

APRIL 2014

# TRAVEL BUYER

FOR SA CORPORATES

## +Meet

A close-up portrait of Brett Krause, a middle-aged man with grey hair and a goatee, smiling. He is wearing a light blue striped shirt. The background is a blurred wooden structure, possibly a staircase or a building interior.

# Hatching a *new* travel programme

**Hatch Goba's Brett Krause  
finalises partnership with new TMC**

- *How to de-clutter your travel programme*
- *Manage forex more effectively*
- *What is the role of non-tech suppliers in OBТ integration?*
- *Have you tried laughter yoga for your events?*

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## COMMENT:

## De-cluttering emotions

It is the emotions that get us in travel, some say.

When assessing the effectiveness of a corporate travel programme, Wings Travel Management's **Michella Pellegrino** believes there is very little room for emotion in such a programme because this is where the complexities come into travel. She was commenting for an article in this issue about how to de-clutter your travel programme (p2) in which Nedbank's **Howard Stephens** also refers to taking the 'emotion out of it' when refining your programme.

Hatch Goba's **Brett Krause**, whom we interview this month (p4), can attest to that, as his biggest learning since taking on the travel portfolio has been how to deal with travellers on an emotional level and how to respond to the emotion of travellers. It is the only operational area he's ever been involved in that is like this, he says.

And how can we forget the desperate emotion of travellers' families, friends and colleagues when a trip goes horribly wrong as in the case of Malaysia Airlines MH370, highlighting the strongest

kinds of emotions that travel buyers could be confronted with.

This is where technology is supposed to help. Yet in the same way it eases emotions, technology can also fuel them. In our travel technology feature this month, as one story, we look at the role of non-tech suppliers in the roll-out of an e-procurement solution for a corporate client. Thrifty's **Fiona Angelico** suggests that a successful implementation centres around the human element, as systems can mean less contact points between bookers and service providers.

Here's a question: is it possible to evolve from being an emotional industry like none other to becoming an industry that doesn't only concern itself with business intelligence, but rather emotional intelligence as well? Can we learn to manage emotions better for the highest good of all concerned?

And do we want to? Didn't emotions get us into travel in the first place?

All the best

**KIM COCHRANE**  
(kimcochrane@telkomsa.net)

## COVER

Hatch Goba facilities lead in Johannesburg, **Brett Krause**, speaks with *Travel Buyer* about how the firm is finalising its partnership with a new travel management company. Cover photograph by **Shannon Van Zyl**.

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# Shake-up on Oz route

**Q**ANTAS and SAA have cancelled their codeshare agreement, effective May 31 – a surprising move as both carriers fought for years to sustain it despite regulators' reluctance to extend the codeshare. The move has left many questions as to what will happen now on the South Africa-Australia route.

Some speculate that both carriers will cut the route, relying on codeshares and partnerships with other airlines to service these markets.

Cash-strapped Qantas is expected to post a loss of around AU\$300m (R2,9bn) for the first

half of the 2013/14 financial year. A drastic reduction in staff is also expected to be announced. These announcements have led to predictions in Australian newspapers that Qantas might axe its Sydney-Johannesburg route, which operates using a fuel-thirsty B747-400, as one of many measures to curtail the airline's financial losses.

**Michi Messner**, Qantas's regional manager for Africa, told *Travel Buyer* the airline would continue to fly direct to Sydney from Johannesburg, with no change to the daily service operated by B747 aircraft (QF63/64).



The rejuvenation project at the Garden Court Milpark hotel recently included refurbishment of all the bedrooms, lobby, lounge and the corridors as well as the addition of two new conference venues and a new fitness centre.

## New look and facilities at Garden Court Milpark

TSOGO Sun's Garden Court Milpark hotel has a fresh look and new offerings after the recent completion of an extensive refurbishment and upgrade of facilities.

New room types have been introduced and the hotel now offers 76 Standard King and Standard rooms as well as 140 Family rooms, including 12 Superior rooms, 19 Deluxe rooms and four Executive rooms. The Executive rooms offer a small open-plan lounge and kitchenette with semi self-catering facilities.

Furthermore, the hotel unveiled three new conference facilities, seating up to 140 people, as well as the upgrade

of existing meeting rooms, increasing the overall conference facilities from two to five rooms.

"The new conferencing offer was driven by the demand for quality venues close to the city and surrounding attractions and we have no doubt that the new additions coupled with the refurbishment will meet and exceed our guests' expectations", said gm **Noël Macquet**.

Conference packages at the new venue start from R325 per person. A full-day conference package includes three tea or coffee breaks and lunch, a PA system with line microphone, data projector and screen as well as lectern, pens and notepads.

## Pax re-accommodated

ALL Qantas customers with existing bookings on Qantas codeshare services operated by SAA (with a 'QF' flight number) between Johannesburg and Perth for travel on or after June 1 will be re-accommodated.

All SAA-ticketed codeshare passengers on the Qantas flight will be accommodated on to flight QF064 and QF063 and transported to their final destination.

All SAA un-ticketed codeshare passengers who had booked SA7700 and SA7701 on Johannesburg-Sydney-Johannesburg will be re-accommodated on SAA's Perth operations with the ticketing agent, using the most convenient option available for the onward connection to Sydney that is permitted within the conditions of the fare conditions.

## Delta turns FFP on its head

DELTA Air Lines has revolutionised the concept of frequent flyer programmes by announcing that, from January 2015, travellers will earn frequent flyer points based on the amount of money they spend with the airline rather than the number of miles they have travelled.

This move is to recognise and reward higher-paying customers. Bargain hunters flying on cheap flights will earn fewer points.

The traveller's status on the airline will also play a role in the accrual of points. Fliers with no status will earn five miles per dollar spent while

Delta's top-tier travellers – those who travel 125 000 miles per year – will earn 11 miles per dollar spent. For flights purchased in a currency other than US dollars, the currency will be converted to USD on the late five-day currency exchange rate at the time of ticketing. Then the same 'mileage earn rates' per USD will be applied.

**Jeff Robertson**, Delta's vp of SkyMiles, says the new model for earning miles will better recognise frequent business travellers as well as those less frequent leisure customers who purchase premium fares.

## Accommodation levy to apply in Dubai

THE Tourism Dirham is a new accommodation fee levied in Dubai on all hotel and apartment hotel stays since the end of March.

Set at a scale of 7 (US\$1.90) to 20 dirhams (US\$5.44) per room per night depending on grading, the revenue goes towards marketing and development of the Emirate's

tourism and trade sectors. The fee is collected by hotels on checkout.

A grace period applies: the fee will not be imposed for stays between March 31 and June 1, providing the accommodation was paid in full before February 23.

• Refer to page 13 for our Gulf feature.

## New aircraft for SAA Africa routes

**S**AA has taken delivery of two new A320 aircraft – with more to come – which will be deployed on SAA’s domestic and intra-African routes. The A320s are configured with 24 seats in business class and 114 in economy.

SAA would not specify which routes the aircraft would be deployed on.

**Linden Birns**, spokesperson for Airbus, says A320s are specifically designed for routes with three- to four-hour flight time, making them ideal for domestic routes and services to African destinations.

“Business-class seating offers a 10% improvement on pitch compared with

our current business-class offering on narrow-body aircraft, giving our competitors in the domestic market a run for their money,” says **Myriam Bracke**, SAA product manager.

The fuel-efficient aircraft feature a back compartment on all business-class seats, with the exception of the first two rows, where passengers are able to store a PC tablet and make use of a USB power point and PC power console.

Further innovations are also in the pipeline, including Samsung tablets with in-flight entertainment already loaded – a service that will be offered to business-class travellers on longer African flights.

## ABTA breakfast: novel ideas



PIC: KIM COCHRANE

A RECENT ABTA buyers’ breakfast in Johannesburg saw delegates participating in round-table discussions about e-tolls, time management, new suppliers, MICE spend, change management and traveller compliance, among other topics. **Roger Jacobs**, contracts and compliance manager, MSD (Pty Ltd), was delighted to win air tickets for two people and five nights’ accommodation in Mauritius. He was photographed with **Elonka Reuss**, Air Mauritius representative, and **Monique Swart**, ABTA founder, receiving his prize.

## The BEST of the BEST

INDUSTRY peers gathered at the reinstated Asata Diners Club Awards to honour and celebrate those individuals in travel who “go the extra mile, burn the midnight oil to deliver excellent customer service and ultimately contribute to the professional image of our industry”. The event was held on March 1 at a grand gala dinner in Johannesburg.

“The goal is to recognise the

outstanding individuals, as nominated and voted for by their peers, which will further strengthen the message of professionalism and enhance the credibility and commitment individuals make when choosing to commence, develop and grow a long-term career in travel,” said Asata ceo, **Otto de Vries**.

The winners were:

- Leisure Consultant: **Jacqui**

**Giles** (Club Travel)

- Corporate Consultant: **Angelique Anderson** (Sure African Imprint)
- ITC: **Janine Corry** (24Point7 Studio Travel)
- Key Accounts Executive: **Rachael Penaluna** (Sure Maritime Travel)
- Wholesale FIT: **Carla Seaman** (Travel Vision)
- Wholesale Groups: **Lizelle**

**Morrison** (Beachcomber)

- Wholesale Sales Representative: **Cheryl Smith** (Travel Vision)
- Exceptional Commitment: **Johanna Mukoki** (Travel with Flair)
- Tomorrow’s Leader: **Dorcas Dlamini** (Protea Hotels) WTM Africa sponsored prizes for the retail and wholesale categories. ■

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# Hatching a new travel programme

Hatch Goba Africa facilities lead in Johannesburg, **Brett Krause**, speaks with *Travel Buyer* about how the firm is finalising its partnership with a new travel management company. By **Kim Cochrane**.

**Q: Is it business as usual for your travel programme at the moment?**

**A:** It is not business as usual for us at all in terms of travel. We've been out to tender since late last year and have only just appointed a new travel management company, HRG Rennies Travel, in February. The arrangement will probably commence in May or sooner depending on the implementation process.

But by the same token, this change has given us an opportunity to evaluate our travel policy and look at it in line with global travel policy as well as our service level agreements (SLAs) and payment model – and assess where we want to be. We knew when we went to market that there would be an enhanced focus on Africa in our company this year so we needed to align ourselves with the right people and processes to help us through that. We've never gone the online booking route before so technology has also been a critical part of our tender, which was also driven by our colleagues in Canada whose programme looks very different to ours in terms of online booking.

With HRG Rennies Travel, we've opted to pilot a solution with a core of travel bookers before rolling it out to the whole organisation. They'll be able to book local travel and point-to-point international travel via the tool. By the end of the year, we hope to have all project support coordinators (PSCs) who manage travel bookings on behalf of

the business units and projects booking online for all local flights. We'll still be able to book travel traditionally if need be.

**Q: How has your programme worked traditionally until now?**

**A:** Our programme – typically managed by an off-site TMC – is still evolving and it has taken us a few years from when I took on travel at Hatch in 2010 to become comfortable in terms of where we are. Travel sits in Facilities within Shared Services and prior to that, with Finance. Our CFO was looking at the high-end level but no one internally was dealing with the operations of it. I joined Hatch seven years ago and built up an integrated facilities department from scratch, so when travel needed a home, it seemed natural to me that it should sit with us in Facilities.

