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A Corporate Travel Policy that Works

It is a myth that employees who travel on business resent the corporate travel policy. The truth is that employees like to know what is expected of them and how to comply with a corporate policy as long as that policy is fair and gives them the ability to do what they need to do on the road. So a well thought out corporate travel policy is a benefit to the company and the business traveler alike.

If it has been given to you to put together a corporate travel policy, your mission from the stand point of the company is to develop a policy that standardizes business expenses, eliminates waste and excess on the road and puts some controls around that part of the business expense picture. So there are some definite focus areas you should include in the stated corporate policy including…

*   Reservations. The business can utilize a travel agent that is looking for the best deal for the company. The best rates can be identified and taken advantage of but only while making sure the business traveler's needs and the business objective of the trip are satisfied. Requiring that employees utilize the corporate travel agent again is not unfair and it clarifies for the employee how to handle the situation.

*   Use of credit. It is a bit of effort and expense to set up corporate credit cards that you can require your traveling employees to use. But by trapping expenses to the corporate account, you can get a record of a most of the business expenses that the employee is incurring. Many of the expenses of travel such as airline and hotel can be directly billed back to the company thus taking the issues out of the hands of the business traveler.

*   Travel rewards. If you have your corporate travel coordinated by an internal or external travel agency, corporate accounts with the major airlines can be established so the frequent flyer miles can be collected by the business. As such, the business can redeem those miles and realize those benefits as a significant discount to apply against the travel budget.

*   Per Diem. Your corporate travel policy must communicate clearly to the traveling employee what their limits are for hotel, rental car and meals on the road. You want to head off before it starts any tendency by the employee to go overboard with daily expenses. This part of the policy should be reviewed annually to update to current costs.

*   Reporting.   One of the chief complaints employees have about corporate

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travel policies are that the expense reporting system is cryptic and hard to fill out. You will give the employee a standardized form that each traveler in the company must fill out to get reimbursed for expenses while traveling. But review these forms and even design your own so the format is understandable and you have categories to cover all types of expenses the employee might encounter. Along with these general categories, your corporate travel policies should include some leverage for employees who are faced with exceptional situations. Room and food expenses can vary widely depending on where the employee must travel. So you don't want to set the hotel limit to $125 per night because it is reasonable to stay in a comfortable hotel for that rate in Lincoln Nebraska but enforce that same limitation for an employee who must do business in New York City.

By creating a policy that in general protects the corporate budget but is also workable to employees who are about the company business, you will have a tool that will serve both company and employee interests and enable business travel to be what it was always intended to be – a productive, business focused activity that achieves the goals of the enterprise.

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