

MARCH 2016

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A GUIDE TO
GARDEN ROUTE
CONFERENCING

HOW
*tech helps
SMEs save*

WEAK RAND

damages travel budgets

6

STEPS TO THE
perfect duty-of-care policy

MANAGING TRANSITIONS

Thulani Mahamba-Sithole takes control of a TMC changeover



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Editor's note

The question on everyone's lips seems to be – "what is the rand going to do?"

While there appears to be some sort of recovery, or at least a stabilisation following the dramatic weakening that took place over December and January, economists remain concerned that South Africa's downgrading to "junk status" remains just around the corner, threatening to plunge the country into an economic crisis.

Industry experts are predicting that this will have a profound impact on corporate travel with businesses cutting back dramatically on international travel and the size of incentive groups. Added to this, the car rental sector is predicting big rate hikes for the year. Find out what this means for your business in our Big Issue on the impact of the weak rand.

We spoke to **Thulani Mahamba-Sithole** about his new role at Tiger Brands – which has seen him manage an enormous amount of change in the seven short months he's been working for the business. From a TMC changeover to the drafting of a

new travel policy, he provides his top tips for transition management from a travel procurement perspective.

In an increasingly volatile world, it has never been more important to have a perfectly drafted, air-tight duty-of-care policy – a daunting prospect if you're starting from scratch. Read our expert tips on the steps you need to take to ensure you've taken all the required measures to keep your travellers safe, and find out what South African law actually has to say on this important topic.

Faced with ever-shrinking budgets, technology – as impressive as it may be – may seem like an unnecessary splurge for smaller businesses. However, by partnering with the right TMC, SMEs can access powerful software and online solutions that can end up saving them time, and most importantly, money. We have brought you some of the encouraging success stories.

Keep reading!

Sue van Winsen
(suev@nowmedia.co.za)

COVER

Thulani Mahamba-Sithole tells *Travel Buyer* about his role overseeing the transition from one TMC to another. Cover photograph by **Megan Fischer**.

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Another Gulf carrier for SA?

OMAN Air has set its sights on South Africa. The airline advertised in *The Star* that it was looking for a "representation partner" in the local market.

Oman Air is the flagship carrier of the Sultanate of Oman. The airline currently operates direct international flights from Muscat to Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Doha, Dubai, Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam, Madina, Tehran and Kuwait in the Gulf region, as well

as Cairo, Beirut and Amman within the wider Middle East region.

It also flies to 11 destinations in India; Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore in Pakistan, Kathmandu in Nepal, and Colombo in Sri Lanka, as well as the Maldives, Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Jakarta, Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam. Its European destinations are London, Milan, Munich, Frankfurt, Paris and Zurich.

Experts predict car rental rate hike

THE weak rand is expected to result in higher car-rental rates, members of the industry have warned.

Commenting recently on the latest Tourism Business Index released by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, **Marc Corcoran**, president of Southern African Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association, said although overall performance of the tourism industry had been good over the December holiday period, the industry would face a difficult operating climate this year as the depreciation of the rand would impact on new vehicle pricing.

Deon Ragunath, gm operations at Hertz Rent a Car, and **Martin Lydall**, cco

at Europcar South Africa, said the current rand/US dollar exchange rate resulted in a vehicle price and interest rate increase.

Lydall said while the increase in Europcar's rental costs would depend on contracts and forecasted demand growth, the car rental company was expecting an average 10% increase to be implemented across the board.

"General economic pressures have had an increasingly negative impact on cost, and rising operational and accident costs have increased the cost base dramatically. The depreciation of the rand has added up to 20% to our cost base," said Corcoran.

New logo and brand for FCM

CORPORATE travel agency, FCM, has changed its logo and branding, with the change forming part of a number of new developments within the business.

The shift in branding places greater focus on offering a personalised service blended with global technology

platforms, says **Euan McNeil**, gm of FCM.

"The change represents the direction in which FCM is heading," says **Karen Cooke**, FCM's global marketing leader. Some of these changes include a new global reporting platform, a profile management tool and new online booking technology.

BA Comair – new flight closing times

ALL domestic and regional British Airways flights operated by Comair will close 45 minutes prior to departure as opposed to the previous closing time of 30 minutes, with immediate effect.

The check-in close-out time has been standardised across British Airways' global route

network and its franchise partners as part of the airline's deployment of a new airport solution that is being rolled out across all airports that it serves.