There has never been a global consolidated travel programme for Hatch, which is something we are focusing on as a global organisation. At the time I got involved, we could generate certain information about our spend but we didn't really understand our travel patterns; there was a lot of information we didn't have in order to build a solid foundation for our programme. My difficulty was that I had no previous exposure to travel. I didn't want to be overly reliant on a TMC or ask them the basic questions, so I procured the services of Strategic Travel Management Brokers (STMB), an independent travel procurement consultancy. I



PIC SHANNON VAN ZYL

needed to empower myself and get a good understanding of the industry without going directly to my service providers.

That decision culminated in a process of starting the travel programme over with a new TMC, since I realised there were noise levels in the organisation and we needed to go to market. But I didn't know how to do this or what to look for so I used the consultancy to establish what to get out of this process.

I needed to understand travel patterns, expenditure and how it worked in terms of travel, as well as what was available in the market and how to manage the change of service provider if that was what we decided. We needed to refine our travel policy. I needed to understand SLAs and

how to develop, implement and manage them so we could measure performance. I needed to understand reporting requirements and what precisely we wanted to help us manage this programme effectively. And then how to manage all of this going forward.

**Q: How did Goba come into it?**

**A:** Hatch Africa acquired Goba in 2013, which further impacted on our travel programme, as Goba had an extensive national footprint, something Hatch didn't. Hatch globally has significant travel in South America, Australia, Canada, Northern America and more recently in Russia. We utilise different TMCs in each of those

regions. Goba has very different travel patterns – and an organisational hierarchy, which we don't have as a flat, matrix organisation. There needed to be one travel policy and this had to be introduced during the acquisition phase.

For Hatch Goba Africa, our travel spend last year was just over R20m, as opposed to R56m when I took on the portfolio. We brought the spend down significantly due to the softened economy but mainly because of more disciplined booking such as sticking to preferred supplier agreements and using videoconferencing.

### Q: What is your role with respect to travel?

**A:** My background is in facilities, property and leasing management. Travel is therefore only about 5% of what I do on a daily basis. In my position as facilities lead, travel therefore doesn't always get the attention it deserves. Travel is critical though so at times it gets tremendous focus from me. I run a fully integrated facilities department throughout Africa.

My biggest challenge is how I'm going to manage travel this year with all my commitments; we'll probably need to up-skill another staff member. For this reason, it's essential to have an effective TMC, which is why we spent a significant amount of time and effort on the tender process. Our principals in Canada who work with the travel programme were here for two weeks to meet with our travel committee to review the presentations from a global perspective and share advice and best practices.

While travel approvals go to the relevant business units, I get involved when there are questions on policy. I also manage the relationship with the

TMC. If there is a real problem, I get called in but it's not part of my daily management process.

### Q: How important was Africa in the tender?

**A:** Africa was fundamental in terms of how we looked at the RFP process. While our big focus this year will be bedding down the new TMC, our next important issue is having a good strategy and understanding of travel into Africa, including effective risk management, because Africa is where we see a significant trend of travel patterns.

There are huge opportunities for Hatch Goba in Africa in many sectors and we need a clear understanding of travel expectations. We are required to provide information in terms of residential and hotel accommodation etc. from a travel perspective to the company when it prepares for business tenders so we have to align ourselves with the right people to ensure we can assist the company to be competitive.

A typical example is that I was asked to look at the feasibility of a charter service to Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) for three years in relation to the cost of scheduled carriers. We did this and the charters were 250% more in costs. So we need to understand what the business is asking of us, the impact of the information we submit to the business, and then to understand how to maintain the cost of that throughout the project.

### Q: How capable with respect to Africa did you find respondents?

**A:** We asked respondents key questions in terms of their existing capabilities into

Africa and most of them were developing capability – and happy to partner with us to develop capability further. I was nervous about these as candidates; we wanted a partner with established expertise, with people and infrastructure already on the ground. They needed to understand shuttles, the residential component, access to highways and airports, risks etc.

One or two TMCs had significant footprints in Africa and we needed to explore that. A few had alliances in Africa and we had to understand what that meant for us. One or two didn't have a footprint but were happy to develop it in association with us and we needed to understand the implications of that.

It was also interesting during the tender to see how the different respondents planned to approach the implementation of online booking. We saw some amazing technologies, from all applicants. But we needed to decide how relevant and realistic that tech was for us travelling in Africa. We had a lot of questions but not many answers.

### Q: What has been the biggest internal challenge while streamlining travel?

**A:** Our organisation doesn't really believe in written policies, rather in the notion that as professionals we will operate responsibly in a professional environment. I've therefore experienced the problem before where staff – believing they were adding value – were booking outside of policy with non-approved suppliers. And it is disastrous in a programme that is process driven like travel. So it is essential to get your travel policy right and that everyone buys in to it.

## Tip:

- BE fair to your TMC. Manage them through a balanced scorecard to protect them and yourself when it comes to emotional decision-making. It is critical to report on progress and savings regularly when there are no problems so as to diffuse the situation when emotional complaints do arise. Share your travel programme and its successes regularly.

### Q: What have you learnt from all of this?

**A:** Definitely how to deal with travellers on an emotional level and how to respond to the emotion of travellers. The travel industry is not a science, for example the different air fares at times of booking – the emotion attached to that is huge. Pricing and ticket availability creates such a level of emotion and then you look at it in relation to our culture and employees think travel is the worst run thing in the world. They don't understand the processes involved when booking travel or how TMCs and airlines work.

My challenge (and learning) is how to take the emotions out of the debates and reporting I have in the organisation. It is the only operational area I've ever been involved in that is like this. Unfortunately perceptions become reality and while you can assess SLAs, reaction and response times and scorecards, you can't measure emotion. In some cases it doesn't matter how many reports you provide or how much information you give on savings, if the emotion gets to such a level, there seems to be no justification for the decisions made then. ■

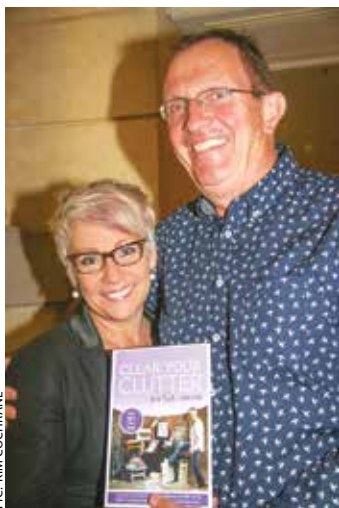
## How to

# De-clutter your travel programme

At a recent ABTA buyers breakfast in Johannesburg, keynote speaker and author of *Clear your Clutter*, **Kate Emmerson**, offered delegates suggestions on how to manage their time – and clutter – more effectively. Nedbank's **Howard Stephens** won a copy of her book so we asked them for some recommendations on how to de-clutter a travel programme. By **Kim Cochrane**.



In any organisation, people run the risk of doing things by default or simply because they are part of a programme, believes clutter and productivity expert, **Kate Emmerson**. "Generally we don't re-evaluate or question vigilantly enough."



PICTURE: KIM COCHRANE

Looking forward to clearing the clutter is new head of sourcing at Nedbank Group Procurement, **Howard Stephens**, with author of 'Clear your Clutter', **Kate Emmerson**, at the recent ABTA event.

To de-clutter managed portfolios such as corporate travel first requires taking stock, she says. "Just like a physical store has a stock-take, do the same for your inventory of programmes. Then apply the Pareto principle (80-20 rule). Be willing to de-frag the programmes that are not working. Ask for feedback to generate new ideas and be willing to risk letting go to create new. Get out of lazy thinking that just because something is part of the portfolio, that it needs to stay there. Cull, then create, then cash in."

**Howard Stephens**, who recently took on the role of head of sourcing at Nedbank Group Procurement, says it's important to get the mindset about travel right. "Travel is a business tool and not a reward system. Get the 'bad' travellers on your side and take the emotion out of it."

Stephens believes travel management is a skill and a valuable asset to the business and if done correctly, it can be effective and generate cost savings. "If done incorrectly, it can be dangerous and waste time."

He continues that a de-cluttering programme for travel would start with a travel strategy. "There must be buy-in

from top management and from this base, an effective travel policy can be built."

Not all travellers understand the complexity of travel arrangements, Stephens emphasises, so they must be educated about all aspects of the process. "Travel cost is everything from the time you leave home until you arrive home – not just the flight or hotel."

Emmerson agrees that travel buyers should ask what their desired outcomes are as specifically as possible and why those outcomes are important. "What is your portfolio and its processes attempting to achieve and how are you measuring it? Working with numbers for feedback as well as qualitative, more emotional feedback will give you a well-balanced starting point. Work from the adage that 'less is more.'"

To achieve this, Stephens suggests buyers review the effectiveness of the travel programme on a regular basis. "Adjust strategies and policy to meet current requirements; make them living documents and have a regular spring clean."

He recommends buyers test the processes themselves and get feedback from travellers. "And open your mind," he adds. "Read

travel news items and attend seminars to get other views on how the best portfolios and processes are constructed."

## How do organisations benefit from de-cluttering?

Companies are about output versus input, leveraging all processes, and at the end of the day, says Emmerson, wasted time is one of those components that needs to be turned into a financial calculation. "On average, an executive waste six weeks per year, about an hour per day looking for documents and misfiled information. I take clients through a simple process to equate that lost time into hard cash. If anyone wastes any time due to issues such as cluttered desks and e-mail systems, non-streamlined workflows, inadequate systems, procrastination, excessive meetings or poor use of tech gadgets, as examples, that is time, energy and money that could be funnelled into more exciting endeavours such as being more innovative."

Stephens believes the financial impact of clutter on the bottom



line could be as much as 10% of travel spend. "Buyers need to look at the total end-to-end cost of travel. A saving of a few rands on a flight or a hotel could make your traveller ineffective when trying to close that important deal. If your policy is linked to the business strategy you will be seen as part of the solution and not part of the problem. If you get the right information you will be in the best situation to negotiate improved rates based on volumes."

## Where do buyers and travellers pick up clutter?

Travellers pick up clutter in hotel rooms by taking all the complimentary products, jokes Emerson. "More seriously though for travellers, clutter could result from not adjusting to time zones (thus wasting time) or not being prepared beforehand. Or over-packing because no packing list system was used."

She continues that clutter also results from travel programmes trying to be all things to all people. "Think niche rather than general. Clutter also results when companies try to do it all without outsourcing."

For Stephens clutter in a travel programme is generated by:

- Too many suppliers. "Check annual utilisation and off-board if necessary."
- Contracts that are overly detailed. "Simplify. Have standard legalese that does not change and then have differences for only the services to be delivered."
- Excessive paper. "Get rid of as much paper as possible and make processes electronic driven by workflow processes."
- Information overflow. "Focus your reporting on what is necessary."

# 5 practical steps

**S**INCE travel is such an emotive experience, emotion can cloud judgement and create impediments to a successful travel programme, believes **Michella Pellegrino**, head: Business Development, Oil & Gas Division, Sub-Saharan Africa at Wings Travel Management.

"When looking at business travel, there is very little room for emotion and this is often where the complexities come into travel programmes."

She recommends five basic steps that travel managers should consider.

"If travel is a critical part of your business then applying these steps will resolve many of the issues within your programme. Ultimately tailoring these elements will resolve other internal factors such as back-office requirements."

