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Editor's note

How much do you know about the new draft B-BBEE codes and the impact it will have on your business? If you're confused, you're not alone.

The new draft Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment codes for the tourism sector, which include travel, were published in July and they're considerably stricter than the generic codes of good practice.

The biggest point of concern for travel buyers is that the new codes don't provide much-needed clarity around third party procurement. Most corporate clients prefer using their TMC's BEE scorecard as they tend to have a high level of compliance. This could be seen as 'fronting' – the deliberate misrepresentation of a company's BEE status – and lead to serious consequences for both the travel agent and the client (see story on page 2).

On the other hand, some processes are being simplified. Tourvest Travel Services is saying goodbye to the billback burden through its end-to-end online travel management solution – Travelit. The automated process eliminates the costly and time consuming process of capturing billbacks. Read more about

Travelit in the advertorial on page 16.

The Northern Cape Provincial Legislature's manager of supply chain management, **Ntozakhe Gladman Siyo**, has also turned to technology to optimise a wide range of travel processes. He speaks to *Travel Buyer* about the organisation's cutting-edge travel system.

Procurement technologies are one of three trends influencing the business travel landscape and corporate budgets, says **Frank Palapies**, coo – Africa and Middle East for Wings Travel Management. In the Travel Budgets feature, Palapies talks about technology, airline commissions, and currency exchange restrictions, and why this doesn't have to mean additional costs to corporates.

On the events side, we look at when buyers should "hire or fire" their PCO. South Africa has world-class facilities, attracting events from all over the globe. As a result, there's a host of new event organisers on the scene, says **Adriaan Liebetrau** – not all of which should be trusted.

Keep reading!

Natasha Schmidt
(natashas@nowmedia.co.za)

COVER

Ntozakhe Gladman Siyo speaks to *Travel Buyer* about the NCPL's cutting-edge travel system. Cover photograph by **Riana Jacobs**.

News

2

- New 'strict' B-BBEE codes need clarity
- FlySafair: new routes, new aircraft, new ceo
- Uganda visa costs double

Profile

6

- NCPL talks tech-savvy solutions

Namibia

8

- A desert adventure on our doorstep

Meetings

10

- When are event commissions OK?
- When to fire your PCO
- 7 event add-ons for Rustenburg

On the radar - Business in CT

13

- The Mother City 'back in business'

On the radar - Travel budgets

18

- How to keep incentive costs down

Deal Detective

24

- Travelinfo's latest top travel deals

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New 'strict' B-BBEE codes need clarity

THE draft Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment codes for the tourism sector, which were published early last month by Trade and Industry Minister, **Rob Davies**, are considerably stricter than the generic codes of good practice and have significantly lower revenue thresholds for exempted enterprises. They also don't provide much-needed clarity around third-party procurement.

As intermediaries, the biggest problem for travel agencies under the new draft is the latter, says **Keith Levenstein**,

ceo of EconoBEE. He says under the generic codes, third-party procurement was never properly verified. Unfortunately, the new tourism codes don't address the problem, giving no guidelines on how to deal with it.

This could cause serious issues for TMCs, as most corporate clients prefer using the travel agency's BEE scorecard as they tend to have a high level of compliance. This could be seen as 'fronting' – the deliberate misrepresentation of a company's BEE status – and lead to serious consequences for both the travel agent and the client.

Asata has addressed this problem by asking that the definition of travel agency turnover be clearly defined under the new tourism codes to rule out any confusion. **Otto de Vries**, ceo of Asata, explains that, although TMC revenue has always been calculated as revenue earned from service fees, this is not always clear to the TMC's clients.

"Asata has put forward a case that the turnover criteria should include a sector-specific 'nett revenue' definition to meet the unique business structure of Asata members in particular,"

he says, explaining that Asata's intent is not to change anything in the codes but to create clarity.

According to de Vries, the new thresholds could have an impact on travel agencies that are suddenly qualified as small enterprises (QSEs) under the new tourism codes instead of Exempted Micro Enterprises (EMEs) under the generic codes.

Members of the public have sixty days from the date of publication to make inputs and comments before the Draft Tourism B-BBEE Codes is gazetted as a legally binding Sector Code.

FlySafair: new routes, new aircraft, new ceo

FLYSAFAIR has introduced four new routes following its campaign asking travellers to vote and help it to decide where to fly next. The airline will now add Cape Town-Durban, Cape Town-East London, Johannesburg-Durban and Johannesburg-East London routes to its schedule.

The airline will fly one return flight daily between Cape Town and East London, two return flights daily between Cape Town and Durban, two return flights daily between East London and Johannesburg (twice daily on weekends), and four return flights daily between Johannesburg and Durban.

The airline has also announced the appointment of new ceo, **Elmar Conradie**, in addition to new fleet additions and upgrades.

The airline will add a fifth aircraft to its fleet (a Boeing 737-400), to be used on the new East London-Durban route. It will also replace three of its Boeing 737-400s with newer generation 737-800s, increasing capacity from 165 seats to 181. The entire fleet will be refurbished with new, state-of-the-art seats.

The new seats, together with the increased capacity, will ensure that the airline can keep its fares low. "We needed to make the plane as light as possible – and require minimal maintenance, in order to minimise the cost of operating the aircraft," Conradie explains. "These new seats are much lighter than the old, traditional seats, therefore they will require less fuel for the aircraft."

The airline will launch a business product catering



Elmar Conradie

specifically for the corporate market before the end of the year, offering business travellers flexible ticket options.

Lufthansa brings new aircraft to SA

LUFTHANSA will upgrade services from SA later this year, bringing the first Boeing 747-8 to Africa. The next-generation jumbo jet will service the Johannesburg-Frankfurt route at the start of the winter schedule in October.

Known as the 'Queen of the Skies', the Boeing 747-8 will feature Lufthansa's new first- and business-class cabins as well as the new premium economy class. It will be configured with eight first-class seats, 80 in business class, 32 in premium economy and 244 economy-class seats.

The aircraft replaces the A380 on the route, which means fewer seats available in economy (176 to be exact). However, there would be a higher number of upper-class seats, which was in line with current market demands, the airline said.

As it looks to strengthen its position in the Western Cape, Lufthansa will also extend its Cape Town-Munich service. The seasonal summer service will now operate daily, using an A340-600.

Uganda visa costs double

SOUTH AFRICANS travelling to Uganda can now expect to pay R1 500 for a single-entry visa and R2 000 for a multiple-entry visa.

These prices have been significantly raised from the previous R600 for a single-entry and R1 200 for a multiple-entry visa.

Visitors must have a passport that is valid for at least six months, a completed application form, two recent passport-size photos, proof of accommodation, a copy of an itinerary, a letter of employment, a deposit slip submitted with the application, and a letter from the person being visited in Uganda along

with a copy of their passport or residence permit.

Business travellers require a letter from their employer stating how long they will be away from work, as well as a letter from the company in Uganda being visited.

All travellers require a yellow fever certificate.

Angola to welcome 50 new hotels

ACCORHOTELS has sealed a partnership with Angolan company AAA Activos LDA to open 50 hotels in Angola between 2015 and 2017. This equates to more than 6 200 rooms, ranging from luxury to economy.

Sebastien Bazin, chairman and ceo of AccorHotels, said the partnership signified AccorHotels' ambition in Africa, "where tourism is rapidly evolving".

"AAA is already investing in the building of a national chain of 50 hotels in all the capitals of provinces and a chain of three logistic centres to supply the hotels. Now we have established a partnership with AccorHotels to manage the hotels, train Angolans and provide hospitality services in all hotels with international quality standards," says AAA chairman, **Carlos Manuel de Sao Vicente**.



PHOTO: DARISE FOSTER

Re-introducing SITE

THE Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) hosted its first regional event since rebranding into SITE Southern Africa. The workshop was simultaneously held in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, with attendees working together to plot the way

*forward for the organisation's new chapter. Pictured here at the event (from left) are **Henk Graaff** (SW Africa DMC/SITE), **Kathy Davies** (Legacy Hotels), **Ebere Owa** (By Design Africa Group) and **Kathy Basson** (Mauritius Incentive Connection).*

Malawian Airlines

– now direct to JNB

MALAWIAN Airlines has added direct flights to Johannesburg from both Lilongwe and Blantyre, due to popular demand. The airline previously operated flights to Johannesburg from Lilongwe via Blantyre.

The flights will operate on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Flight 3W024 departs Lilongwe at 08h00 and arrives in Johannesburg at

10h30. Return flight 3W025 departs Johannesburg at 18h20 and arrives in Lilongwe at 20h50. Flight 3W027 departs Johannesburg at 11h25 and arrives in Blantyre at 13h40 and return flight 3W026 departs Blantyre at 15h05 and arrives in Johannesburg at 17h20.

Flights are operated by a B737-800 with 138 economy-class seats and 16 business-class seats.



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The Capital enters Pretoria

THE Capital Hotel Group is set to build a new 213-room apartment and conferencing hotel in Pretoria. The multibillion-rand 315 000sqm Capital Menlyn Maine opens September 2016. "The executive apartments, hotel and conference concept

will be completely integrated with Menlyn Maine Central Square and will be a much-needed offering for Pretoria," the hotel group said in a statement.

Managing director, **Marc Wachsberger**, says the new development offers a lifestyle

in a league of its own, with rooms kitted to high standards. In addition, exclusive services include an in-room dining concierge, uncapped high-speed complimentary WiFi, HD full bouquet satellite television, complimentary parking and shuttles.