Travellers are advised to check their flight status prior to travelling, as the closing time of their flight may be earlier than previously published.



GBTA provides buyers with 'Food for Thought'

GBTA Southern Africa has introduced a series of 'Food for Thought' luncheons, in which a select group of travel buyers are invited to enjoy an afternoon of networking and delicious food in various hotels throughout the country. Pictured here at the first event for 2016, which took

place at the Four Seasons The Westcliff, are (from left) **Nicole Fonzari**, travel manager at CBS Africa; **Fikile Nkala**, group travel coordinator at Super Group; **Marcelle Ross**, chief sales officer for TravelLinck; and **Sharon Richards-Lund**, regional account manager for GBTA Southern Africa.

Hilton Garden Inn to open in Windhoek

THE United Africa Group (UAG) will soon start construction of the Hilton Garden Inn hotel in Windhoek. This will be the third Garden Inn hotel in Africa.

The hotel will cost about R325 million and will be solely owned by UAG. Construction is expected

to be completed by early 2018.

"This hotel will be the biggest in the city with a huge conference and convention centre, restaurant, and a parking lot for up to 350, and will have at least 180 rooms," said **Haddis Tilahun**, UAG founder and executive director.

Cameroon airport to close for repairs

DOUALA International Airport in Cameroon will close for reconstruction from March 1 – 21. All flights that operate from Douala

will use Yaoundé Nsimalen International Airport during this time.

During the closure, repairs will be made to the runway and aircraft parking areas.

Premier acquires two new hotels

PREMIER Hotels and Resorts has acquired the Winkler hotel in Mpumalanga and the Bayshore Inn in Richards Bay.

The Winkler hotel was formerly owned by the Hospitality Property Fund, marketed by Protea Hotels and managed by Extra Bold, functions that will now be handled by Premier Hotels and Resorts. It is located nearby the Kruger National Park and Kruger Mpumalanga Airport and offers 87 guest rooms, ranging from standard and executive rooms to family rooms and suites. All rooms have en-suite

bathrooms, satellite television and Internet connectivity.

The Bayshore Inn offers full-service accommodation, a restaurant and conferencing facilities, which the group plans to renovate. It is the first of the group's new three-star 'Splendid Inn' branded properties.

"With the strength of our loyalty programme and the business market needs in the region, we see great potential for these properties, especially within the conferencing and corporate sectors," says **Samuel Nassimov**, md of Premier Hotels and Resorts.

Fastjet delays Vic Falls service

FASTJET has had to delay the launch date of its new route linking Johannesburg with Victoria Falls. This follows the recent announcement that it would launch direct services between Johannesburg and Victoria Falls and Harare.

The Victoria Falls route was scheduled to launch on February 3. However the airline has now said scheduled flights could not be confirmed

until it had engaged with tour operators to ensure that they were flying optimal frequencies.

"The timings of the flights need to be customer-centric," says cco of fastjet, **Richard Bodin**. "Once flight dates and timings have been confirmed for the JNB-VFA route, fastjet will engage with other South African travel agents and tour operators to discuss industry fares for inclusive travel packages to Victoria Falls."

FOR THE RECORD

The comment from Wendy Wu Tours published in the February 2016 edition of *Travel Buyer* in the feature titled 'China on the rise' is outdated. Since the time when the article was written, the brand

has undergone a change in GSA and as such comment in the article attributed to **Alet Steyn** and **Daniela Gallagher** should not have been used. *Travel Buyer* apologises for the mistake.



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New event facilities in Mauritius

EVENTS will play an integral part in the offering of the newly revamped Shangri-La Le Touessrok Resort & Spa in Mauritius.

According to resort gm **Gabriele Lombardo**, it was essential to create a variety of settings for events, including a comprehensive range of meetings rooms and conference venues.

Two dedicated private rooms,

named Orchid and Jasmin, can each host up to 80 guests, whilst the Frangipani venue has incorporated a floating platform, offering panoramic ocean views, that can be reserved exclusively for cocktail receptions, group lunches, or tea and coffee breaks for up to 175 guests.

Lombardo said the resort had also established the Hibiscus Garden for group lunches and similar events. It can cater for 10 to 60 guests; whilst the

Hibiscus Pavilion is ideal for more intimate gatherings such as small business meetings. For larger events, the resort helipad can be transformed into a conference venue where up to 400 delegates can be accommodated in a dedicated marquee.