**1. Travel policy:** its purpose is to offer a guideline to the traveller on how to procure the required services for travel and how to behave. Most importantly it forms part of the scope of work that the preferred TMC/s will be required to fulfil. It is important to keep this policy simple and comprehensive; lengthy travel policies often lead to complex programmes, which leave travellers and TMCs unclear, increasing risks to both traveller safety and the organisation's costs.



Networking at the ABTA breakfast: Wings Travel Management Oil & Gas Division Sub-Saharan Africa's head: Business Development **Michella Pellegrino** (left) and account manager **Shaun Lovett** (right) with **Clifford Mavundza**, PPC Limited group category manager: MRO, Packaging & International Support, who looks after travel.

**2. Authority matrix:** who can authorise travel, changes to the policy and exceptions to the policy? The key factor is not to have too many levels within the matrix but ensure there are sufficient controls dependent on the size of the organisation. Having a single department head to authorise may lead to complications should this person not be available.

**3. Preferred suppliers:** most buyers have challenges in determining which suppliers would be best suited. The next concern is whether it is truly beneficial to have a direct agreement with the suppliers or to leverage off the economies of scale and utilise preferred TMC/s agreements. Loyalty programmes can often complicate choices. Fewer suppliers equals maximum discounts and benefits but don't put 'all your eggs in one basket' or over-compensate in one area, e.g. three airlines that all travel on the same routing.

**4. MIS reporting:** this is the most effective way to manage a travel programme yet many travel/procurement managers are not receiving the data they require or in a format that can be easily interpreted by them to make effective changes.

**5. Strategic relationships:** much time is wasted and spent on meeting with various suppliers and service providers. Narrow this down through an RFP process, not just with the TMC but also with your air, car and hotel suppliers. On an annual basis reviewing these service providers is essential. Suppliers can also be coordinated through your TMC and then the necessary information filtered through via your TMC; the result is then one meeting a month and quarterly reviews. Meeting with suppliers then is only done with your TMC on your request, not when sales representatives need to fill their diaries. ■



# The essential pre-event checklist

**Angela Makholwa-Moabelo**, md at events management and PR company, Britespark Communications, gives a rundown of the checks PCOs should perform to ensure a successful event.

**E**VENT check-listing is absolutely crucial for any events manager, whether the person is organising small or large-scale events. As minor details seem, they can make or break an event.

Ensuring that things such as sound checks are conducted prior to an event can prevent the embarrassment of having technical glitches. It is also important to make sure your guests' dietary requirements are catered for. People are very particular about their food preferences and quick to voice their discontent if they have made organisers aware of their preferences.

In addition to these checks, it is a good idea to keep an 'event bag' on site stocked with items such as scissors, sticky tape,

pens, markers, headache tablets and pins. As an event manager, you should be a one-stop emergency service for guests and your client. Throughout the event, you should make sure two-way communication is available to ensure contact with all relevant suppliers.

It is industry standard to ensure that safety and health regulations are adhered to so make sure that your technical team has all the relevant engineering certificates for rigging stages and sound equipment. If you are draping the venue, make sure you have a fire-retardant certificate for your draping.

Entertainment is one of the key elements of most events so make sure your programme director is a professional who will take the time to familiarise him or

herself with your or your client's brand and the objective of the event. Ensure they are miked according to the requirements of the event and to suit their presentation style.

Ensure you get a technical rider from your entertainers and that you secure a dressing room if possible for wardrobe changes. Entertainers can be very finicky and are accustomed to certain standards. Some may even threaten not to perform should they find the conditions of your event to be wanting, so it's best to know what you're dealing with.

Finally, ensure that your suppliers have been paid their requisite deposits to avoid a supplier dropping you on the day of the event.

## 1. A week before the event



- A menu tasting should be performed
- RSVPs should be confirmed and dietary preferences sent to the caterer
- The full event décor set-up should be confirmed with the supplier and approved by client
- All AV presentations should have been finalised and checked for formatting in line with AV equipment to be used at the event
- The programme director, entertainment and all other event suppliers should have been confirmed

## 2. The day before the event



- A dress rehearsal should be performed
- Confirm all logistics with the event venue and all other suppliers
- All staging, sound and AV equipment should have been rigged and tested
- All AV presentations should be given a dry run
- All safety and engineering certificates should be available and submitted to the event venue
- Décor should be set up. Alternatively, décor should be completed at least three hours before the event if access is not possible the day before

## 3. An hour or two before



- Ensure lighting is correctly adjusted
- Sound check should be performed for the programme director and speakers
- The programme director should be properly miked up
- The relevant suppliers, including catering, should have a copy of the programme
- Event programme and/or menu should be on the tables or chairs, depending on the seating set-up
- Event safety crew should be on site as per regulations
- All relevant suppliers should be on site
- Registration staff should be on site

▶ feature continues on p10

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**WE'VE GOT IT ALL**



PIG: CAN STOCK PHOTO

# Have you tried laughter yoga?

Conference planners looking for something completely different to spice up a conference should consider laughter yoga.

**Sue van Winsen** finds out more.



*Dr Madan Kataria*

**L**AUGHTER yoga was started in 1995 in India by medical doctor, **Madan Kataria**. SA-based laughter yoga practitioner and founder of Laughter for Africa, **Martin Combrinck**, says Dr Kataria was looking at ways of assisting his patients deal with the increasing levels of stress in their lives. "He noticed that the normal homeopathic medicines weren't working so he began looking for an alternative," says Combrinck. During his search, he discovered research on the medical benefits of laughter and thought it would be a good idea to start a laughter club. "But this didn't really work because he was using jokes and humour, which is very specific to the individual,"

says Combrinck. "He wanted to develop something that didn't need comedy humour and came up with the idea of just laughing for the sake of laughter, and the concept of laughing yoga was born." Laughter yoga is now practised in over 70 countries worldwide.

Laughter for Africa introduces South Africans to the concept of laughter yoga and corporates can select from a range of sessions or workshops depending on their requirements. "Basically, we teach people the basics of how laughter yoga works and within a short space of time, people find their own laughter and get the benefits from it," says Combrinck.

## What are the benefits?

For the individual, there are physiological benefits, particularly from all the additional oxygen that they will take in during the laughter yoga session.

"On a corporate level the sessions boost creativity in people," says Combrinck. He adds that the laughter breaks down social barriers very quickly and increases emotional intelligence. "Once you are balanced and healthy within you will transfer

that into the workplace," he says. Research has shown that regular sessions can boost productivity and even the bottom line, he adds. "A US-based telesales company started implementing 15 minutes of laughter yoga before they started work in the mornings and this increased sales for the day by up to 20%."

## How can you incorporate it into your event?

Laughter for Africa offers corporate seminars and team-building workshops. These can be customised to half-day, one-day or two-day workshops on general wellness. Alternatively, the company also offers short laughter sessions that can easily be conducted during a coffee break between programmes at a conference, or a start to a training day. Off-site retreats are also available.

"Many corporates are bored with the usual team-building options so they try laughter yoga. It has been embraced by a lot of companies as awareness of laughter yoga grows."

► *Meet continues on p12*

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# Inside the new Premier Hotel Midrand

We enlisted the help of a meetings expert to inspect the facilities of the new Premier Hotel Midrand. After a detailed walkthrough and interviews with key staff, she provided us with her independent assessment.



*Elouise Cloete is the md of Shift, a company that specialises in meetings, events and incentives. For the past eight years, Shift has honed its skills in corporate event management and provides a comprehensive solution including venue sourcing, incentive travel and a host of different projects.*

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## What Elouise Cloete found...

**W**HILE many shy away from having a conference in Midrand on account of traffic in the area, only 4.5km from Midrand Gautrain Station, the new Premier Hotel Midrand will definitely give you cause to reconsider.

Upon entering, guests are greeted by friendly, helpful staff. To compliment first impressions of modernity and efficiency, dark wood and glass furnishings, curved lines and circles are used throughout the hotel.

Behind the reception is the 80-seater restaurant, which stretches out to the pool area. The serving station has a partially open kitchen view and can cater buffet or plated meals. A fully stocked bar is also available in the restaurant area.

The hotel comprises 113 rooms of which two are paraplegic rooms on the ground floor. There are two suites and 111 deluxe rooms. Of the deluxe rooms, 39 are twin and ten are king rooms with bath and shower combo.

No more horrible sticky shower curtain as all bathroom combos have a glass divider. The two suites have a separate bath and shower. Each room is equipped with an en-suite bathroom, digital in-room safe, tea/coffee facilities, a full hotel directory, telephone, WiFi, hairdryer, flat-screen TV and a selected DSTV bouquet.

Room service is available from 06h00-22h00 each day. Rooms are only refreshed once a day, unless otherwise requested. Turn-down services are also available on request.

Premier is taking a step towards being green. The air-conditioner, hairdryer and lights work on the guest's key card, for this reason only one card will be issued to each guest.

The hotel has four conference venues. The boardroom, situated in the main building, can accommodate 35 delegates in cinema-style seating. There is one big room, situated in a separate building just opposite the main reception area, which can split into three smaller rooms. The foyer area, cordoned off by its huge slate pillars, can comfortably host a cocktail function for 120 people.

Future plans include the insertion of glass panels between the slate pillars to stop the draft blowing through, making it an all-year outside venue. Situated behind the foyer is the main conference room, which can host 200 guests banquet style, or three smaller groups. The hotel has done away with the standard rounds and now has oval tables, which is a fresh new look for banqueting.

Complimentary shuttles are offered within a five kilometre radius as well as between Midrand Gautrain Station and the hotel. ■

# The Gulf: Masters at reinvention

Geographically central between north and south, and culturally midway between East and West, The Gulf, in particular Dubai, remains a hot business travel spot for South Africans. **Michelle Colman** reports.



PIC: JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS HOTEL DUBAI LOBBY

**T**HE GULF region, notably the Emirate of Dubai, has assumed a new centrality for South African travellers. Gulf carriers such as Emirates, Etihad Airways and Qatar Airways have filled the gap left by the many European and other international airlines that vacated our skies over the last decade or so. Nowadays, when there's no direct flight option, the Gulf, with its midway location, offers the next best routing.

As tourist destinations, many Gulf countries make up for what they lack in natural appeal with incredible man-made innovation. The United Arab Emirates, with Dubai in the lead and Abu Dhabi on its tail, has become a region of superlatives – the biggest, best, fastest, tallest. And at the risk of losing their place in this race, they have also become masters at re-invention, so that every few years or so there's a whole new spate of activities.

Business travel from South Africa is encouraged by the fact that there are over 120 South African companies operating in Dubai. This statistic, which comes from the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, explains the noticeable South African contingent in the emirate's large expat community.

Emirates flies six flights a day between Dubai and Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. Asked about the proportion of business

travellers it carries out of SA, Emirates regional manager, **Fouad Caunhye**, comments: "We fly on average 30% of business traffic. Emirates connects business travellers from around the world to Dubai, and to other destinations with just a single stop in Dubai. Dubai's strategic location on the global travel map makes it possible for us to serve almost 90% of the world's population with non-stop flights."