SAA, Air Mauritius new agreement

AIR Mauritius and SAA have strengthened their codeshare, effective July 1.

The new agreement paves the way for wider co-operation and collaboration between the two airlines, says Air Mauritius regional manager for Southern Africa and Latin America, **Carla da Silva**.

"The free flow agreement will allow for better sales opportunities through schedules co-ordination between the two airlines to maximise network opportunities," Da Silva says.

The agreement will cover all Air Mauritius- and SAA-operated flights between Mauritius and Johannesburg and beyond, whereby each airline will codeshare, as a marketing carrier, on the other airline's operated flights.

Meanwhile, Air Mauritius has officially launched flights to Chengdu, China, with the first flight having departed on Monday, July 6.

Chengdu flights operate from Mauritius every Monday, departing at 17h45 and arriving in Chengdu at 08h00 the next day. Flights depart Chengdu on Tuesdays at 23h30 and arrive in Mauritius at 05h35 the next day.



PHOTO: DEBBIE BAHAM

Putting the FUN in FUNction

THE African Business Travel Association hosted its inaugural mid-year Travel Buyers' Cocktail FUNction at the Protea Hotel Fire&Ice! Travel industry peers enjoyed a fun evening of cocktails, canapés and an Amazing Race that left some

lucky teams walking away with great prizes. Pictured sharing a drink at the event are (from left) Tourvest Travel Services chief sales and marketing officer, Claude Vankeirsbilck, and former Nedbank cpo, Howard Stephens.

Is your real-time data up to scratch?

SINCE the launch of Travellinck's real-time data dashboard last year, the solutions provider has seen 100% uptake of the solution amongst its clients.

The company says this is largely because data is possibly the most critical element of a travel management programme, yet accurate real-time data is seldom achieved by local corporates.

The Travellinck real-time dashboard provides both real-time and monthly data. It includes travel orders, spend by category (flights, accommodation, car rental, transfers, parking) and spend by service provider. The dashboard also shows flight savings, missed savings and policy violations. For risk planning, it shows the number and the names of travellers booked on the same flight.

Travel managers can decide what they want to monitor on a real-time basis for greater control, and are able to view data for the current day, week or month.

Additional functions that can be added to the dashboard include the number of five-star hotel bookings, the percentage of last-minute bookings and the percentage of LCCs booked versus full fare, amongst others.

Indonesia introduces free visas on arrival

THE Indonesian Republic Presidential Regulation has introduced free visas on arrival for 45 countries including South Africa. This applies at certain

airports.

They are available from immigration checking counters at Soekarno-Hatta Airport, Jakarta; Ngurah Rai Airport, Bali; Kuala Namu, Medan; Juanda

Airport, Surabaya and Hang Nadim Airport, Batam.

The free visa is granted for a maximum stay of 30 days only and is not extendable or changeable.

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GBTA restructures, appoints new chairman

GBT Southern Africa has undergone a significant restructure, and appointed a new chairman.

Felicity Meyer, a founding member of the organisation and long-serving board member, has stepped down from her position as chairman to join Walmart's global procurement team in the US. A seasoned travel professional, Meyer was previously travel manager for Massmart.

She will be replaced by **Kovilan Naidoo**, who takes over as chairman of GBTA Southern Africa. Naidoo is currently senior internal auditor at Cummins Inc.

"I am excited to take over as Chairman at a time when GBTA Southern Africa is reinventing itself. Business travel is an ever-evolving and constantly changing industry and together with our sponsors and members we have the opportunity to share ideas, learn and innovate,"

says Naidoo.

Jim Weighell has also stepped down from his role as director of operations. He leaves GBTA to embark on a new venture in business travel technology.

The board currently consists of **Andrew Shaw** (Amadeus), **Kagiso Dumasi** (BCD Travel), **Dr Roderick Ross** (TravelLinck), **Dawn Weir** (Comair), **Kovilan Naidoo**, **Busi Khumalo** (IDC) and **Linda Basson** (Accenture).

Turkish launches flights to Atlanta

TURKISH Airlines will launch a daily non-stop service between Istanbul Atatürk Airport and Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International Airport.

The route will launch on May 16, 2016 and will be the carrier's second gateway in the southeastern US, following its non-stop service that is set to launch in late October to Miami International Airport.

Flight TK31 will depart Istanbul at 13h30 and arrive in Atlanta at 19h10. Flight TK32 will leave Atlanta at 22h00 and arrive in Istanbul at 16h55 + 1.

The new daily non-stop service will be operated by Boeing 777-300ER aircraft. ■

Save the dates! GBTA and ABTA conferences

THE Global Business Travel Association Southern Africa will host its 9th annual conference at the Protea Hotel Fire&Ice! Menlyn from October 21-22. The conference theme this year is 'Spice up your travel programme' and will feature extensive networking, as well as the sharing of ideas and best

practice among business travel industry professionals.

Visit <http://events.gbta.co.za/#registration> to register.

The second annual African Business Travel Association (ABTA) conference will take place at the Westin Cape Town hotel from November 21-23.

Plenary and breakaway sessions covering the

liberalisation of African skies; selling value across the supply chain; fraud assessment and management, data, technology and payment trends; and elevating procurement practices are all topics that will be included in the conference agenda.

Email monique@abta.co.za for further details.

TEP: BRINGING YOU ENTERPRISE AND SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

The Tourism Enterprise Partnership (TEP) has developed its unique Enterprise and Supplier Development Solutions (ESDS) programme to help corporates in the tourism industry meet the new Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Codes of Good Practice.

The ESDS programme allows corporates access to enterprise and supplier development points for their B-BBEE scorecard, both through TEP itself and through access to SMME suppliers.

For more information regarding TEP's ESDS programme and how to earn full points, contact Fathima Haffejee on 011 880 3790 or email esds@tep.co.za.



www.tep.co.za.

The ESDS programme is verified by Empowerdex, South Africa's leading economic empowerment rating agency.

NCPL talks tech-savvy solutions

At the forefront of corporate travel technology, the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature uses technology to optimise a wide range of travel processes. **Debbie Badham** speaks to **Ntozakhe Gladman Siyo**, manager of supply chain management about the organisation's cutting-edge travel system.

WHEN Ntozakhe Gladman Siyo first took charge of travel at the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature (NCPL) eight years ago, he was confronted by a major administrative challenge. Tables full of undocumented invoices meant that it took the department on average six months to pay its travel agencies. "I decided then and there that I wanted to create a paperless environment."

He describes his journey to finding a solution as fraught with challenges.

"We had issues trying to implement a lodge card system as some travellers were confusing credit cards with lodge cards, but I didn't give up on my plan," he says. The result was that the NCPL, according to Siyo, became the first government institution to implement an online solution, and since then he has had a considerable impact on not only the NCPL's transformation, but many other corporates and government departments as well.

A scholar in his own right, Siyo's education began in electrical engineering. However, he was forced to abandon his studies as a result of the political dispensation at the time, and his academic career took a different direction in 1994 when he pursued a certificate in marketing at a registered institution of commerce and business management. He later completed his Honours at the University of Stellenbosch, followed by a Masters in management at the University

of the Witwatersrand. Currently, Siyo is reading towards a Bachelor of Law degree.

Meanwhile, his career, which began at the Department of Public Works, has progressed within the strategic supply chain management and procurement space, leading up to his current role at the NCPL.

As manager of supply chain management, travel is simply one aspect of Siyo's portfolio.

Currently this involves the management of many hundreds of frequent travellers and tens of millions of rands in travel spend. He explains that, after researching

the travel technology market, the NCPL decided to acquire Travellinck's online travel management solution as part of a centralised approach to travel. Travellers request their travel online – the system links into the HR and Finance departments, requests are sent through to line managers via email and SMS for approval and the relevant travel documents are then forwarded back to the traveller in question's mobile phone and email.

Domestic as well as regional flights are booked online; Swaziland and Mozambique have both been added to the system.

Siyo explains that when it comes to more complex international trips, these are handled by Travellinck's agency partner while the corresponding data is managed by the online tool. All documentation relating to international trips is therefore stored in the system to allow for audit purposes. For complex bookings, the entire quote history as well as any changes

are all recorded.

However, over and above the support centre provided by Travellinck, the NCPL has also employed its own travel agent so that there will still be a 'warm body' that oversees all bookings centrally and provides quality control, should any problems occur.

Compliance and safety

As all booking procedures are handled online, compliance is well managed throughout the organisation. Siyo reveals that, as a government entity, compliance is of the utmost importance to the NCPL. "As such, our policy clauses are built in to our online system in such a way that certain booking classes will simply not open to travellers should they not qualify for that particular level of travel. We also have access to trip details from inception and can see exactly which flight options were not chosen. The recent audit went very well," he says.

Similarly, traveller care is made easier to manage through the database of reputable service providers that comes with Travellinck's online system. "In this way, most of the service

providers that we make use of have already been vetted and checked," says Siyo.

In cases where a new service provider that is not already part of the database needs to be used, the Legislature draws on the knowledge of the local South African embassy. This relates to decisions around

when it is and isn't safe to travel to a particular destination as well.

Siyo says he has first-hand experience of some of the challenges travellers face when they visit certain African countries. "A significant challenge is that in some destinations, systems still run on a manual basis. To help alleviate this, we try and make use of international service providers only," he comments.

Online savings

Siyo reveals that the organisation has generated a 70% saving with the new online system. "This is in part due to the massive reduction in transaction fees to book travel and the system's ability to track spend and provide real-time reporting and, in part because the system displays the cheapest ticket for every booking."