"The resort also has the Îlot Mangénie," said Lombardo. This is a private island that can accommodate groups of between 20 and 200 guests.

Angola introduces multiple-entry visa

ANGOLA has introduced a multiple-entry visa that is valid for three months.

Previously, travellers were only able to apply for a single-entry visa, which was valid for 30 days. The multiple-entry visa is far more cost-effective for travellers, says HRG Rennies Travel national executive client services manager, **Jose Cruz**, as it costs the same – R750 – as the standard visa.

Some business travellers visit Angola as often as three times a month, he says. "Before this visa was introduced they would've essentially had to apply for a visa 12 times a year."

Travellers with a multiple-entry visa are only allowed to stay in the country for 30 days at a time. The visas take about seven working days to be issued and the phrase "multiple-entry visa" must be included in the letter of invitation from the receiving company in Angola, advised Top Chela Traders, a visa application service in Cape Town that specialises in Angolan visas.

Starwood to debut Four Points in Ethiopia

STARWOOD Hotels & Resorts Worldwide is to introduce its Four Points brand in Ethiopia.

Due to open at the beginning of 2019, the Four Points by Sheraton Addis Ababa, Meskel Square, will be located on the main avenue leading to Bole International Airport.

The property will have 450 guest rooms, including 44 suites and a presidential suite. Facilities will include several food and beverage options with an all-day dining

restaurant, a roof-top speciality restaurant, a pool bar and a lobby bar and lounge featuring the brand's signature Best Brews programme.

There will also be a fitness centre, an outdoor pool, an extensive spa facility and over 2 000 sqm of meeting and ballroom space. Free bottled water will be offered in all rooms and suites and fast and free WiFi throughout the hotel.

"As home to Africa's largest airline, Addis Ababa is a key hotel

market and an ideal city for a brand that serves the modern, everyday traveller," says Starwood Hotels & Resort, Europe, Africa, and Middle East president, **Michael Wale**.

"With two Four Points Hotels currently operating in Africa and five more in the pipeline, the brand is enjoying great interest and traction with developers across the continent," says Starwood Hotels & Resorts svp acquisitions and development, Africa & Middle East, **Neil George**.



PHOTO: KEVIN WRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Gautrain expands to meet demand

FOLLOWING increasing passenger demand on the Gautrain, the Development Bank of Southern Africa has approved a loan of R3,5bn for the Gautrain Management Agency to purchase additional rolling stock.

"Current passenger growth has been consistent in the peak periods and if the current

patronage in the peak periods is not addressed, capacity will become more constrained," Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport, Dr **Ismail Vadi** said at a media briefing outlining the business case for the additional train car sets.

Vadi said recently that the Bombela Concession Company, initially appointed to operate

and maintain the Gautrain project, had invited suppliers to submit tenders for the design, manufacture, supply and maintenance of 12 train sets.

The Gautrain system currently carries 1,4m passengers a month and would require a total of 48 new rail cars over the next decade to meet the current passenger demand.

New hotel for Centurion

PROTEA Hotels plans to build a new hotel with extensive conferencing amenities in Centurion, according to coo for the Middle East and Africa of Marriott International, **Mark Satterfield**.

Satterfield said Marriott International had experienced an increase in demand for conference and meeting facilities from the corporate, group and conferencing markets and noticed that Centurion was developing as a business and government hub in South Africa.

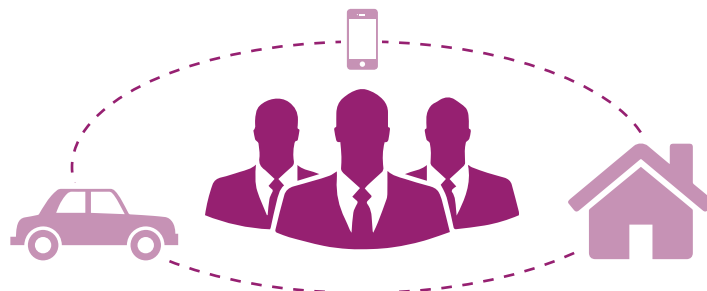
"This trend is reinforced by the popularity of our nearby Protea Hotel Fire & Ice! in Menlyn, which opened last year and has already seen strong performance across these key segments."