## Dubai in comeback mode

**GILL Dewar**, md of GCD Consulting, notes the return of incentive business to Dubai, which was a novelty with corporate MICE clients about eight to ten years ago. Dewar is the SA representative of Dutch-based DMC network, Body and Soul International. One of its members is 1001 Events, with offices in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Dewar says once Dubai was perceived as a 'one-time only' destination for events but with its talent for reinvention, many clients are revisiting. In the first two months of 2014 she received 13 group enquiries for travel to Dubai, one for 750 people. In 2013 she processed over 40 enquiries, nine of them materialising into confirmations. "The business is definitely there," she comments, "from my

perspective Dubai is a best-seller."

Emirates' flights out of SA present ease of access, which is a huge plus factor in the Dubai comeback. Further, with corporates anxiously watching budgets, the fact that a four-day incentive can be jam-packed with activity and interest fuels the appeal. In addition, visa applications can be done online and are relatively hassle free.

Atlantis The Palm, with its South African connections, is a huge drawcard for South Africans, who regard a visit there as somewhat of a status symbol, says Dewar.

Dewar says the incentive experience is pretty much stock standard, limited by the emirate's small size, with desert experiences, heritage trails and shopping high on the list of activities. But Dubai



Enjoying a food festival in Dubai

PIC: DUBAI FOOD FESTIVAL DTCM

DMCs "never really say no to any request" and will make everything happen. Some DMCs offer a more intimate taste of the desert with small exclusive camps.

Dubai's success is rubbing off on the second largest emirate in the UAE, Abu Dhabi, which Dewar believes will soon present competition to its neighbour, just an hour's drive

away. Abu Dhabi's attractions include one of the largest mosques in the Middle East, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque; Ferrari World theme park with one of the world's fastest roller coaster rides; the oasis city of Al Ain; the Al Ain Camel Market; the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital and the Arabian Wildlife Park.

▶ feature continues on p14

# Travel management retains a personal touch

PIC: BURJ KHALIFA DUBAI TOURISM

**Drisha Acharya,** business development executive of BCD Travel in the UAE, offers this interesting insight into corporate travel management in the region.

**T**HE UAE is a unique market with a mix of local and global businesses. Travel management has been in existence for over three decades, servicing the travel needs of multinational corporations (MNCs), government and public sector organisations and local companies of all sizes. Corporate travel management has evolved through a combination of local know-how based on the culture, expectations and trends, with best practices and technology from more mature markets.

While Dubai and Abu Dhabi are the two corporate travel hubs in the UAE, both cities have their own nuances and differences.

The traditional business model is still prominent in both cities (more so in Abu Dhabi) and it's quite common for a client to deal with more than one or two travel agencies, with price being the deciding factor.

Purchase orders for tickets, followed by invoicing and a credit facility of up to 90 days is common, with a limited number of clients using corporate cards as a form of payment. Adoption of corporate cards and business travel accounts (BTAs) is higher in the Dubai market, largely due to a higher presence of MNCs and a greater awareness of card programmes. A fixed transaction fee or a percentage-based fee are the two commonly used methods for travel companies to levy charges, although there are a few cases of monthly management fees as well.

The booking process in the UAE still involves a significant element of 'personal touch'. TMCs are often required to provide options by e-mail, which are then reviewed by the traveller/booker before completion of the transaction. So there's very little instant ticketing! The majority of business travel bookings are still made by travel bookers, PAs and administration staff and the concept of onsite agents or implants is in force.

More often than not, an agency is also required to manage personal, annual home leave passage tickets (which is seen as corporate travel) for expat employees. The TMC must also support ancillary holiday plans and services such as airport transfers, visa assistance, travel insurance and MICE

or group travel. Under these circumstances, services offered often go beyond the normal TMC model seen in other parts of the world, and it requires resource levels and processes to be adapted to meet requirements. This does have an adverse impact on productivity and costs, but is something that needs to be suitably handled.

## Technology an area of rapid change

Some of the best practices brought in by global TMCs during the last five years have been well adopted through ongoing education and advice by industry experts. Implementation of travel policies and the benefits of compliance have been significant areas of change in the recent past.

The penetration and adoption of travel technology for clients such as online booking tools (OBTs) is, however, limited due to various contributory factors. With a number of low cost carriers (LCCs) emerging in this region, there has been a shift from the legacy carriers to LCCs, affecting the operational workflow of TMCs which has been largely based on the conventional GDS model. It's apparent that technology will probably be an area of rapid change in the near future.

## SA favourites expand on MICE facilities

THE coupling of location, air connection and innovation in the UAE makes for a 'never-fail' recipe as a business destination.

The Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) for instance, has secured its position as the Middle East's premier platform for business networking and international trade, hosting some of the region's most important exhibitions, not least being the Arabian Travel Market.

The Johannesburg-based office of the Government of Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) states that two hotels very popular with the SA market, Atlantis The Palm and JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai in Business Bay (pictured), both recently unveiled new meeting and conference amenities.

The former offers 14 meeting rooms totalling 5 600m<sup>2</sup> in total. Two new outdoor conference areas have been added.



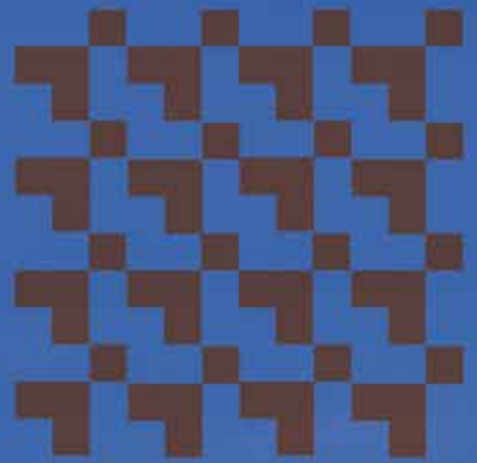
PIC: JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS HOTEL DUBAI

The JW Marriott facility, the world's tallest hotel and location of last year's Association of South African Travel Agents annual conference, has now opened its second tower. This property has about 5 155m<sup>2</sup> of meeting space across 32 rooms. Its Dubai Ballroom Prefunction Area can accommodate 1 548 guests. ■



# Seeking the ideal destination for your events and conferences?

Dubai delivers the perfect combination of infrastructure, private and public sector support and a community of trained professionals for conferences, incentives, events and exhibitions. The city is easily accessible with direct air connections to 220 destinations worldwide. It boasts several event venues including the world-class Dubai International Convention & Exhibition Centre that offers 90,000 square metres of event space. Dubai also offers over 75,000 hotel rooms in all budget classes including 24,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of the Dubai Metro. Add all this together and you'll realise why Dubai is the perfect destination for successful events.



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# Manage forex more effectively

Card currency conversions and fluctuating exchange rates are an unmeasured and unmanaged expense for most travel buyers. These costs are often overlooked when corporate travellers pay with a credit card overseas. **Dorine Reinstein** looks at ways for companies to get a better handle on these expenses.



**L**ESS than a fifth of travel buyers are effectively managing charges for converting currency, according to a recent study conducted by AirPlus International. About 40% of surveyed travel managers admitted they had no idea what percentage their card provider charged them as a conversion fee. Similarly, when asked if they accounted for conversion fees in their travel budgets, only 30% said 'yes'.

"The issue of forex rate is beyond the scope of many companies and I hazard to say all buyers (apart from banks maybe)," agrees **Alan Reid**, owner of PSCM Solutions.

Figuring out the breakdown of conversion costs, the exchange rates applied and the profit element for the card company can indeed be difficult. And whereas in the UK, card issuers are now obliged by the Payment Services Directive to include these details *ex post facto* on cardholders' statements, no such rule is applicable in SA. There are, however, ways for travel managers to take action.

## Negotiate the conversion fee

Opinions are divided on whether negotiating the conversion fee is a realistic option for travel managers. Most credit card companies and banks tend to say the conversion fee is non-negotiable.

**Pamela White**, head of

Corporate Card Services at Nedbank, explains: "Travel buyers can't at present negotiate currency conversion fees but we publish these fees and are transparent about them. On American Express Corporate Cards, the conversion fee is 1.7%, which is one of the lowest conversion fees in the SA industry. These currency conversion fees should be compared to the commission that foreign exchange dealers charge of foreign exchange purchases."

According to Reid, however, it is possible for prominent clients to either negotiate the conversion fee down or even ask the credit card provider to completely scrap this fee.

If a negotiation on bringing down the conversion fees seems impossible, buyers can also try to negotiate their rebate up. Companies that spend large amounts of money through a card can often negotiate with the card company to rebate a small percentage of that spend to them.

## Negotiate the exchange rate

White explains negotiating the exchange rate is not necessarily a good option to manage forex expenses. "Unfortunately the rand is a very volatile currency and the exchange rates are determined on a daily basis. The timing of the transactions is also determined by when the relevant merchants

where the cardholder used his card, process these transactions."

## Compare

White points out that travel managers should always compare all the various options available to their cardholders in the market and take into consideration the lowest currency conversion fees, the lowest forex commissions, etc.

## The challenge of personal credit cards

A serious problem of post travel receipt of card transactions comes when personal cards are used, says Reid. He explains the corporate traveller has to wait for the statement to see the rate and accompanying charges. Many companies insist on expense claims being submitted as soon as a trip is completed. The traveller then carries the risk of getting the exchange rate wrong.

## Use a foreign currency pre-paid card

American Express offers a global travel card, a prepaid travel card that is designed specifically to allow travellers to lock in the rate of exchange in advance.

**Ian Barrable**, director UK, South Africa & Global Encashment American Express Global Payment Options, explains: "One of the benefits of Global Travel Card is that the exchange rate is locked in before

travellers depart on their trip. By purchasing foreign exchange before departure, a traveller can remove the impact of fluctuating currencies while travelling and budget with confidence. Given our currency is volatile it would be prudent remember the 60-day window available to purchase prior to travel and to use a prepaid product to lock in the rate, which makes budgeting far more accurate."

**Kate Howarth**, spokesperson Travelex, explains Travelex provides a Cash Passport: a prepaid card that is loaded with foreign currency in advance of spending. "At the time of loading the card, customers can negotiate on the exchange rate and lock this in. The more a customer spends with us, the bigger the discount we can provide on our exchange rate and commission." According to Howarth, the fees for withdrawing cash with a Cash Passport are also fixed at GB£1.50, US\$2, €2 and AU\$3.50, which is significantly less than those for the average credit or debit card.

**Craig MacFarlane**, director retail operations at Bidvest Bank, also believes that pre-paid cards are the way to go, as companies will only have to navigate the rate of exchange once. He advises that companies should not wait till the last moment to purchase their foreign exchange. They have 60 days to watch the currency fluctuations and buy at the best possible rate.

MacFarlane adds that pre-paid cards allow travellers to pay

everything with a clear audit trail. "If they withdraw cash as well, you get a nice audit trail."

White warns, however, that although these cards do not attract currency conversion fees, and are loaded at a fixed exchange rate, they attract other fees and are subject to different terms and conditions.



### Apply for an omnibus facility

Bidvest Bank can authorise an annual omnibus allowance for business travel up to R10m or

facilitate an application to the South African Reserve Bank for a value greater than R10m.

MacFarlane explains every traveller has a standard personal foreign exchange allowance of R1m. A corporate traveller, will, however, often be reluctant to tap into that allowance for business travel. He says with an omnibus facility, corporate travellers can keep their R1m foreign exchange allowance for their personal use and use the omnibus facility for corporate expenditure.