What's more, the system provides significant advantages when it comes to admin-related processes. For example, when booking, flight invoices are generated immediately and the lodge card is easily reconciled. "All accommodation payments and related invoices

are managed by Travellinck, so the reconciliation of spend is no longer an administrative headache," says Siyo.

He says he has found that processes run most efficiently through the assistance of the NCPL travel agent and the online system rather than an external service provider.

We had issues trying to implement a lodge card system as some travellers were confusing credit cards with lodge cards.

Our policy clauses are built in to our online system in such a way that certain booking classes will simply not open to travellers should they not qualify for that particular level of travel.

In this way the Legislature is not only able to deal directly with suppliers but also has an internal person who is accessible 24 hours a day. "We find that it's better not to have a middle man – we can negotiate our own rates and finalise duty of care directly with the service providers. We also now have more money to spend on travel."

Last-minute changes

According to Siyo, last-minute changes are a minor issue with the new system. "Previously, through the travel agent we would have had to cancel and then rebook the flight, but now changes are simply handled as amendments on the new system and a completely new flight is booked."

Focus on admin

Moving forward, Siyo indicates that the NCPL will continue to strive for additional improvements. He reveals that he will soon be travelling abroad to enhance his understanding of travel. "Travel can essentially be divided into two parts – travel bookings and travel administration, and we, as a Legislature, have recognised that the best way forward is to remain abreast of current affairs and make sure that one understands what is happening in the travel market.

"At the moment I meet with the supervisors on both a monthly and weekly basis to speak to them about the ways in which we can improve our service offering. I also meet with Travellinck on a regular basis to go through the current reports – it's important to keep all parties involved and updated on a regular basis," he maintains. "We are determined to stay ahead of the game." ■

PHOTO: RIANA JACOBS



A desert adventure on our doorstep

South Africans now have easy access to the 'adventure capital' of Namibia through Air Namibia's recent launch of direct daily flights from Johannesburg and Cape Town to Walvis Bay. **Debbie Badham** attended the launch celebration as a guest of the airline and Legacy Hotels and Resorts.



TOGETHER Walvis Bay and neighbouring city Swakopmund make up a Namibian hotspot alive with new development. Now, just over two hours by air from both Johannesburg and Cape Town, the area offers South Africans a wildly different landscape, geared towards adventure experiences.

Michell Fourie, SA sales and marketing manager of Air Namibia's Commercial Services, says the airline decided to reopen direct services between South Africa and Walvis Bay because of the considerable development taking place in and around the area. "In particular, the development of a new harbour in Walvis Bay signalled the right time for us to relaunch flights," she says.

Two new hotels in Swakopmund – roughly a 20-minute drive from Walvis Bay – will open by the end of the year: Gondwana Collection's The Delight (scheduled for completion in November) and O&L Leisure's Strand Hotel (set to open in October).

There is also a growing MICE interest in the region. **Janet Wilson-Moore**, gm of Swakopmund Hotel and Entertainment Centre, says MICE travel to Swakopmund was booming in the early 2000s but dropped off largely as a result of the global decline in incentive travel. However, she says business has picked up again. "Other popular incentive destinations have been so overdone. We've been campaigning for South Africans

to come and try something different," she says.

So far the uptake of flights to Walvis Bay has been phenomenal. "Interest in the area's MICE offering is definitely growing," says Fourie.

The strength of Namibia as a MICE destination lies in the diversity of its offering. Its combination of sand and sea lends itself to a wide range of adventure-type activities. It can also accommodate groups of all sizes at some of its more versatile conference venues. The Swakopmund Hotel has hosted events of up to 700 delegates, says Wilson-Moore. "We are able to provide groups with huge variety in terms of breakaways and the way in which we personalise the event through corporate branding

like banners and such."

Driving tourist numbers

Air Namibia is collaborating with other airlines to increase connectivity to the country. Namibia's new Minister of Environment and Tourism, **Pohamba Shifeta**, was quoted as saying in media reports that tourist arrivals in Namibia had been negatively affected by South Africa's new strict visa regulations as many travellers transit through SA.

Fourie confirmed that the airline was in strategic talks to improve connectivity through alternative hubs, which included talks with Turkish Airlines and Kenya Airways.

7 things to do in 'THE DESERT'

1. Dune safari

It would be difficult to imagine a more appropriate introduction to the beauty of the Namib Naukluft Park than through a tour of Sandwich Harbour. Photo Ventures Namibia offers travellers the opportunity to explore the desert by four-wheel drive. An experienced and highly knowledgeable guide narrates the history of the desert, peppered with fun

anecdotes about the flora and fauna that call it home while guests are treated to thrilling races up and down the dunes. Delicious snacks are served atop the dunes, which offer incredible views of the rolling hills of sand that descend into the vast blue ocean beyond. The more adventurous can also try sand boarding in a race down the desert hills.



Meet a variety of marine characters on a catamaran cruise in Walvis Bay.

2. Cruise with dolphins and seals

For those who appreciate the finer things in life, a catamaran cruise from the Walvis Bay Yacht Club with Catamaran Charters is a good choice. Prepare to welcome a variety of fun characters aboard in the form of the resident pelicans and seals, which guests have the opportunity to interact with and feed. Dolphins can also be spotted

frolicking alongside the catamaran while the vessel's skilled guide provides engaging commentary on the region's marine life and visible landmarks. When passengers grow tired of snapping away at the scenery they can relax below deck with oysters (Walvis Bay is famous for its incredible oysters) and champagne.



Thrill seekers can enjoy racing through the desert dunes.

3. Desert quad biking

If your aim is to get some adrenalin pumping while getting up close and personal with the desert, consider quad biking with Desert Explorers. Both experienced bikers and complete novices are able to enjoy this thrilling exploration of the desert. Riders are given a

choice of an easier more scenic pace or a more adventurous race through the dunes. A guide is provided to take riders out into the endless sea of sand where they can have fun shooting up to the top of the dunes and careening back down again.

4. Tug Restaurant

Well-known among Namibian locals for its great food and spectacular scenery, the Tug Restaurant is another must for travellers who appreciate

fine cuisine. Guests can take advantage of seating that overlooks the Atlantic Ocean while they choose from the restaurant's wide menu.

5. Living Desert Tour

At first glance there appears to be little that moves or breathes in the desert. But just beneath the surface of the sand the dunes are alive with activity. Tommy's Living Desert Tour is renowned in Namibia – and it's easy to see why. Namibia's very own desert guru, 'Oom Tommy', bolts up and down the desert dunes in an interactive exploration of the region's wildlife. Using small signs that are completely hidden to the untrained eye, he uncovers a range of unusual species, including chameleons, desert spiders and colourful geckos and lizards. The desert sidewinder (Peringuey's Adder) is also a common sighting on the tour.

6. The Brauhaus

A quaint town with significant German heritage, Swakopmund has retained much of its European charm. The seaside town's Germanic influence is perhaps best captured by the Swakopmund Brauhaus, which offers a full range of traditional German favourites – which provide the opportunity to try something new. Decorated in typical Bavarian style and adorned with flags from across the world, the restaurant provides a warm and relaxing atmosphere.

7. Dinner in the desert

Ideal for those extra-special evening events, a celebration in the desert is tough to beat. Event planners have the opportunity to surprise guests, driving them out to a dinner set up under the stars. Special touches like a bonfire and blankets ensure that guests remain comfortable

and warm while they breathe in the incredibly still and peaceful night-time atmosphere. Specialist outdoor caterers are able to provide a delicious three-course buffet – impressive when one considers that you are literally dining in the middle of a desert.

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Helen Brewer, director, MICE Academy



Zelda Coetzee, national chairperson, SAACI



Adriaan Liebetrau, ceo, SAACI



Neil Fraser, sales director, Tsogo Sun

When are event commissions OK?

Event commissions remain a major talking point in the industry. Event professionals say the time has come for improved standardisation.

Liesl Venter consults authorities on the way forward.

THE controversy surrounding event commissions was again raised at this year's Markex by the MICE Academy. Director, **Helen Brewer**, called for standardisation of commissions as urged by the corporate and association buyers, saying the academy is working hard to develop a minimum set of standards that can be followed by everyone.

"It not only comes down to a minimum standard but professionalism of our industry," maintains **Zelda Coetzee**, national chairperson of SAACI and managing director of Imfunzelelo Tourism & Event Specialists. "We have to develop our industry to a point where we realise our value and charge the market accordingly."

SAACI has released an official position statement regarding event commissions, which ceo, **Adriaan Liebetrau**, says has received overwhelming support from the association's members. "The statement brings much relief as it has been a long and difficult road to get to this point alone."

However, the journey is still far from over.

"It remains an extremely sensitive matter and cannot be rushed. As an association we are happy to finally have a firm position to share, not only with our own members but also other industry bodies, forums and organisations."

Liebetrau says it has been unfortunate that no comment has been received to date from venue forums as they are an intricate part of this issue. But, he maintains, it is a matter that cannot be ignored any longer. "Saaci will now present the position statement to the TBCSA (Tourism Business Council of South Africa) for circulation as

well as Fedhasa and Asata."

Commissions should be earned

Saaci's position is that if a venue or hotel feels that the partnership between it and the organiser is not mutually beneficial, no commission needs to be set – to earn a commission, the organiser should add some value to the venue or hotel through the process and their involvement.

