making their travel arrangements from the convenience of their computers, while staying compliant with the travel policies in place in their company. Ultimately, **corporate self-booking tools** are supposed to bring:

Lower **TMCs** transaction costs – because online bookings made through such platforms do not require travel agent assistance or support

Lower travel costs – more options displayed: a **CSBT** had the ability to display more options than an agent can describe in the same amount of time.

What you should be looking for

Understanding the features of online corporate booking tools can help you choose the right tool for your corporate customers. First, keep in mind that that travelers are more likely to use a simple and empowering booking tool than a complicated or limiting option. While this might sound obvious, with so many **CSBTs** available today, **TMCs** might forget this 'rule' and get lost searching for the right fit. This can result in choosing some complex solutions which eventually will prove to be pointless for most of their customers.

So, look for simplicity – business travelers are very busy people anyway, so no one wants to complicate things. Simplicity will increase adoption.

Look for content freedom. Many solutions on the market come with predefined content. You're the one who knows what works best for your corporate customers, so why would you constrain them to book content from a single supplier? You should be able to offer them flight content from your own GDS contracts and from low cost carriers and accommodation from both travel wholesalers and your own contracted hotels. Of course, driving up volumes from your suppliers will translate into increased negotiation leverage – you can get lower fares based on the increased number of transactions.

Look for the possibility to allow **advanced travel policy configuration.** Without the right policy in place, companies are likely to expose themselves to substantial unnecessary costs in their travel activities. With in-depth configuration of travel policies and consistency across the entire travel activity within the corporation, maximum savings can be achieved.

A good **CSBT** permits policies definitions per various criteria, such as, for example: type of service, total value of the transaction, departure or destination cities, airlines, flight classes, flight duration, hotel categories, regions accepted for accommodation and the list can continue.
Just think about how often it might happen for a travel manager to have to define a policy in which, for a certain destination the traveler is restricted to use economy class, while for one that implies a long haul he can choose business class, up to a certain amount.

Convenience for everyone involved in the process – from travelers to travel managers. An automated travel policy validation and multiple workflows that can be set up for the approval will translate into an optimized and hassle-free process, fort both travelers and approvers. If compliant with the travel policies the booking is permitted, if not it, the request will pass through an approval chain.

Convenience can be also reflected by a **user-friendly interface.** A pleasant interface, intuitive and that provides a good user experience will drive adoption, so you shouldn't neglect this aspect when it comes to comparing possible options.

A **fast search response time** is also important when it comes to looking for flight or accommodation, especially when we talk about corporate travel. Business travelers are busy anyway - they want corporate travel services that answer their need for efficiency, allowing them to be productive, even when they are on the move. They want hassle-free travel experience, so do not bother them by neglecting the response time of the corporate booking tool in your portfolio. They will give up using it.

Possibility to use **remarks** and **reason codes** – these are extremely useful for out-of-policy itineraries. Very often, bookers might be asked to supply reason codes for itineraries that violate/ do not comply the applicable corporate travel policy – these exceptions will be further displayed in the email notification containing the booking information and will be reviewed by a designated supervisor. Moreover, the possibility to add these reason codes to the GDS PNR as remarks represents a plus. So, look for a **CSBT** that allows remarks configuration compatible with as many GDS systems as possible and also with mid-back office software.

Seamless **integration** with a reliable and multi-market **back office system** – for a greater efficiency in processes, automation, extended business visibility and control, the integration between the **corporate self-booking tool** and the mid-back office solution is extremely important. **Corporate reporting** is among the main benefits brought by a flowless integration – this will ensure control over costs and travel policies at all times for travel managers. The travel program responsible will always have a close-up view of travelling employees, details regarding **booked services, cost centers** and **travel spending.**

The importance of retaining your customers is obvious and doesn't need further arguments. You should use tools that keep you permanently in touch with them, guide, support and engage them at every step. You need to deliver real-time information and provide them the possibility to manage their travel plans, from one place – directly from their mobile phones. There are **CSBTs** that are **integrated with itinerary management mobile apps.** Thus, once booked, the trips are sent automatically to the travelers, on their mobile phones. So, they can have at their fingertips complete details about their itinerary, real time flight notifications, calenda-synchronized plans, weather info, attractions and city recommendations, maps and other widgets useful while on the go. Basically, business travels will get everything they need to stay productive and enjoy a great experience at the same time.

Last, but not least is the **price** – there are numerous available solutions out there these days, that come in various 'shapes and sizes', each with their own features setting them apart. If you are servicing small and medium-sized enterprises, probably you can't afford expensive tools. Many of the available solutions may prove to be too costly for you, especially if the provider charges also transaction fees. So, look for a vendor that doesn't charge you for the transactions performed. You should also consider the tools that have no limitations with respect to the number of users allowed in the system.

It's clear that in the corporate travel business, the options for self-booking tools are abounding and diverse. Choosing the right tool for your needs is an important decision and depends on lots of factors specific to your business profile. For your small and medium customers, where the business travel processes have not yet been fully established, a corporate self-booking tool might be the perfect option – helping both of you. You, as a **TMC** will be empowered to deliver the best service for your SME, whilst your customers will enjoy more autonomy, an intuitive and efficient booking process and great choice.

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The main purpose of a corporate self-booking tool is to make the booking process an intuitive and efficient one, while providing transparency and choice.

Have you found it yet?

GET IN TOUCH WITH US AT
sales@dcsplus.net

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