He says the omnibus facility allows companies to better manage foreign exchange expenditure and any travel expenditure. "When a company has applied for an omnibus facility, every employee of the company can use this facility to travel overseas. At the end of the year, companies can get a detailed report from the

omnibus facility outlining how the whole expenditure was used. The Reserve Bank encourages this to better manage the travel allowances."

### Look out for Direct Currency Conversion

According to White, foreign merchants often offer the Direct Currency Conversion (DCC). She explains that if a merchant offers this service, the cardholder has the option to process the transaction in his home currency. "Keep in mind that this transaction is done at the relevant exchange rate as applied on the day by the DCC supplier, and the transaction attracts additional conversion fees of up to 3%, which is much higher than the standard credit card conversion fee."

Corporates can also try to keep hotel rates in

neighbouring countries in local currency as the rand versus pula, metical, kwacha, schilling is not as volatile as to the US\$.

Adds Reid: "A rate in US\$ probably has a 'double whammy' as there is often a conversion from local to US\$ and then again from US\$ back to ZAR."

### Be clear about your own data

When selecting a supplier for a corporate card, travel buyers should provide as in-depth information as possible as this will give them leverage to negotiate.

Spencer Hanlon, executive director of marketing for AirPlus, explains: "That includes how much you spend in another currency and where, what you spend it on, and how many travellers you have."

## How forex affects meeting costs

OVERSEAS meetings can be heavily impacted by the cost of foreign exchange. Large and costly meetings are often booked several months in advance and payment may be as late as two months after the event takes place.

When organising large-scale meeting overseas, it is a good idea to 'fix' the exchange rate, explains Howarth.

White explains that as with any forex transaction, there is risk involved in organising meetings overseas. "There might be either an upside or a downside risk in this scenario. Organisations making large foreign purchase mitigate this risk with forex forward cover. To secure the budget for conferences, it may be prudent to pay as much as

is feasible upfront and 'fix' the cost."

Pay the bulk of the cost early, advises Nathan Warner, market head, South Africa at American Express Global Payment Options. He explains that the benefit of holding onto your rands a little longer cannot be compared to the risk of moving currencies. "The sooner you can settle the bulk of the payment due, the smaller the risk and possible loss." According to Warner, there is also an option of having a foreign currency account or opening a forward exchange contract (FEC), which allows companies to buy foreign exchange early and settle once payments are due.

It all depends on the client,

according to Kathy Nel, national manager, Limex. She explains that most clients are aware of the exchange rate and allow for the risks in their budgets. If the client is not ready to take the risk, it is advisable to buy forward cover from the bank and secure the payments at a set exchange rate. She warns, however, that since the banks have to cover the risk, they will usually increase the exchange rate slightly for such forward cover.

Reid cautions that the costs associated with a forward cover provided by the bank often outweigh the benefits derived from such a cover.

Better savings can be achieved by carefully choosing the time period, venue and country of the event.

### Did you know?

AMERICAN Express has announced it is waiving its cross-currency conversion fees until January 31, 2015, for all cross-currency transactions done with an American Express Global Travel Card in US\$, euros and the pound. ■



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# Changing demands call for NEW SOLUTIONS

**Max Marx** investigates how changing travel management needs are resulting in development of new technologies.



PIC: DINERS CLUB

**M**ORE recently the corporate market has been looking for more than just online booking technologies, says **Claude Vankeirsbilck**, Tourvest Travel Services (TTS) chief sales and marketing officer. "They are looking for technologies robust enough for the nuances one has to deal with in the South African and African contexts. We are experiencing a rapid and significant move to more integrated online travel management solutions where corporates are moving the bulk of their bookings online, with the need to be fully supported and backed by competent TMCs."

He adds that there are, however, still many corporates, particularly large spend/volume corporates, who expect their TMC to offer a combination of traditional travel services along with state-of-the-art technologies.

Key to online travel management solutions, he says, are online self-service booking tools with lowest prices and access to multiple inventory platforms; management of supplier corporate agreements; profile and policy management; electronic authorisation systems to pre-approve travel based on corporate authority limits and mandates; full integration into a corporate's existing systems; electronic invoices and reconciliation into card systems; traveller tracking; and emergency and after-hours TMC support.

TTS recently developed its own market-leading technology and online travel management solution that incorporates these aspects while addressing changing demands of travel management.

The solution, says Vankeirsbilck, takes into account several key drivers that are

fuelling change and technology in the SA corporate market. These include duty of care; procurement (transparency, cost containment and aggregation of buying power); compliance (authorisation of all trips, budget controls and policy control); as well as investment in new internal ERP systems such as SAP (integration).

According to him, TTS's new solution revolutionises the way its customers use the technology, with that same technology platform integrated into its various operational brands such as American Express Travel Services and Seekers Travel.

"It's a complete robotic end-to-end solution from requisition to expense management that is used simultaneously by our consultants and customers. It offers customers complete flexibility when processing a

▶ feature continues on p22

## Did you know?

DINERS Club recently released an online solution, *Diners Club Advantage plus*, which is an end-to-end expense management tool. The enhanced data is uploaded daily and for a minimal once-off scoping and set-up cost, the company is able to assign hierarchical user access levels to facilitate and automate the expense management process.

According to the access level, users are able to build customised reports using pivot tables; facilitate the expense management process; allocate and approve transactions; and extract allocated and approved transactions in a number of file formats for upload into any financial system.



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► feature continued from p20

all available technology platforms including mobile technology. The system supports all the necessary elements that make up a business trip such as air, car hotel, B&B, transfer parking, visa requests, subsistence allowances and forex."

## Consolidation

**Leáne Walters**, Diners Club's manager: Corporate & Travel Relationships, says businesses are looking at technology to find ways to consolidate traveller, booking and payment information to streamline and reconciliation process, and to produce meaningful reports.

"Reports are now being used to track key traveller behaviour in terms of reasons for travel and length of stay and the like, in an effort to increase productivity and reduce 'frivolous' expenditure that is sometimes referred to as unplanned travel."

Diners Club offers a payment solution that enables businesses to consolidate travel and business spend as well as related transactional data. It has partnered with TMCs, travel suppliers and service providers to enhance the transactional information with company-specific references to simplify the approval, allocation and reconciliation process.

She says corporates who channel their travel spend through one payment mechanism are able to obtain an overall view of actual spend. "We've found that businesses prefer to rely on financial information provided by financial institutions, rather than collating information from various sources and in various formats. Travel providers are also looking at us to assist them in providing a better service to our mutual clients in areas that are not necessarily their area of expertise."

**Robyn Christie**, Travelport

gm in SA, says the industry is diversifying due to increased internet access and mobile phone technology. To support these changes, Travelport has launched Travelport Mobile Agent that enables agencies to ticket on mobile and tablet devices. It has also partnered with outside developers, through its open platform, to innovate next generation travel tools and apps.

Developments in mobile technologies are fuelling the move to mobile travel management, agrees **Allan Lunz**, BIDTravel md. "Smart phones and tablets are going to play a huge role going forward. We are in the process of developing new online and mobile solutions that will offer our clients new ways of engaging with our TMC brands. The new solutions enable corporates to book and manage their travel online, either at their desktops or on their mobile devices."

Lunz adds that once a company's policies and traveller profiles are loaded onto the system, the travel management solution becomes fully automated and seamless. "Once a booking has been made an e-ticket is generated and automatically sent to a device of the customer's choice."

## Local trends

There have been a number of technology shifts in the marketplace, continues Vankeirsbilck.

"Market-leading TMCs have made significant investments in ensuring a single system to manage front, mid and back office with efficiency being key in a high-volume, low-margin business environment. Communication and notification systems are using mobile technology to

► feature continues on p24

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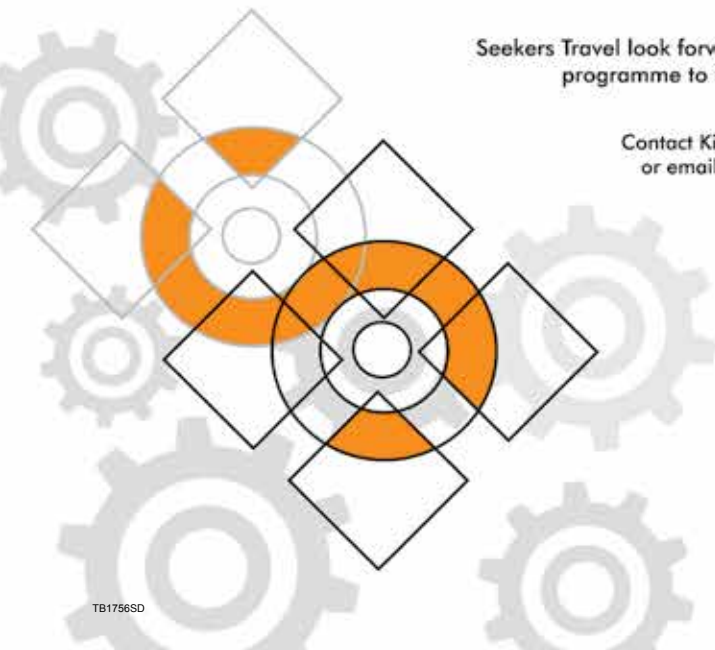


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► feature continues from p22

keep travellers informed. There have also been shifts in online self-service technologies, and moves to integrate and access non-GDS content providers such as B&Bs and car-rental companies."

Christie says corporates are seeking better reporting at pre-and post-trip level, as well as access to bookings on their mobile devices. "They also want to be able to book ancillary products such as additional cabin and excess baggage and onboard meals in one place and have access to this content."

### Are these technologies moving into Africa?

Vankeirsbilck says it's inevitable that online travel management solutions are being sought across the African continent. "While many African markets are lagging behind SA, the demand for more transparent pricing and control is driving technology and a change in behaviour."

He says the large multinational companies are the ones driving these changes. "The main challenge for Africa is to ensure all the key travel suppliers make their content available to online platforms or GDSs and to improve the available payments options such as BSP and card solutions. Change is coming more quickly in certain markets than in others. We need to appreciate that the various markets within Africa have varied needs and challenges and that Africa cannot have a 'one size fits all' solution which comes with many GDS online booking tool products."

Christie says customisable GDS online booking tool solutions are available but understandably come at a price. She adds that Africa has a lot of untapped potential with internet usage soaring and the middle class booming in markets like Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

## Travelport focuses on relevance and profitability

TRAVELPORT is continually developing technologies to ensure both its GDS and its customers are relevant, profitable and focused on service and growth, according to gm in SA, **Robyn Christie** (pictured).

Through Travelport's Agentivity product, corporates have the ability to turn travel booking information into intelligence. It offers a sophisticated reporting system that enables pre-, during- and post-trip reporting. In real time corporates can check for flights booked but not yet paid for, booking cancellations and traveller location.



Travelport Viewtrip Mobile enables TMCs to push updates and changes to itineraries directly to travellers' mobile devices.

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## TTS speaks to local requirements

HAVING developed an online travel management solution from scratch, Tourvest Travel Services (TTS) has ensured its newly developed technology speaks to the requirements of the local market, says **Claude Vankeirsbilck**, TTS chief sales and marketing officer.