"A commission should not be seen as a clandestine back-hand to be paid to an organiser as a reward for business placed, nor should the commission be regarded as a carrot or incentive for an organiser to place business. An organiser should not be rewarded

for the selection of a venue based on commission income as opposed to venue suitability," reads its statement.

And they should be contractual

Event commissions have been a bone of contention for years – from those planners that waive a professional fee and rely on venue commissions alone to those who dabble in 'double dipping', the industry's term for planners that earn both a fee and a commission.

It is easy to understand why PCOs are welcoming Saaci's position, says Coetzee. "Commission payment from hotels and venues to event organisers is not new and neither is it a local issue. It's an international norm. However, it is not a right and where it is applicable, then it has to be contractual."

Liebetrau says without a

contracted agreement between a venue and the organiser, the lines are blurred. "It is our recommendation that contractual agreements are signed between venues and organisers that are established against a clear set of deliverables."

According to Coetzee commissions must be declared amongst all parties, including clients. "I charge a management fee for my services – they are professional and they warrant it. If there are commissions paid, this is declared."

Neil Fraser, group sales director for Tsogo Sun, agrees that a contract is essential to the commission process. "For a group our size it is vital that we have a structured and clearly understood policy to avoid confusion in the market, and prevent our hotels and conference facilities from competing with and undercutting each other. We actually don't regard our efficiency reward programme as a commission but more a business arrangement that rewards distribution, efficiency and logistical support."

Tsogo Sun is one of the first hotel groups in the country to implement a commissions policy, although several others are following suit. Fraser says the benefits of a clear policy and signed agreements are clear.

"Our Tsogo Sun conference partners have a clear understanding upfront on how we operate and they can support us and add value to our mutual clients because of this. We are also able to identify partners that are committed to the industry and that have a long-term focus on a sustainable business model. We avoid situations where the venue with the biggest commission gets the business," he says. "Like wholesale discounting, it's simply not sustainable. The other obvious benefit is that our brands and hotels have a clear guideline that leads to quick and efficient decision making."

When to fire your PCO

A successful event requires the right event organiser. **Liesl Venter** asks **Adriaan Liebetrau**, ceo of Saaci, how to know when to hire or fire your PCO.

SOUTH Africa has seen a significant increase in conferences in recent years. With world-class facilities in place it has quickly become a destination that attracts events from all over the globe. As such, there has also been an increase in event organisers, says **Adriaan Liebetrau**, who points out that not all organisers belong to an organisation such as Saaci or are even vetted prior to entry into the industry.

"This makes it very difficult to spot a lack of professionalism before it is too late," he says. "There is no industry norm so to speak. Government has for a number of years used a tender process to hire and fire the PCOs they use which is something we are now starting to find in the corporate world as well. Corporates also favour retainers whereby they appoint someone for a certain period after which the contract is either renewed or not."

Liebetrau notes that, in the past, a PCO would have been brought on

board by a corporate for one event and ended up doing all of the organisation's event planning for years. "That is a trend that has just about disappeared. Corporates are far more critical in whom they choose and why they choose them." But the criteria, he says, are not standard and are generally dependent on what is wanted at the time.

On a positive note, there has definitely been a shift towards greater use of PCOs, which the industry has welcomed. "Organising conferences and events is not child's play and it requires a professional. This is something that is being realised more and more and bodes well for our industry," Liebetrau says.

When to hire

Liebetrau's advice to buyers intending to hire a PCO is to look for experience first and foremost. "Look at the number of years they have been operating, who they have worked for and what they have organised. Documentation proving all this must be provided during the appointment process. Ask for references if they are not included

and then call them."

Event organising is a practical thing after all, he says. "Get a feel from companies the organiser has worked for about their ethic, attitude and way of doing things. When it comes to eventing, people can and will sell you

anything but when it comes to deliverables – that's a different story. Make sure you are dealing with a reputable person or organisation with a proven track record."

He also

advises hiring a PCO that is affiliated to some sort of association. "It allows for professional recall. You can go somewhere to complain or speak about your experience. It is about making sure the organisation you are employing for your event needs has credibility."

Lastly, he says it's important to get the right organiser for the right event. "Not all organisers are equipped to handle every type of event, so make sure the person you are employing is aptly qualified to do the job at hand."

When to call it quits

More and more organisations – be they government or corporate – are signing agreements for shorter periods of time. "This makes it easier to end a contract if the PCO is not delivering," says Liebetrau. "And ultimately that is the way it should be. Any PCO that is not delivering on their mandate should have their services terminated."

However, cautions Liebetrau, it is essential that corporates ensure there is a signed mandate in place defining what these deliverables are ahead of the event.

"Too often PCOs are called in at the last minute to pick up the pieces and when they can't fix the mess they are blamed and that is also wrong."

Driving standards

Liebetrau believes that, when it comes to the hiring and firing of PCOs, it is not always easy to quantify the relevant criteria. "Our industry has venue finders masquerading as PCOs and they are damaging the reputation of everyone. It is time that we start to look at a standard or even a norm of what a PCO is and what they need to have in place to offer a particular service, to act as a guideline for organisations doing the hiring."

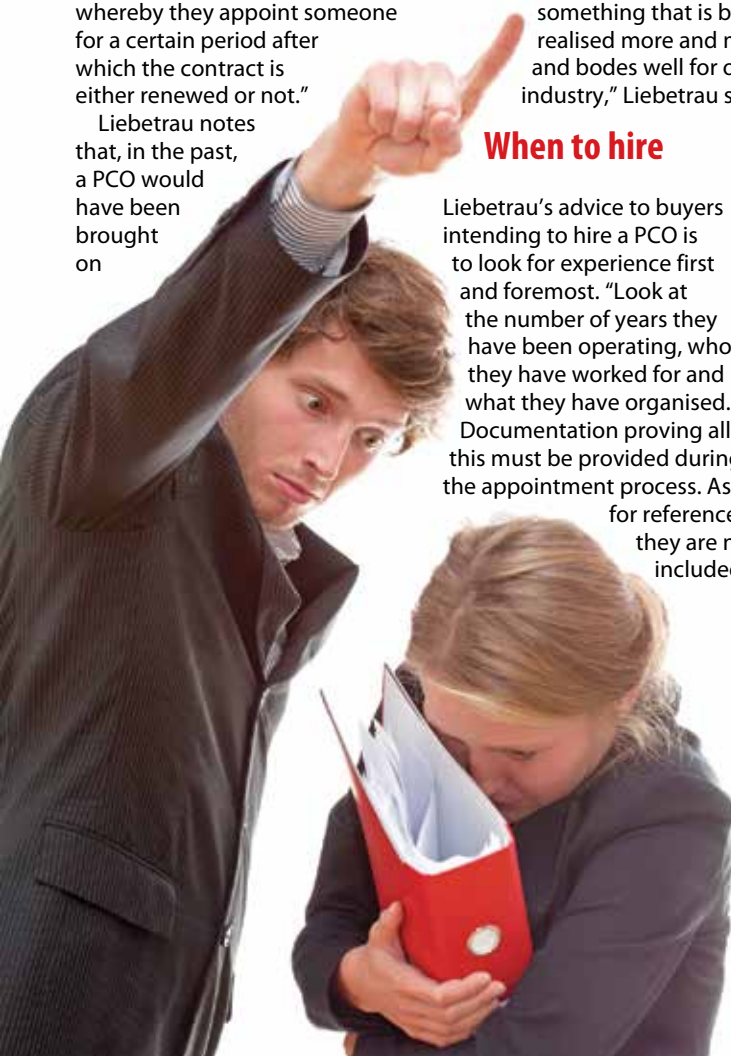
"Unlike many other professions where there are very strict guidelines and protocols allowing not only entry into the profession but also continued operation, there is no such thing in our industry and that is where the danger comes in," he says. "It is just too open and too broad at this stage. As an industry we need to start the conversation around defining a PCO and what compliance is required."

This, he says, will go a long way to eliminating the problems experienced when it comes to hiring and firing. "It will also provide a guideline for buyers so that they know when they are hiring an organiser or a sporting event manager or a venue finder. It also prevents a venue finder, for example, hiring themselves out as a professional organiser."

While this is still some way off from an industry point of view, it is fast becoming a topical issue, he says.

"Saaci has started to look at its own membership to make sure we have certain compliance boxes ticked in terms of who we are representing. This process will take at least a year or two but it is the first step towards professionalising our industry – which in the long run is what we need to do."

“Not all organisers are equipped to handle every type of event, so make sure the person you are employing is aptly qualified to do the job at hand.”



7 EVENT ADD-ONS FOR RUSTENBURG

Situated at the foot of the picturesque Magaliesberg mountains the town of Rustenburg is diverse in culture with a rich history and strong mining presence. **Liesl Venter** draws up a to-do list when holding an event in town.

Brauhaus am Damm

RUSTENBURG might very well be the last place one expects to come across a German micro brewery. The name Brauhaus, however, indicates a brewing operation of proud German tradition while am Damm is a reference to the nearby Olifantsnek dam. It's a hi-tech private brewery, where tours and tastings introduce visitors to a fine selection of beers, including the Brauhaus Pils, the Brauhaus Dunkel and the Farmers Draught.



PHOTO: BRAUHAUS AM DAMM

African drumming

Drumming is as much a part of African culture as its wild animals. Gametrackers, an organisation offering a variety of activities in the Pilanesberg National Park, also organises drumming sessions, during which

participants learn the secrets of playing a Djembe drum. This is said to do wonders for releasing stress, enhancing clarity and bringing focus. Drumming is also a fun activity connecting one with the heart of Africa.