Saaci Academy offers free trial period

AS of March 1, Saaci members will be able to access Saaci Academy free of charge. The trial period will last until the end of June, during which time the Academy will not just be complimentary for the member companies' listed representatives, but for all staff members of the companies as well.

Once on the Academy website, members will be prompted to register for their free trial.

As of July 1, a minimum of an additional 10% of membership fees will be charged for those who wish to continue to access Saaci Academy's resources which include Saaci courses and discounted premium partner courses.



Uber and Airbnb continue to gain traction with business travellers

IN 2015, more people used Uber (41%) than taxis (20%) or rental cars (39%) while on business trips, and the number of

people staying in Airbnb properties while on work trips reportedly grew 259% during the same period.

This is according to travel expense management company Certify.

Certify considered over 30 million receipts and travel expenses in 2015, and its research showed that employees want to use services they enjoy as individual consumers.

"Business travellers are interested in saving time, adding convenience

and reducing costs, so the essence of on-demand services are aligned with business travellers," says Certify ceo, **Bob Neveu**.

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) projects that \$1.25 trillion (R20 trillion) was spent worldwide on business expenses in 2015, with 17% on lodging, 11% on fuel, 5% on car rentals, 3% on taxis, and 1% on tolls and parking. It is likely that while employees enjoy Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb due to their familiarity, companies are probably looking at them more closely because of the potential savings they offer.

ExecuJet expands African fleet

THE ExecuJet Aviation Group is expanding its African managed and charter fleets with the addition of its first Bombardier Challenger 850 aircraft, which will be based in Johannesburg.

The aircraft can accommodate 13 passengers with various seating configurations available.

Chay White, sales manager, aircraft management, ExecuJet Africa, says: "The addition of this aircraft follows a high level of interest in large-cabin, mid-range aircraft in the region. We anticipate it will be very popular, especially amongst business travellers wishing to reach their destinations faster, with exceptional on-board office support on route."

ExecuJet has 31 aircraft in its African fleet, 27 of which are available for charter. ■

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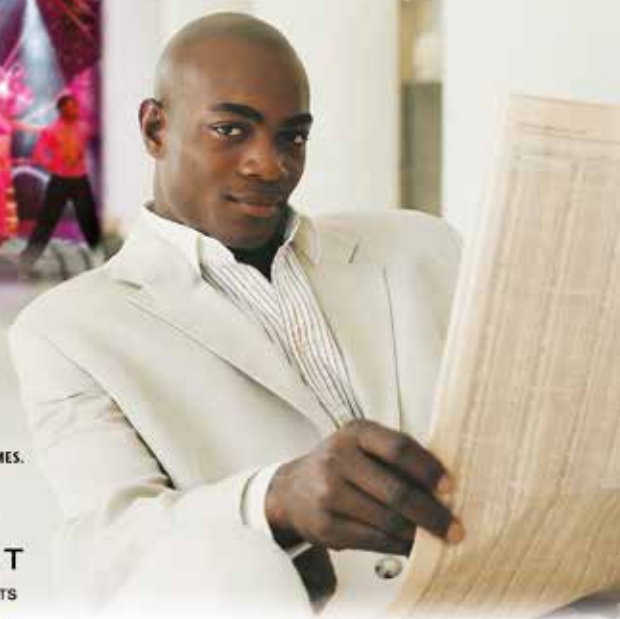
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Weak rand damages travel budgets

The weak rand is having a profound impact on outbound South African corporate travel, with businesses now implementing more stringent limitations on international travel.

Carina Borralho investigates.

ECONOMISTS are predicting that the rand's decline will continue this year, with the possibility of an exchange rate of R19 to the US dollar and R26 to the pound. Wings Travel Management ceo, **Tony Sofianos**, says: "We will undoubtedly see some South African clients pull back even further. However, we may see increased inbound travel into South Africa as international businesses take advantage of the favourable exchange rates," he says.

In this economic environment it becomes even more important for travel logistics businesses to increase efficiencies and to further realise cost savings for clients, notes Sofianos.

Meanwhile, SARS specialist in travel

management, **Merrill Isherwood**, says the rand exchange rate will negatively impact on travel budgets this year, especially when it comes to international travel. "Managing needs versus costs will become a sensitive priority," she says.