Its online travel management solution allows corporates direct access to all the content TTS's consultants have, to ensure bookings are made at the lowest available prices within a controlled travel programme.

The front office is used by consultants and customers. The mid office drives correct traveller behaviour in terms of policy, procurement and duty of care, and the back office ensures

all ticket and travel documents and invoices are robotically issued after a comprehensive quality control process.

Key elements of the solution include:

- Speed of booking – it takes under five minutes from start to receiving documents.
- Control over every aspect of the booking – from controlling who the vendors are, type of fares and classes, requisition and approval workflow systems and automated profile management.
- Reporting – assists corporates in understanding their travel spend and volumes.
- After hours and emergency support 24x7 year-round.



PIC: AMADEUS

## Amadeus rolls out mobile tools

WITH duty of care being top of mind, Amadeus recently released Amadeus Mobile Messenger (AMM), a tool that delivers efficient incident management, putting corporates fully in control of any situation that may arise, advises **Andrew Shaw**, online manager: SSA Regional Solution Centre at Amadeus.

The AMM tool provides professional assistance for handling disruptive incidents such as weather events, political unrest or natural disasters, he says. It enables travellers to be identified and assisted immediately and efficiently, allowing corporates to quickly pinpoint traveller location.

Also new is Amadeus e-Travel Management Mobile (AeTM Mobile), Amadeus' new

mobile online self-booking tool for corporations. The AeTM Mobile app enables travellers to make air and rail bookings via mobile devices, including Android and iPhone. It enables easy switching between desktop and mobile, allowing travellers booking through the AeTM desktop solution to access details of their booked itineraries on the mobile application. Bookings can also be finalised via the app, and a summary of the trip plus a listing of all onward bookings is provided.

Shaw says AeTM Mobile ensures continued control of a corporate's travel programme with preferred suppliers, policies and negotiated fares while demonstrating a corporate's care for their business travellers.

## BidTravel updates and integrates solutions



BIDTRAVEL is currently updating and integrating all its corporate travel management solutions so clients have easy online access to all elements of the booking process from a single location.

The solution is being supported by a mobile application, through which corporate travellers will be able to access all this information and make bookings from their tablets or smart phones.

**Allan Lunz**, BidTravel md (pictured), says the new solution will provide integrated support into

existing legacy systems and real-time reporting tools that ensure better controls to drive cost savings.

"We are able to customise, configure and integrate the solution to meet the exact requirements per corporate client. The ability to integrate with a client's existing systems ensures that corporate clients are able to manage the entire process from source to pay."

One BidTravel offering is mymarket.com, a fully integrated, customisable business-to-business procurement solution.

### News flash!

**NEDBANK**, in partnership with iMobilise Transportation Systems, has launched card payment units in metered airport taxis.

The device makes use of Nedbank's Pocket Pos technology to enable passengers to pay for their fares with credit or debit cards.

## Thrifty launches new corporate booking tool

THRIFTY recently introduced a new online booking system, Thrifty Direct, providing corporate customers with 24-hour online booking support.

In development since October last year, the Thrifty Direct 2014 project launched in March, according to national sales and marketing executive, **Fiona Angelico**.

"Once we have checked the full cycle, from reservations

to invoicing, we will roll out the platform to the rest of our corporate customers, after which the system will be launched to the retail travel trade, followed by car hire brokers as well as international and local tour operators."

The system is easy to use and is operational 24 hours a day, she says. "We are very pleased with the feedback received so far."

▶ feature continues on p26



**Natasha Henry**,  
travel manager and PA, Unitrans



**Tibor Zsadanyi**,  
Travel with Flair coo



**Tracey Shaw**, TraveluXion  
head of sales and marketing



**Marcelle Ross**, Travellinck ceo



**Melissa Storey**,  
executive head: strategy,  
development and marketing, First  
Car Rental, Sixt Rent a Car

## Role of non-tech suppliers in OBT integration

Just how integral to the successful roll-out of a new technology or solution within a corporation's travel management programme are the company's travel suppliers? Words: **Kim Cochrane**.

**S**UPPLIERS such as car-rental companies and accommodation establishments play an integral role in the corporate travel management programme, particularly when integrating a new e-procurement system for travel, believes Unitrans travel manager and PA, **Natasha Henry**.

"Without these suppliers, your programme will struggle to survive. The success of your system will largely depend on the infrastructure and back-office systems of suppliers."

When Unitrans embarked on the first phase of its TravelLinck implementation in October 2008, the transition was smooth from a systems perspective, she says. "It does help greatly when your preferred suppliers are online and availability is in real time. We ran the system on a trial basis for a fairly long period, after which certain modules were rolled out periodically, the online request and approval module only last year."

Henry continues that non-technology suppliers, particularly car-rental partners, played a big part in the implementation. "A few reconfigurations and system upgrades were required in order to facilitate compatibility of the two reservation systems but when this was resolved, it was plain sailing. A huge benefit to these suppliers is that when they are part of the TravelLinck system, they are exposed to more additional business because all clients using the system are exposed to their availability and services."

She believes the suppliers with whom corporates partner when embarking on such a project are integral to the success of the roll-out process. "See it as a joint venture between multiple

parties with a common interest and shared benefits."

**Tracey Shaw**, head of sales and marketing, TraveluXion, agrees that all suppliers to the corporate client are integral to the successful implementation of an end-to-end T&E application. "Not all suppliers have all their content or preferred rates contained within a GDS, so communication with regards to both GDS and non-GDS content is crucial."

According to Travellinck ceo, **Marcelle Ross**, TravelLinck has integrated to the reservation systems of all major car-rental companies, hotels, low-cost carriers and multiple GDS systems to access airline and any other supplier stock required by clients. "The suppliers do not have to load any rates as we access all the latest fares in real time."

**Fiona Angelico**, Thrifty national sales and marketing executive, says the company's role as a service provider is always to find the most expedient method of processing a reservation, as well as the actual check-out procedure. "Although we are in the business of hiring out a tangible vehicle, it is imperative that we as service providers continually examine our systems internally and attempt to marry them not only to the current technologies that are available but to examine new trends and tech to see how we can gain competitive advantage by adapting early."

Angelico continues that end-to-end e-procurement solutions have become key. "Our role as a car-rental supplier is to ensure that we have e-systems that can work within a corporate travel management system. A stand-alone that a corporate client can use to manage all aspect of their car-rental usage,

including a portal housing invoices, statements and management reports. Or to assist with co-development so that developed corporate booking systems are able to link to our and other systems to book all travel requirements in one hub."

### What steps make the transition simpler?

From a TMC perspective, **Tibor Zsadanyi**, Travel with Flair (TWF) coo, says his company as a travel solutions provider prides itself in taking care of both technology and non-technology informed suppliers. "Non-technology related suppliers' resistances are financially motivated, as entering the technology sector can be costly. Whilst the primary focus is linked toward offering our mutual customer a solution to their requirements, TWF has developed fully automated GDS/web-based management tools that incorporate non-technology supplier offerings into our travel management solutions to be able to offer a full end-to-end solution to customers."

In addition to TWF's automated management of non-technology suppliers, he says TWF takes it a step further by assisting non-technology related suppliers to become "tech savvy" through various projects and methodologies. "One such supplier is Executive Carport at OR Tambo International Airport. TWF worked closely with Executive Carport in creating a solution that saw a traditional and cumbersome booking process move toward an automated live online booking platform."

**Melissa Storey**, executive head: strategy, development

and marketing, First Car Rental, Sixt Rent a Car, says: "We are a technology supplier and do the integration with the relevant party ourselves. The key is immediate remote electronic support upon development to iron out any difficulties experienced by the programmer at the time."

According to Henry, it became simpler after approvers got more involved in the online process. It was positive because it allowed them to see exactly what was being spent against their cost centres. As with any other online system, adds Henry, everyone needs to sing off the same hymn sheet. "As the client, agree on the non-negotiable aspects and expectations of the system in order to get the maximum benefit with the least amount of additional cost."

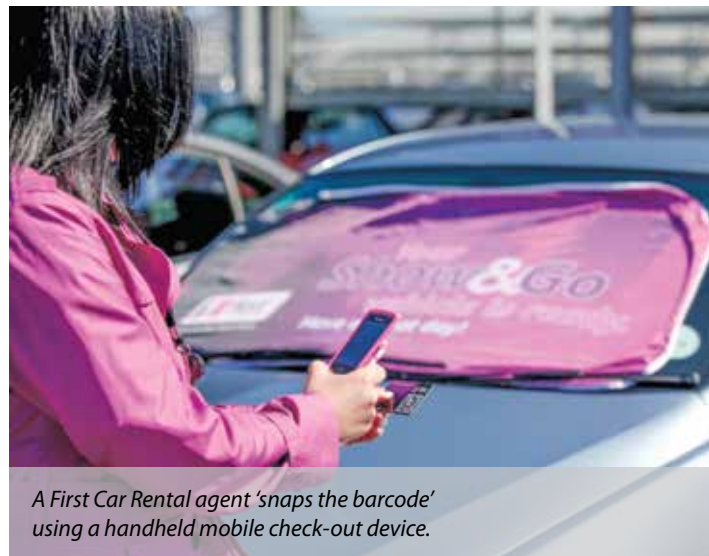
Henry believes the more suppliers you can have in one online, real-time travel management system, the more benefits you will experience. "Integration of company policy and an approval framework in your travel management system will greatly assist in

smoothing the path during implementation. Travel bookers and travellers alike are creatures of habit and change is often met with great resistance, but having a firm policy and procedure in place makes this an easier transition."

The rules are the rules, she states. "This will undoubtedly require the backing of your management team, which should be easy when all the benefits are illustrated through projected cost savings."

A well-developed change management strategy with executive and multi-level stakeholder buy-in is key, suggests Ross. "Complete rebranding of the solution plays a large role in user acceptance and having access to your preferred supplier inventory and rates at the touch of a button has only improved the relationship between buyer and supplier."

Shaw recommends that corporate clients and suppliers appoint a dedicated product person to the project to work closely with the technology provider to ensure accurate



A First Car Rental agent 'snaps the barcode' using a handheld mobile check-out device.

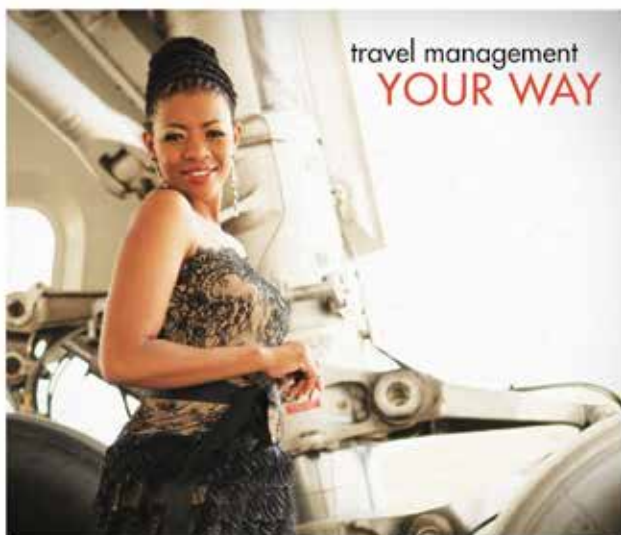
PIC: FIRST CAR RENTAL

reflection and loading of application content. "The non-technology supplier may also gain invaluable insight into future technology enhancements their client may envision, which places the supplier in an enviable position to work alongside their client to develop client-focused innovations. Ideally, if all suppliers could provide electronic SARS-compliant

invoices, this would assist corporations and the accounts payable teams to improve the back-office function."