Sun City

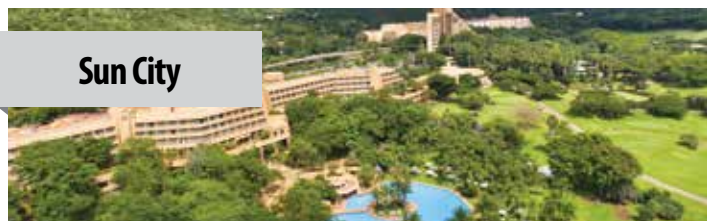


PHOTO: SUN INTERNATIONAL

Arguably South Africa's most famous resort, Sun City is a 30-minute drive from Rustenburg and offers seemingly endless activities. From show-stopping entertainment and gambling to

quad biking, clay pigeon shooting, golf, water activities, archery, horse riding, zip slides and cultural tours, there is something for everyone to be found at this resort in the Pilanesberg National Park.

Safari experiences



PHOTO: SUN INTERNATIONAL

Game is a common sight in Rustenburg, which boasts several game reserves including some of South Africa's more famous parks. Just 47km from the town lies the Pilanesberg Game Reserve – the fourth-largest game and nature park in the country. With a wide variety of fauna and flora as well as the Big 5 this malaria-free park is a must see when in the area. The

Kgaswane Mountain Reserve, previously known as the Rustenberg Nature Reserve, is located on the northern slopes of the western Magaliesberg. It is one of the most interesting reserves in the Highveld, well known for its sable breeding programme. Home to a host of birds, reptiles and amphibians it offers a variety of walking trails.

Canopy tours

The Magaliesberg Canopy tour is undoubtedly for the more daring but it allows one to see the world from a very different point of view. Zipping over the cliffs of the Ysterhout Kloof on a wire is a unique eco-adventure of around two and a half hours. Eleven platforms built into the cliffs and rock faces connect cables that allow one to zigzag through this particularly beautiful part of the world.

Hiking

The famous Baviaanskran's hiking route in the Kgaswane Mountain Reserve offers a good two-day hike that requires only moderate fitness. The hike can begin at either of the two overnight camps – Avon More or Explorer Camp – and covers around 19km, including a visit to the Tierkloof Waterfall. Various rock formations and the fauna and flora are all part of the allure.

Hartbeespoort Dam



The Hartbeespoort Dam is only 45 minutes' drive from Rustenburg and offers a wide range of water sports for the more adventurous, or lazy afternoon boat tours for those less inclined to get wet. White-water rafting on the Crocodile River entails a 5km river trip that takes about two hours to

complete. No experience is required. At least nine rapids are covered during the adventure, which makes for a fun day out. In addition, several different leisure cruise packages are available on the Hartbeespoort Dam – an equally entertaining activity, albeit slightly less adventurous. ■

The Mother City 'back in business'

While Cape Town has long been viewed predominantly as a leisure destination, the city's drive to position itself as a leading business destination in Africa is paying off. **Dorine Reinstein** investigates.

CAPE Town is enhancing its status as a leading business destination on the continent. Indeed, the city was voted as the number-one destination for business events in Africa on the ICCA rankings, and in PricewaterhouseCoopers' South African Hospitality Outlook for 2015 it was predicted that the bulk of growth in the overall hotel market in South Africa would be generated in Cape Town over the next five years.

Rick Taylor, ceo of The Business Tourism Company, says Cape Town is very much becoming a destination for business people. He argues that this is the result of at least 15 years of hard work and planning. "Positioning Cape Town as a business destination has been part and parcel of a long-term view of Cape Town as an attractive place for both business and leisure. It didn't happen overnight."

Cape Town has, over the years, evolved into a more corporate-focused destination, agrees **Kamil Abdul-Karrim**, director Pam Golding Tourism & Hospitality Consulting, who says that the corporate segment is the largest segment at the mid-market (three-star) level and increasingly more influential at both the upscale (four-star) and luxury (five-star) levels. "Interestingly, business tourism demonstrates high demand at the luxury level, indicating that the level of business events attracted to the city may be of a higher level than elsewhere in SA."

According to Abdul-Karrim, demand from the corporate market is far more balanced in

terms of seasonality than the leisure market and, as such, growth within this sector has the added benefit of mitigating the seasonality effect. "The Cape Town hotel market is currently more dependent on the corporate market than ever before. Increases in supply of commercial office space mean a growth in hotel demand, as there are more companies present with more employees and more accommodation demand."

Increased investment

Cape Town's popularity as both a leisure and business destination has brought new investment

and substantial improvements to the city for both travellers and locals, says **Mariette du-Toit Helmbold**, owner of tourism marketing agency, Destinate. "From the airport to the road infrastructure, improved public transport, and recreational areas like the Sea Point Promenade and Green Point Urban Park, Cape Town is a city evolving continuously."

The city has indeed seen a significant number of new investments. Cape Town International Convention Centre is expanding its space, which is currently under development. The V&A Waterfront precinct has also announced new developments

in its Silo district, which will comprise 35 000 sqm of mixed-use, sustainable development, including new corporate offices, a residential development, a gymnasium and a mid-range internationally branded hotel. The Zeits Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeits MOCAA) will also be located in the heart of the district.

In addition, a new high-tech conference centre will open in Century City in February 2016. With the capacity to accommodate 1 900 guests across 20 different venues, the Century City Conference Centre and Hotel will provide the ideal location for a wide variety of events, from corporate conferences and

product launches, to expos, cocktail parties and weddings. The centre forms part of a R1bn mixed-use development within the Bridgeway precinct.

Western Cape minister of economic opportunities, **Alan Winde**, adds that the hospitality sector has also seen a

boost in investment with Tsogo Sun constructing a 500-bedroom, R640m complex on the corner of Buitengracht and Strand streets. The new hotel development will include a 200-bedroom SunSquare hotel and a 300-bedroom StayEasy hotel, and will offer banqueting and conference facilities. "Tsogo Sun's continued investment

in the Western Cape speaks of the confidence they have in our province as a business destination."

Attracting events

Investment in the city's offering has allowed the Cape Town Convention Bureau to increase the target number of event bids for the city, reveals **Rob Kucera**, general manager of The Westin in Cape Town. He says the Bureau's focus on low-season business to help extend the peak season will further help Cape Town drive MICE revenue. "The expansion of the CTICC and the opening of Century City will also assist in increasing footfall into the city."

Abdul-Karrim agrees and says that the effort put into positioning Cape Town as a business events destination has paid accelerated dividends. "The forward event booking at CTICC up to 2018 is ticking over. Business tourism, driven hugely by the CTICC, plays a major role in reducing the low season, which in the past stretched from May to mid-September and currently spans from June to July. What's more, where the occupancy in the low season used to drop as low as 40%, it has now improved to over 50%, with hotels in the CTICC vicinity recording occupancies of over 60%. The stats show Cape Town is achieving its fair share of the conferencing and events market in relation to Johannesburg and Durban," he comments.

The Western Cape's academic offering is another drawcard when it comes to driving business events. **Corne Koch**,

“Positioning Cape Town as a business destination has been part and parcel of a long-term view of Cape Town as an attractive place for both business and leisure.”



head of the Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau, says the Western Cape is an intellectual magnet, with four world-class universities and other research institutions in fields as diverse as astronomy, science, medicine and social politics, which offers a fertile ground for intellectual dialogue. "When exchanging dialogue and ideas, in most cases a meeting venue is required that, in turn, benefits the business events sector," she says.

Winde maintains that the meetings industry is an important economic contributor to South Africa's economy, with business tourists generating more jobs on average than

leisure tourists. "It has been encouraging that the share of business tourists in the city's overall visitor numbers has increased from 7,3% to 12,1%."

Despite Cape Town's success in the MICE sector, **Nicholas Barenblatt**, group marketing manager for Protea Hotels, warns that it is unlikely that the city will become a business hub of the same calibre as Johannesburg and Sandton, as the majority of South African corporates are headquartered in Johannesburg and government is based in Pretoria.

Taylor agrees that Johannesburg will always be the business hub of Africa. "It's where things happen business-wise."

However, he believes there are niches where Cape Town can position itself as a leading local destination, such as, for example, the IT sector. "Cape Town could become the Silicon Valley of South Africa. The possibilities are endless."

Business meets pleasure

The main attraction for Cape Town as a MICE destination is that it is seamlessly able to tack lifestyle and leisure activities on to a business stay, with the CBD's heritage and culture, the Peninsula's stunning coastlines and the Cape Winelands right

on its doorstep, says du Toit Helmbold.

Barenblatt agrees and says event organisers can be a lot more confident about getting a good turnout at their events because many delegates look at these events as opportunities to combine a business trip with leisure time. He says there are some interesting trends in this regard. "For instance, if one considers the fact that the Mining Indaba is so well attended every year, even though Cape Town is quite far from the mining centres in South Africa, this reflects the fact that people from many parts of the world simply want to visit Cape Town because of its attractiveness as a tourist city."



PHOTO: SAT

Are standards improving?

ACCORDING to **Alan Winde**, the quality of Cape Town's service has been steadily improving and the hospitality sector has been earning international acclaim. "These accolades garner international exposure for the establishments and for the destination as a whole. They also point to growing service excellence in our tourism sector."

The increase in tourism has had a positive impact on standards, agrees **Michael Nel**. "Cape Town Tourism is very proactive and works closely with Wesgro and the CTICC. Our streets are being cleaned more regularly, there is more visible policing and security cameras have been erected in the city centre."