Angelico suggests e-solutions that run alongside a service-linked membership programme as potentially the best methodology to use. "Using the database as part of a booking tool allows the booking process

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## LEADERS IN... Corporate Online Booking Tools



► feature continues from p27

to be completed quickly, and as the member's details are also housed within the system at time of collection and transaction, this process is streamlined as no unnecessary information is re-requested."

## Are suppliers adequately involved in most roll-outs?

Storey doesn't believe that the South African tourism industry in general (leisure or corporate platforms) is evolved enough in this sphere. "Local corporate travel programmes often experience procrastination and it takes months with certain integrations. With overseas brokerages it can take a few days or a maximum of two weeks to implement existing integration material for a supplier within an existing platform that offers that specific discipline, for example our car rental xml integration capability. One or

two are doing a decent job, with talented programmers – but unfortunately prioritising projects due to increased demand for integration remains a problem in any development-intensive environment."

Angelico says an answer to the question depends on which programme is being rolled out. "With our own booking system, we are of course very involved. With roll-outs that involve collaboration within large travel management programmes, we assist with roll-out as well as product training for facilitators. With programmes that are third party stand-alone products that provide service bundles, we are not involved in the process; here involvement would be more from a product offering and system perspective."

Ross says Travellinck has established relationships with the technical teams of all suppliers, so implementations run smoothly and suppliers are not directly involved with

the roll-out. "The supplier gets involved with the initial set-up, which includes giving Travellinck permission to access the corporates' preferred rates via our integration channel."

From TraveluXion's perspective, Shaw confirms that part of the detailed project plan includes milestones and objectives for each role player, which includes non-technology suppliers as they are critical to the success – and will impact or delay the roll-out if not included. "The agreed stakeholders attend the project meetings and agree to clearly defined responsibilities. This mitigates the risk of non-technology suppliers from being excluded."

Adds Zsadanyi: "Through TWF's fully automated GDS/web-based management programmes, TWF ensures optimal involvement of all supplier stakeholders. In many cases non-technology service providers play a key role working hand in hand with our mutual

customers based on industry and possible geographic locations."

## Navigate through resistance

IT developments that have occurred in the past two decades have meant that it is often the customer who requests a tool to speed up the process of booking, says Angelico. "The key to any system is how fast, effective and how easy it is to use. Provided the booking system reduced the time taken to make a booking and made the booking process easier than contacting an outsourced service provider directly, there shouldn't be much resistance."

She continues that it is about the human element, as systems can mean less contact points between bookers and service providers. "If you have a contact person who makes the corporate booking facilitator feel at ease and accepting of the system,

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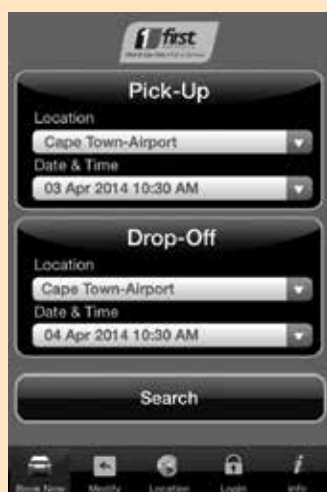
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### First Car Rental's app launches

Here is a sneak peek at First Car Rental's iPhone app, which will be available for mobile car hire bookings this month. Aimed at both corporate and leisure markets, the car-rental rates and inclusions displayed are user specific. Says spokesperson **Melissa Storey**: "Our Android app will follow shortly. This doesn't replace our web booking portal but just makes life much easier for the 10% of our mobile phone users who want to book their cars from wherever they are in SA."



PIC: FIRST CAR RENTAL

then the process of moving to the new system becomes an adventure and not a hassle."

Ross agrees that resistance can be avoided by ensuring correct communication and user buy-in long before training commences. "Foster a sense of excitement and anticipation."

It is important that the TMC is supportive and embracing of the concept of an end-to-end T&E application for the client's benefit, believes Shaw. "The main resistance is when travel bookers and travellers liaise directly with the TMC, outside of the T&E application, meaning that they are bypassing the controls and compliance mechanisms the application provides."

### Common pitfalls?

There may be a perception that it is very easy to book non-technology suppliers (offline suppliers) via an online booking solution, says Ross. "If a supplier does not have a reservation system we can readily access, we then need to facilitate the reservations behind the scene. This is clarified with the travel buyer upfront and explained during training."

Angelico says depending on the system, buyers may have multiple service providers that are all involved offering supply to the same system. "It could be a challenge to incorporate a number of companies as part of the same roll-out. The online solution's primary purpose is to

ensure that booking facilitators are able to make a booking easily and that the individual travelling has the fastest and easiest method of travelling.

"We always need to remain cognisant of the fact that booking facilitators are not experts in travel; this is often just a small part of their actual role in the company. Any system roll-out needs to offer training that is effective, as well as direct support for any queries and assistance."

Excluding suppliers from the project plan and believing an end-to-end T&E application will alleviate all the challenges that are part and parcel of a well-managed travel programme is a common pitfall, believes Shaw. "Technology solutions can provide a framework for improved compliance and cost controls but a strong culture of good corporate citizenry will go a long way to overcoming the usual obstacles in a programme."

Shaw says to stand still while your competitors embrace technology will leave a company at a disadvantage.

Travel buyers should be bold and embrace the technology available, she adds. "If companies seek independence from a TMC in respect of a technology solution then they should ensure their RFPs and tenders are not confusing in the sense that they should be positioned to technology providers and not to non-technology suppliers."

► feature continues on p30

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# Tech trends

**T**HE most significant trends in the local market at the moment with regard to travel technology, says **Marcelle Ross**, ceo of TravelLinck, are the following:

■ **Data**

This has become the most important element of any travel programme to enable buyers to proactively manage budgets. Clients want access to spend data on mobile devices.

■ **Holistic view of data**

Ability to attach any document pertaining to a trip within the travel order.

■ **Reporting**

Ability to tag travellers/projects to apply specific policy and allow for detailed reporting.

■ **Duty of care**

Ability to readily track traveller whereabouts. Clients want to be able to gain access to this data when needed.

■ **Budget visibility**

Pre-trip approval with access to budget availability is becoming critical for both government and larger corporate clients.

■ **Expense management**

Travel and related expenses need to be combined to get a clearer view of the total cost of travel.

■ **Lodge card reconciliation**

Card companies are offering enhanced solutions but clients need a solution that includes non-financial data on a daily basis as opposed to monthly.

■ **MICE**

A portion of this spend is shifting from PCOs to corporates wanting to manage certain components of this uncontrolled category themselves (flights, coach hire, venue etc.)

■ **Flexible policy module**

Clients don't want a one-size-fits-all solution. Policy requirements are becoming more complex and are no longer only about savings.

■ **Accommodation payment**

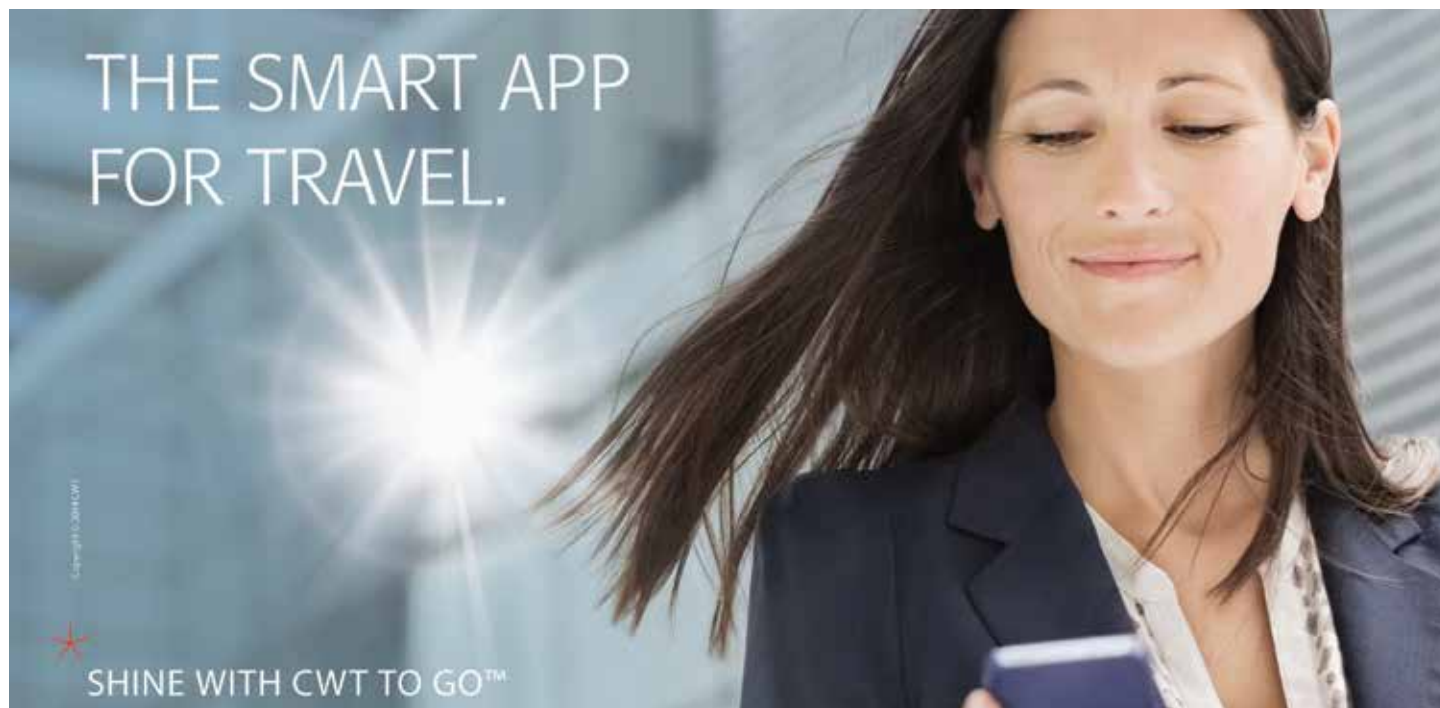
Clients want solutions to the complex problems surrounding the payment of accommodation suppliers.

## SAA: special deals for direct bookings

SAA has introduced a new service for customers booking flights directly online – the ability to book sightseeing and entertainment activities as well as transfers at their destinations. The service will not be available on GDS bookings.

The initiative is in partnership with Amsterdam-based company, DealBroker, a travel technology company serving the global travel and tourism industry.

How it works is that a few days before departure, travellers will receive an e-mail from SAA with offers from sightseeing and entertainment companies at their destination. Travellers can buy these online. ■



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# Top 10 specials

**Linda van der Pol**, Travelinfo's editor, is our Deal detective, bringing you great specials from Travelinfo, the online travel information system in daily use by travel agents all over SA. Just book through your TMC and tell the consultant it's a Travelinfo special. To get connected, e-mail [lindav@nowmedia.co.za](mailto:lindav@nowmedia.co.za).