However, **Rob Kucera** disagrees, saying that as hard development has been increasing at a phenomenal rate, the concern is that service levels are not adequate and that available resources are not being increased at the same rate business is growing. "Businesses are under pressure with the increased numbers – many hotels, restaurants and sites can't increase their head count without enduring rising costs or investing a huge amount of money on training," he maintains. ■

Have prices gone up?

THE popularity of the city and the region as a whole has boosted competition among accommodation establishments and attractions, pushing property owners to increase the quality of their service offering. However, with demand rising as more travellers enter the city, prices have also steadily increased.

Michael Nel, general manager of The Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa, says there has indeed been an increase in rates across accommodation establishments in Cape Town but he argues that it was not based on increased demand alone. "In general, hotel rates have increased based on the increasing costs involved

in running hotels. There is more competition around and therefore hotels have to remain competitively priced while still covering their costs and allowing for profit margins that make the business viable."

The city is definitely not pricing itself out of the market according to **Mariette Du Toit Helmbold**. She says rates for hotels and attractions in Cape Town depend on the establishments' running expenses and competitor pricing. "Major attractions are not overpriced when compared with other attractions around the world, and offer fantastic off-peak season and family rates."

Alan Winde argues that,

although there has been a slight increase in room rates, major investments in the hospitality sector will all ensure the establishments' rates remain competitive.

What's more, **Kamil Abdul-Karrim** points out that, while demand for hotel accommodation in Cape Town has increased consistently since the 2009 recession, with the period 2011 to 2014 reflecting an average approximate 5% per annum growth, demand will likely now be affected by the implementation of the new visa and unabridged birth certificate regulations. "Accentuated pricing competition could well result in pricing decreases."



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Tourvest Travel Services' new end-to-end online travel management solution - Travelit - is revolutionising the way corporates manage their travel. Ceo, Morné du Preez, speaks about the cutting-edge technology.

Travel's first end-to-end online solution

WHAT do travel buyers want? In short, they want to streamline their travel processes, improve reporting and have full visibility of every aspect of their travel spend - while saving tons of money.

It sounds simple but, to date, no online booking tool has been able to deliver an online solution as effectively as Travelit has in the South African market, says **Morné du Preez**, ceo of Tourvest Travel Services.

"Online booking tools are a thing

of the past. What corporates want and need is a holistic, end-to-end travel management solution that is designed to integrate requisitions, bookings, work flow approval and budget controls in one sitting."

Travelit is the "aggregator of aggregators" Du Preez adds. It provides access to an unlimited range of inventory - airlines, accommodation, car rental - and travel buyers have access to a wealth of content, with detailed information on particular hotels, airline product and car rental groups.

It's personal

The system enables travellers to develop and manage their own profiles. Travellers can literally manage all aspects of their itinerary from the single online platform, which includes access to pre-trip requirements such as visa information, forex and travel insurance, to name a few value-adds. Post travel, corporates can capture expense claims and reconcile these via the online platform.

A highlight of the new technology is that all of these different aspects of the travel itinerary can be

booked and managed from one screen. For example, corporates can begin booking their flights and then, without exiting that booking process, can start booking their accommodation and car rental. The entire booking process is quick and efficient - once a booking is approved, travellers will have their documents in hand roughly 30 seconds later. What's more, the system is mobile enabled, meaning bookings from start to finish can be handled via the traveller's mobile device.

It's compliant

Traveller profiles are also linked to the company's overall travel policy, ensuring compliance. Inventory is returned based on the category level within which the traveller falls and the company policy dictates. Travellers are able to book out of policy but these transactions are flagged, holding them accountable for any digressions. "There are times when travellers may be required to book out of policy but these should be exceptions. Through a transparent booking process, good behaviour is re-enforced," Du Preez says.

The system is designed to enforce and monitor compliance through a five-pronged approach:

Adoption rates monitors traveller buy-in, enabling travel procurement managers to reward and incentivise travellers with good adoption rates.

In or out of policy makes use of yellow smiley faces and red sad faces to acknowledge travellers' behaviour. The system will allow travellers to continue with bookings outside of policy, catering for the fact that these are sometimes necessary. It is then up to the approver to determine whether the booking is

truly necessary. Another benefit is that the system works according to the company's approval process. For example, it can incorporate mobile approval.

Missed savings alerts travellers to the fact that, while their booking may still be in policy, they can generate additional savings if they choose a different option.

"Through a transparent booking process, good behaviour is re-enforced."

Advance bookings measures how far in advance travellers make their bookings, enabling travel procurement managers to encourage advance bookings, which will save the company money. The system also starts to learn traveller behaviour. For example, if a traveller often makes changes, the system will issue red flags, encouraging them to rather use a more flexible ticket.

Changes to bookings are also measured so that these costs can be managed more effectively.

It's a first for Africa

The technology is designed by South Africans for South Africa, specifically catering for the nuances of this market and travel into the rest of Africa.

"The system has been built around issues that are unique to corporate travel in Africa, such as lack of inventory, outdated payment solutions, costly billback processes, and duty of care concerns.

The administrative headache that surrounds billbacks is eliminated through the system's automation of the entire process. Each trip has its own unique reference number against which individual purchase orders and invoices are automatically issued. These are then easily reconciled against the lodge card statement. Chief sales and marketing officer at Tourvest Travel Services, **Claude Vankeirsbilck**, says the response from hotels to this technology has been overwhelming, which is not surprising as the establishment is paid as soon as it captures the virtual card number.

Another area of increasing concern for corporates is duty of care. To manage this effectively, Travelit features a duty of care page, which is customised to each corporate's requirements. For example, many companies utilise risk profiling for each

destination. It also takes care of the basics such as prompting travellers to record their in-case-of-emergency contacts where they are easily accessed again by management.



Morné du Preez



Claude Vankeirsbilck

It's for everyone

Travelit serves all Tourvest Travel Services' operating brands, namely American Express Travel Services South Africa, Seekers Travel, Maties Travel and Indojet, and is developed with its

consultants in mind. The system can be used by travel consultants on behalf of their clients. This is particularly helpful when it comes to more complex itineraries or booking changes.

It's the future

The uptake of the new system has been highly positive. Tourvest Travel Services expects that around 75% of its customer base will be using the new platform by the end of 2016, Vankeirsbilck says. The success of the new technology is already evidenced by, on average, 25% savings, which Tourvest Travel Services has been able to generate for clients currently using the platform, he adds.



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How to keep incentive costs down

There are ways of keeping the cost of an incentive trip down without reducing its originality. **Michelle Colman** rounds up some tips from industry experts.

IN TERMS of incentive travel, 'mundane' is a dirty word. The incentive principle is widely understood – to inspire and motivate, travellers must be given experiences they cannot access themselves. But as costs creep up and exert pressure on lavish itineraries, incentive organisers find themselves challenged to avoid just another run-of-the-mill tour.

The good news is that creativity does not necessarily come with a big price tag. According to **Gill Dewar**, md of GCD Consulting, the traveller can be wowed at relatively little cost. She draws examples from a recent trip to Poland.

"We were at the University of Krakow, being told about the astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus. We were each given a piece of chalk to draw the solar system on the pavement. Later, when visiting Pope John Paul's residence in the city, we heard that his favourite pastries came from a local bakery. Suddenly a man arrived in traditional dress with a plate of 'Pope's pastries' as we stood on the street. Then, at the Wieliczka Salt Mine, a salt sculpture of The Treasure Man, a local fable, came to life – our DMC had hired an actor to play the part."

These small touches of theatre are relatively inexpensive ideas but are impressive and form long-lasting memories. Memories, concurs **Caroline Daniel**, regional director Africa for Preferred Hotels & Resorts, are at the core

of incentive travel. And the experiences that make memories don't need to be elaborate. They can be as small as substituting tea and coffee breaks with a healthy smoothie bar or the lunch buffet with a sociable braai on a hotel terrace.

Sabine Blehle, coo for Tourvest Destination Management, Business & Sport Events, suggests a new take on the formulaic city tour. "Rather give your guests a guide book, a public transport pass and allow them to explore at their leisure." Not only are participants experiencing the destination in a more personal way, costs for coaches, drivers and guides fall away.

Adopting a similar approach, **Maud Botten**, sales & marketing director for Uwinlwin, advises building a free evening into an itinerary and providing group members with a meal allowance, instead of shuttling them by coach to a restaurant. "Alternatively, I pick one or two restaurants within walking distance of the hotel. I still use guide services but no coach costs. You could also do an 'Amazing Race'-type activity leaving passengers to find their own way to the restaurant with the help of a map and transport card."

Botten recently found herself having to reduce costs on a Vegas

trip by changing some of the restaurants on the itinerary. Some of the substitute eateries were "good old casual diners" rather than exclusive, formal venues. "Surprisingly, the group actually preferred the more casual dining experience, though this would depend on the group profile," she comments.

More practical means of cost cutting include reducing accommodation from five-star to quality four-star. Dewar says South Africans are not that brand-conscious and are happy to use local chains. Daniel advises considering season and site. "It is wise to choose a location that is close to an airport and with transfers included in the accommodation costs."

Shortening a trip by a night is another tactic worth considering, says Botten. "It is important to keep the trip high-end, so rather make it one night shorter and maintain the luxury experience," she suggests. "Bear in mind that some cities are cheaper over the weekend, others are not. You need to do your research and book hotel days accordingly."

Other budget-cutting measures are selecting destinations that require one flight, choosing all-inclusive cruises and island

resorts, substituting three-course lunches for two courses, and trimming down on room drops and gifts. Plastic wallets may be an acceptable alternative to leather document packs, and leaving travellers to manage their own visas applications will entail budget savings.

Blehle says the use of airport lounges is nice to have but won't make or break the success of the trip. However Botten says they are useful to avoid paying for an extra night's accommodation when an early check-in is involved. "Rather pay to use a lounge at an airport with shower facilities so everyone can freshen up, enjoy a tour of some sort and perhaps a brunch and then continue to the hotel at check-in time," she suggests.

Entertainment is generally one of the larger incentive costs and difficult to trim. Daniel suggests making the most of what the hotel or resort offers in terms of entertainment and venues.

One non-negotiable, according to Blehle, is travel insurance – an essential element, regardless of the destination or programme. Having a local tour guide with local knowledge and language is another must-have. "Taking a tour leader from the agency booking your trip is vitally important," says Dewar, "and site inspections for larger groups are also highly recommended. The majority of this cost should be refunded should the group confirm."

“Rather give your guests a guide book, a public transport pass and allow them to explore at their leisure.”

Budget from the outset

IT'S never too early to start budgeting for an incentive trip, agree most incentive professionals.

The further ahead you plan, points out **Caroline Daniel**, the more savings can be made and there is more potential for negotiation.

"As flights can only be booked 360 days in advance," says **Sabine Blehle**, "a lead time of 9-12 months is generally the preference. The later it is left, the harder it is to find availability and accommodation."

DMC representative, **Gill Dewar**, says planning should commence with the very first proposal. Travel buyers and agents should review DMC quotes discerningly, keeping an eye out for budget cuts from the outset. "So much effort is put into quoting and it is usually the agents that come back and question the quotes who find the edge that wins them the business."

Which destinations are cost-effective?

WE ARE finding that local is lekker," comments **Caroline Daniel**.

Safaris are currently appealing to corporates, as is nearby Victoria Falls, which offers many adventure activities.

Because of the exchange rate, the number of destinations attractive to South Africans is diminishing. Turkey, however, remains appealing. **Sabine Blehle** points out that there are daily flights from both Cape Town and Johannesburg to Istanbul and the destination is hungry for business. Thailand also remains an affordable and perennial favourite.

Cruising, a great value proposition, also records high guest satisfaction ratings, although it's not a mode of travel to be repeated with regularity. **Maud Botten** says



Zambezi river, Victoria Falls

ships these days are mini resorts that provide large amounts of entertainment along with drinks packages that assist with budgeting. "We tend to give each person a cabin or cash allowance so they can choose which activities or tour they want to book in each port of call. It's an element of choice that

comes to the fore." However cruises generally last seven nights and reaching their port of departure can involve more than one flight, she cautions.

Fully inclusive island packages, in particular to Mauritius and now emerging Zanzibar, remain top incentive contenders. Both are short flights away.

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Action packed **Abu Dhabi**

WITH SAA's recent announcement of a strategic partnership with Etihad Airways, the emirate of Abu Dhabi has been thrust into the limelight as a new tourist destination for South Africans.

Abu Dhabi city is not only the capital of the emirate but also capital of the UAE, which consists of seven emirates. It is also the country's second-largest city in terms of population and is fast developing as a tourist hub second to Dubai, one where deep-rooted traditions mix with growing modernity. Incentive organisers can combine diverse attractions such as the ancient oasis city of Al Ain with the world's fastest roller coaster ride at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi.

Travel Buyer asked Abu Dhabi Tourism's Johannesburg office for incentive tour suggestions and received this basic, three-day itinerary, which packs in heritage, adrenaline-pumping activities and modern-day experiences. Prices, will of course, depend on the usual variables such as number of participants, grade of hotel and season of travel.

Day 1

- **Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque:** One the world's largest mosques, with a capacity for 41 000 worshippers. It features 82 domes, over 1 000 columns, 24-carat-gold gilded

chandeliers and the world's largest hand-knotted carpet.

- **Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital:** Its highlight is a falcon display museum as well as a facility with free-flying falcons.
- **Heritage Village:** A reconstructed traditional oasis village exhibiting traditional aspects of desert life, including a campfire with

coffee pots, a goats' hair tent, and a falaj irrigation system.

- **Corniche:** Tourists watch local boats return to dock at the dhow harbour and enjoy a dip at a Blue Flag Beach.
- **Dinner at Hawksbill:** A restaurant with sweeping terraces overlooking a Gary Player-designed golf course, serving over 60 dishes from around the world.



Ferrari World Abu Dhabi



Day 2

- **Ferrari World Abu Dhabi:** This theme park tells the Ferrari story through some 20 exhilarating and educational rides and attractions, interactive shopping and authentic Italian dining experiences.
- **Afternoon catamaran trip to Nurai island:** A leisurely trip to Nurai Island skimming the blue waters of the Arabian Gulf.
- **Dinner at Emirates Palace:** With its traditional Arabic architecture, the Palace is one of the most inspiring sites in Abu Dhabi with 114 domes and ornate rooms decorated in gold and marble.

Day 3

- **Al Ain:** A Unesco World Heritage Site, 90 minutes' drive from Abu Dhabi, Al Ain is home to several historic forts, a date palm park, a 3 000-year



Emirates Palace boasts 114 domes and ornate rooms decorated in gold and marble



Zaya Nurai island, Abu Dhabi



Sabine Blehle



Caroline Daniel



Maud Botten

4 TOP TIPS

old falaj irrigation system, a camel market and Wadi Adventure – a manmade white water rafting, kayaking and surf facility.

A desert safari in Abu Dhabi is a particular drawcard, with two landscapes to explore. There's the Liwa Desert and Rub' al Khali or the Empty Quarter – the world's largest sand mass with dunes that tower 300m high. Dune-bashing and sand-skiing are offered.

Additional activities worth exploring are the Pearl Journey, where travellers cruise aboard a jalboot or traditional pearling dhow, a falcon and saluki show, and kayaking in mangroves

east of the city. Worth a visit is the Saadiyat Cultural District which houses the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Zayed National Museum.

The emirate has a full calendar of special events, highlights among them being the HSBC Golf Championship in January, the Abu Dhabi Food Festival in February and the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in November.

Note that the Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau offers support for business events. Meetings and incentive providers are encouraged to contact the convention bureau to discuss application details.

1. **Gill Dewar** advises against using a hotel's website fully independent traveller (FIT) rates to justify getting lower group rates as they are hardly ever justifiable. "Also consider the final mark-up carefully, dependent on the budget you are trying to achieve and the client's expectations. A mark-up of between 10% and 15% is industry standard for MICE."
2. "Whatever the group size, a tour leader from the incentive house should always accompany the group. Full pre-payment is worth considering as a means of mitigating the risk on currency exchange rate fluctuations," notes **Sabine Blehle**.
3. "Participants' out-of-pocket expenses should be minimised wherever possible," points out **Caroline Daniel**.
4. "You have to consider the age of your participants – younger participants are not into golf, for instance. Simply put, a choice of activity is always appreciated. Additionally, the destination must suit the profile of the group. For example, a beach resort will not suit everyone. The destination should also reflect the tier of performance on which achievers are placed. An expensive destination should be reserved for only the most valued performers," says **Maud Botten**.

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Garden Route, South Africa

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Paris, France

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3 travel trends that influence budget

THE African business travel landscape is entering a period of change but this does not have to mean additional costs to corporates, says **Frank Palapies**, coo – Africa and Middle East for Wings Travel Management. He maintains that the right mixture of risk management, coupled with the latest technology, can produce positive results in the midst of a constantly changing environment.

Palapies believes there are three trends influencing the business travel landscape that could most affect corporate budgets.

Shift away from commissions

One of the biggest changes in aviation has been the move away from commission agreements to overrides and incentives – an approach, Palapies believes, that will likely lead to the disappearance of smaller, corporate-focused travel management companies (TMCs). “The reason for this is that they are unable to negotiate the same pricing as the big players and this trend will have implications for the travel buyer as well,” he says.

Palapies says if three or four TMCs are dominating the market, services might become more expensive to corporations. “If you are managing a travel budget, you need to factor in more distribution fees.”

Foreign exchange restrictions

Foreign exchange restrictions are another factor influencing budget. As Palapies points out, each country comes with its own particular focus and resulting compliancy issues. In Angola, for instance, new legislation will place severe restrictions on money that is earned in the country leaving Angola. This means that vendors cannot be paid outside Angola. “Instead, goods that would often be imported now have to be sourced from local vendors, which would make the price astronomically expensive,” he says.

While Angola focuses on currency exchange control, Nigeria is focused on local ownership. This is evident in the regulation that allows naira to be taken out of the country, however requires all business start-ups to possess at least 51% local ownership and a minimum investment of US\$1m (R12m).

Procurement technologies

Amid the environmental challenges and risks, travel buyers do have some positive industry changes to keep in mind as well, such as the improvement in technology, Palapies says. He notes that this benefits the business traveller

because it allows for improved reporting, while benefiting buyers because they are better able to track their travellers.

“Travel buyers need to calculate what is really useful for the corporation,” says Palapies. In terms of travel procurement, he believes it is all about becoming more effective. “Buyers may be paying more in one area but this may enable them to save in others, so I always encourage the travel buyer not to ignore the procurement technology that is out there, but rather to embrace it.”