## 1. EAST AFRICA

Kenya Airways. Special fares ex-JNB to East Africa. All-inclusive fares are from R5 372 to Dar Es Salaam, R5 888 to Entebbe, R5 753 to Kigali, R6 260 to Bujumbura and R6 808 to Mombasa. Valid for sales and travel until May 31.

## 2. REUNION

Origin Tours. Packages to Reunion are from R12 874 pp sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-JNB, return airport transfers and seven nights' accommodation in a superior room with breakfast. Rate is valid from April 5 to September 30 and excludes taxes.

## 3. ZAMBIA

Flame of Africa. Thorntree Lodge, Livingstone. Stay for three nights, pay for two nights SADC special – rates are from R11 590 pp sharing. Package includes return flights ex-JNB, airport taxes, return airport transfers, three nights' accommodation on a full-board basis plus two activities (choice of tour of the Falls, game drive or sunset cruise). Rate excludes \$20 (R215) park fee and \$10 (R108) cruise park fee. Offer expires June 30.

## 4. WORLDWIDE

Auto Europe. Special: 33% off worldwide car hire. Daily rates are from R308 in South Africa, R251 in Italy, R122 in Portugal, R325 in France, R310 in United Kingdom, R436 in Australia, R424 in Germany and R459 in New Zealand. Rates include unlimited mileage, collision damage waivers and theft protection. Offer is valid for seven-day rentals and applies to certain vehicle groups.

## 5. ITALY

United Europe. Best of Italy special. Seven-night packages are from R7 560 pp sharing. Offer includes two nights in Venice, two nights in Florence and three nights in Rome; three-star accommodation throughout; daily breakfast and second class rail ticket. Valid for travel in August only. Refer to Travelinfo for more rates and travel dates.

## 6. GREATER ST LUCIA

Wilderness Safaris. Rocktail Beach Camp – Greater St Lucia

Wetland Park. Three nights, four days dive packages are from R5 996 pp sharing. Rate includes accommodation with breakfast and dinner plus four dives. Rate excludes diving equipment. Valid until December 10 (excluding public holidays, school holidays and long weekends).

## 7. MOZAMBIQUE

Rove Africa – Islands & Safaris. Vilanculos Beach Lodge: special fly-in package. Rates are from R10 225 pp sharing. Special includes return flights ex-JNB, airport taxes, return transfers to resort, seven nights' accommodation with all meals and non-motorised water-sports. Rates are valid until June 30. (High season and Easter supplement may apply on date-specific departures.)

## 8. MOROCCO

Dream Kist Tours. Royal Cities of Morocco land-only package. Rates are from R8 529 pp sharing. Offer is inclusive of seven nights' accommodation in four-star hotels, daily breakfast,

## 9. DUBAI

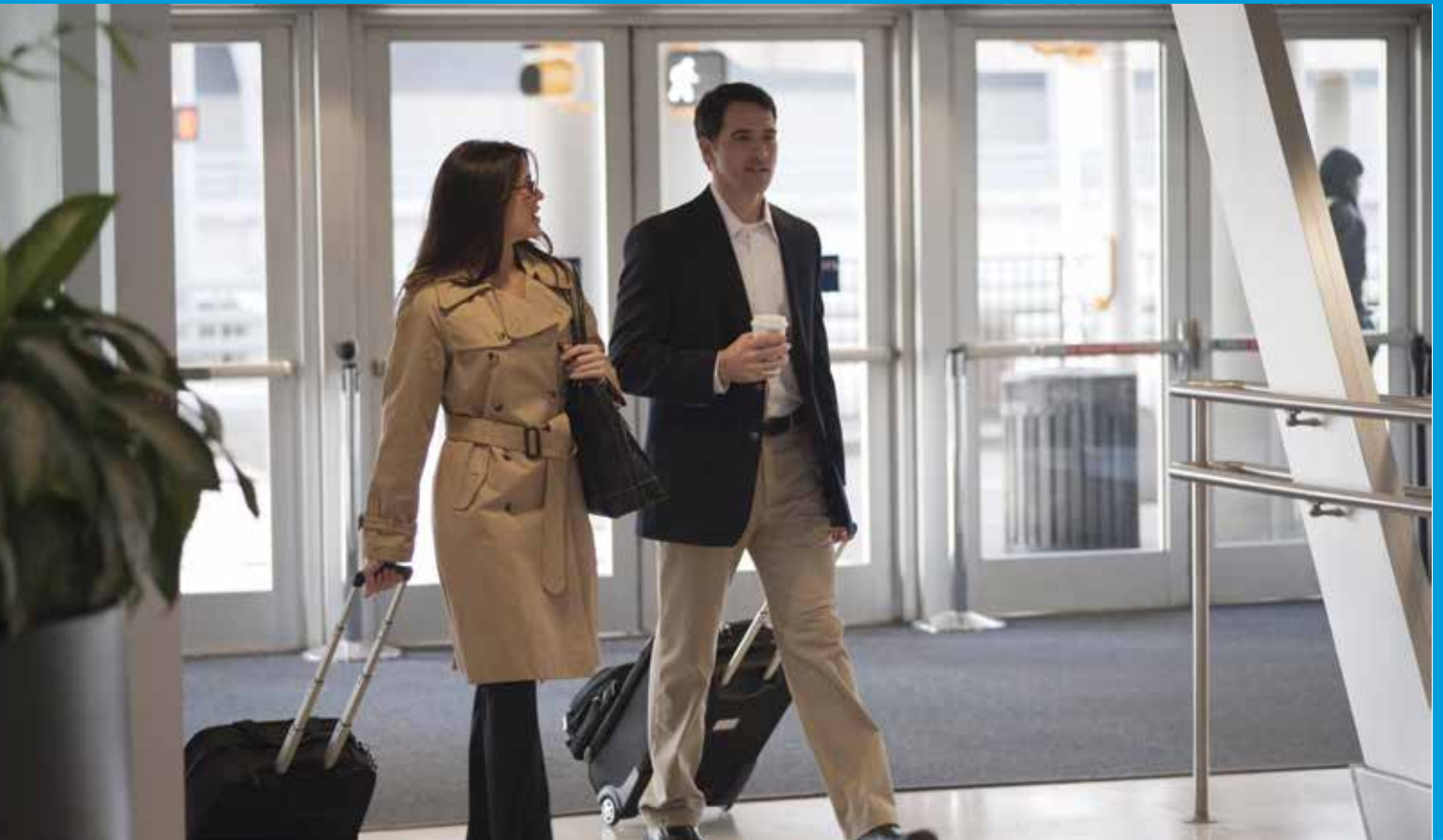
Avocatur Wholesale Tour Operator. Five-day packages are from R6 999 pp sharing. Offer includes return flights ex-JNB, airport transfers, four-star hotel accommodation with breakfast, half-day city tour, dhow cruise with dinner plus desert safari with BBQ dinner. Offer is valid from April 16 to September 30. Rate excludes taxes of about R3 350.

entrance fees to museums and select tours. Visit: Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes, Fez and Marrakech. Offer is valid until November 30.

## 10. PRETORIA

Leriba Hotel & Spa. Conferencing special: full-day conference package from R450 pp. Rate includes venue and set-up, full buffet lunch, three tea/coffee breaks with snacks, data projector, PA system and standard equipment. Four-star accommodation rates are from R1 095 pp sharing including breakfast. Special expires April 30. ■

**DISCLAIMER:** All specials are subject to availability, currency fluctuations and seasonal surcharges.



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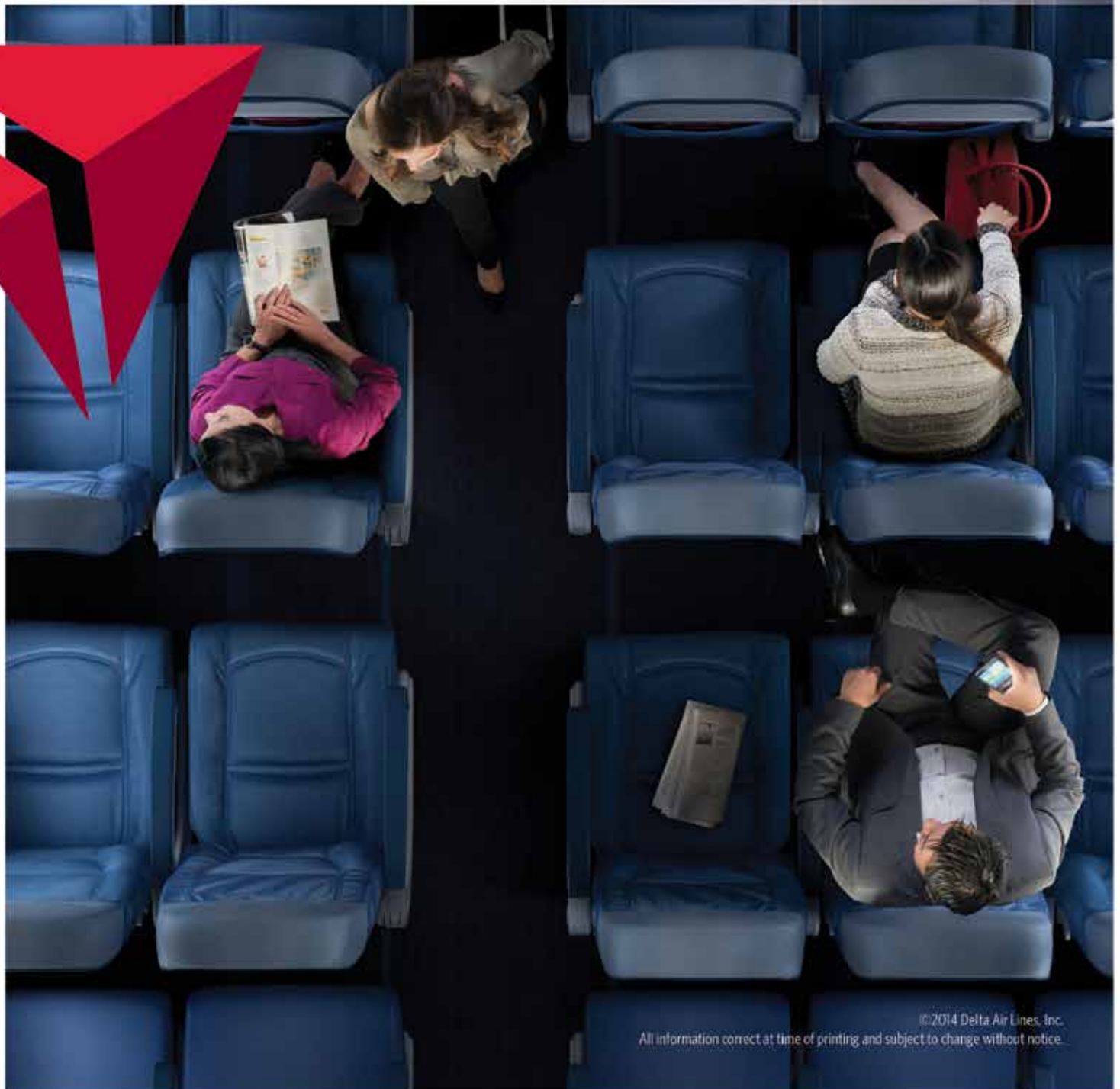
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