Palapies recommends procuring online. “Many travel buyers tell me they do not need the additional technology and that they cannot tell their travellers to go online or view a smartphone app because they would rather call people and place a request via email or verbally. But they do not pay enough attention to the savings potential of procuring online,” he maintains.

On average, 14 people are involved in the procurement process from a company perspective, which does not even include the TMC, says Palapies. “Many people do not know that so many people are involved because it is an existing process that is already on the payroll. If you could reduce this number and multiply it with the number of travel transactions, this is big, big money,” he concludes. ■

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1. Dubai

World Leisure Holidays. Seven-night packages are from R17 990 per adult sharing at the five-star Hyatt Regency. Offer includes return economy flights leaving from Johannesburg on Emirates, airport taxes, return airport-hotel transfers, accommodation with breakfast and 15% discount on food and beverages at selected outlets. Children under 12 stay and eat breakfast free. Offer valid until August 31.

2. Cape Town

Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa. Rates are from R1 505pp per night sharing. Special includes breakfast, three-course dinner, 40-minute head and shoulder massage, a 60-minute hydro-pool session in the spa and VAT. Minimum two-night stay applies. Offer expires September 30.

3. Rome

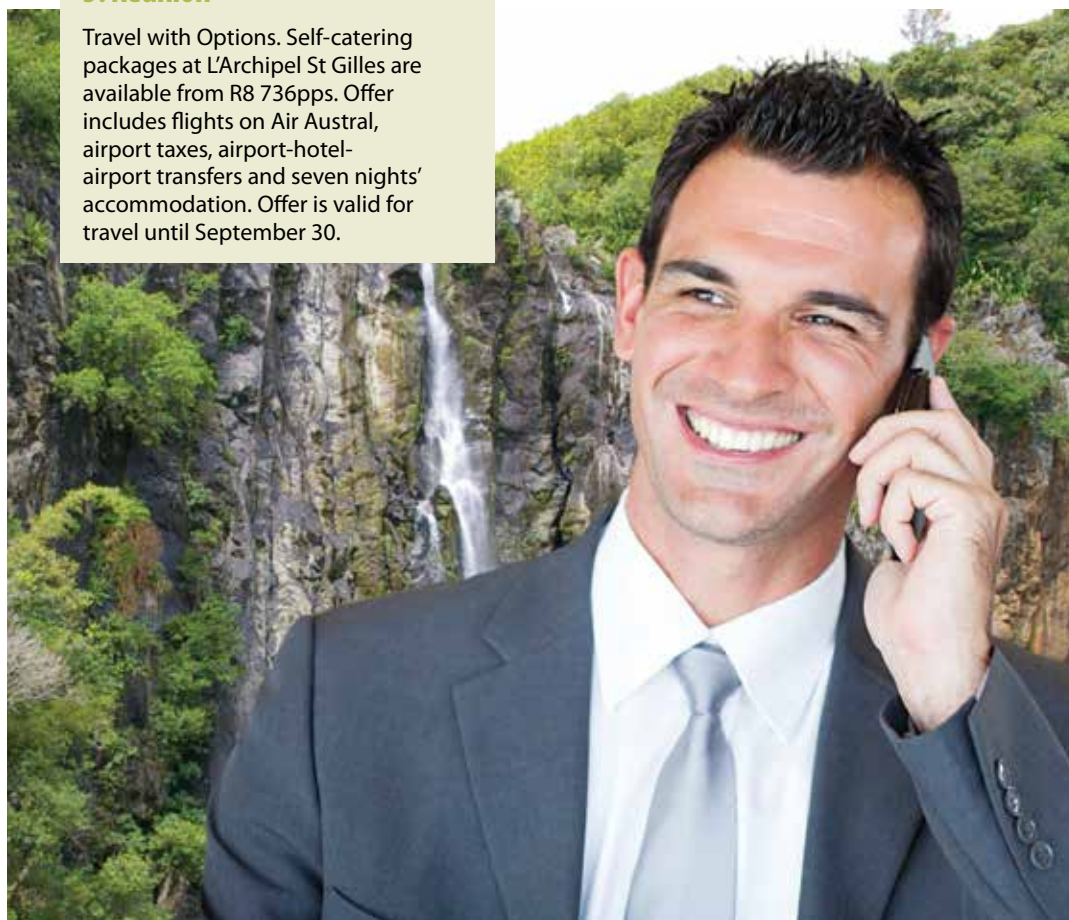
British T.I.P.S. packages are from R4 626pps. Offer includes three nights' twin share accommodation at a three-star central hotel with daily breakfast and a three-day Omnia Vatican and Rome Card. Offer is valid for travel until December 18.

4. Bali

Avocatur Wholesale Tour Operator. Bali packages are from R11 800pps. Package includes seven nights' accommodation at a superior hotel, flights leaving Johannesburg, taxes, return airport transfers, breakfast and three tours. Valid for travel between September 1 and October 31.

5. Réunion

Travel with Options. Self-catering packages at L'Archipel St Gilles are available from R8 736pps. Offer includes flights on Air Austral, airport taxes, airport-hotel-airport transfers and seven nights' accommodation. Offer is valid for travel until September 30.



6. Sun City

Dreams. Three-night stay at Sun City Cabanas from R2 185pps. Rate includes daily breakfasts and one free game drive. Not available over weekends, public holidays and peak periods. Offer valid until August 30.

7. Magaliesburg

Guvon Hotels and Spas. Winter special – stay at Askari Lodge and Spa from R990pps. Rate includes breakfast and dinner. Special is valid for stays until August 31.

8. Zanzibar

AfricaStay. Seven nights at the four-star Uroa Bay Beach Hotel from R10 050pps. Package includes return flights leaving Johannesburg on Mango, taxes, breakfast and dinner. Special is available for travel between September 1 and November 30.

9. Mauritius

Indian Ocean Island Holidays. Spend seven nights at the three-star Tarisa Resort and Spa from R11 850pps. Rate includes flights leaving from Johannesburg on Air Mauritius,

taxes, return airport-hotel transfers, breakfast, dinner and all non-motorised water sports. Offer is valid for travel until September 30.

10. Johannesburg

The Capital Hotel Group. Stay at any of the Capital's hotels from Friday to Sunday from R900 per room per night. Rate includes complimentary WiFi, parking and scheduled shuttles. Offer is valid until August 31. ■

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

Virtual card solutions – the supplier's perspective



Not only are corporate travel managers and TMCs growing wise to the benefits of virtual card solutions, suppliers are also catching on to the many advantages of this simplified, secure form of payment.

The national Protea Hotels chain is one example. States **Bryan Mulliner**, strategic development & revenue director:

"Virtual Credit Cards are already being used extensively by many online travel agencies (OTAs) and wholesalers. They reduce the cost of doing business in that the intensive manual and time-consuming process of bill backs goes away.

"Furthermore they offer hotels and the guest the ability to have guaranteed reservations without the complexity of issuing vouchers or using personal/company credit cards. Virtual cards also greatly reduce the exposure to fraud risk with normal credit cards," he adds.

Diners Club recently launched the Dynamic Virtual Card, a payment instrument that offers nothing short of a revolution for suppliers and their customers. **Kevin Lomax**, head: commercial card, Diners Club and Standard Bank SA, offers pointers for suppliers in the accommodation sector.

Q: Why should accommodation facilities, car hire firms and other suppliers consider acceptance of virtual cards?

KL: Virtual card solutions make the lives of all parties simpler and more efficient. The predominant reasons are the elimination of bill backs as well as the need to extend credit to TMCs or corporates. Hotels can accept pre-authorisations with confidence and cash flow is improved. Customers are afforded an enhanced experience at check-out, cost management is more effective and there is no need to incur costs of card security compliance.

Q: Can you expand on the main benefits for hotels?

KL: Hotels and other suppliers all understand that card is the most efficient form of payment. However due to the issues associated with holding card details, they resorted to bill backs which introduce manpower-intensive processes that continue long after the customer has checked out. Hotels need to follow up on payments and they have reconciliation issues.

A further cost control is the elimination of debtors books. Hotel chains shouldn't be in the business of extending credit to their valued customers and incurring the costs and administration associated with this. So in short the benefits are cost control, administrative efficiencies and reconciliation.

Q: Do virtual cards slot easily into the booking process?

KL: The process is simple and seamless. Travellers make a booking using an online booking tool or a TMC as normal. The booking includes an automatic request for a single-use virtual

card for a specific amount and dates of travel. This request comes through to Diners Club which issues the virtual card against the lodge card account. This card number, amount and authorisation code is sent to the hotel or other supplier, giving them peace of mind that the booking is legitimate and payment guaranteed.

Q: What must the hotel do when the traveller is checking out?

KL: Once the traveller has checked the bill and approved all expenses, then hotels have a number of options in order to finalise the payment. If they are running an integrated system, they can request the final information on the payment, namely the CVV and expiry date, which will be presented to them electronically. This information is then uploaded as a normal card transaction for final settlement. For smaller establishments that function in a more offline mode, we can make slight adjustments to the check-out process. The traveller can be issued with the card information in a secure format on their travel documents. For example, card number 3613XXXXXXXX1011, CVV 987, exp 10/12. At check out, the proprietor simply captures the card details they received at the time of booking, with the details on the document, on the POS.

Q: Can other services providers participate in this payment system on the same basis as the hotel sector?

KL: Most definitely. Car hire companies, B&Bs, taxi services, in fact any establishment that accepts Diners Club can benefit from virtual cards.



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