Glasshouse Communication Management executive director, **Bridget von Holdt**, agrees and says travel is only for essential business trips at the moment. According to Von Holdt, travellers are considering the following factors: Is travel absolutely necessary? How many trips can I take this year and at what cost and how long can I stay for? "Travel consideration will now only be

given to necessity," says Von Holdt, who mentions that, in the past, many business travellers would add some leisure time to trips, but will not be able to now.

The effect of the weakened rand on incentives

International travel incentives have been replaced with either monetary incentives or local travel opportunities, and Von Holdt says this is a great opportunity to promote local offerings.

From a groups and incentives perspective, The Holiday Factory groups and incentives sales manager, **Kathy Basson**, believes 2015 budgets will remain unchanged, getting

incentive groups less bang for their buck for international travel due to exchange rates. "Increasing targets may make it more challenging for the sales force to qualify for travel incentives, thus

making group sizes smaller from an achievement point of view. Further to this, any budget cuts will see a decrease in partners or spouses wishing to tag along, which will lead to smaller groups travelling."

Basson has noticed an increase in shorter stays and travel to destinations closer to home. "International incentives may potentially lose popularity, and regional destinations – including Indian Ocean islands – will be able to offer more

"The whole rand crisis can be turned into promoting everything local."



Wally Gaynor, md, Club Travel

affordable packages and easier accessibility for those with limited travel time and tight budgets."

Shorter lead times are not only putting pressure on suppliers to quote with the best price within 24 hours or less but also on the end client for final decision due to hotel and flight availability.

"If travel budgets are cut to such an extent where incentives are put on hold or delayed to every second or third year as opposed to annually, we may potentially see a slight drop in travel and rise in 'instant gratification' rewards, such as merchandising and gift cards," she says.

Basson suggests making the most of low-season travel and travelling outside holidays to ensure lower fares, hotel rates, value-adds and overall supplier flexibility. "All-inclusive will remain a buzzword for a South African incentive, as it's much more cost effective for our budgets and very attractive, versus off-site meals and events

that can chew up the budget. A conference built around an incentive trip can assist with a tax break, so we will most likely still find 'leisure' programmes gaining momentum in 2016."

Basson adds that the Indian Ocean islands and the Far East often have great deals and are consistently cost effective and affordable, keeping them great destination options for incentives.

Positive outlook persists

Travel experts are urging industry not to panic but rather to work smarter and use the opportunity to prove their value.

"We must not panic. We will just need to work harder to find the right deal at the right price," maintains **Sean Hough**, ceo of Pentravel.

Although clients are clearly concerned, agrees **Wally Gaynor**, md of Club Travel, it's important that the industry don't feed into the negativity but put a positive spin on the situation and that they learn to think outside the box and consider options such as Airbnb, coach tours and cruises. He encourages people to explore new destinations, such as India and Asia, as well as countries in South America, such as Brazil, Guatemala and Nicaragua. "You may pay more to get there but prices at the destination are low."

"There are still plenty of good deals to be found if you look hard enough and are prepared to travel last minute," adds Travelstart's direct sales manager, **Jonty Medcalf**. ■

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Taking control of change

Recently taking on a procurement role at Tiger Brands, **Thulani Mahamba-Sithole** was tasked with overseeing a transition between TMCs, while at the same time tightening up the business's processes and travel policy. **Sue van Winsen** reports.

It has been a whirlwind seven months for **Thulani Mahamba-Sithole**, who joined Tiger Brands' group procurement hub as its sourcing specialist – indirects category. Since taking on the role, not only has he drafted a revised travel policy, but he also managed the transition from the business's previous TMC to its new one.

No stranger to travel, after obtaining his Bachelors' Degree in Economics and Politics and his Post Graduate Diploma in Enterprise Management at Rhodes University, Mahamba-Sithole spent a year abroad in Glasgow, completing his Masters in Global Supply Chain and Logistics Management at Glasgow Caledonian University.

He has also travelled extensively throughout Africa in his previous roles – not only to neighbouring Zimbabwe and Mozambique, but much further afield to South Sudan. This allowed him to gain first-hand experience into the mindset of the corporate traveller. "It helps to understand, from the traveller perspective, what their needs are – and then compare these with the needs of the business to come up with right solutions for all parties," he says.

Balancing the portfolio

This is just one of the skills Mahamba-Sithole has brought to his new position. He joined Tiger Brands in August 2015, an FMCG company with a diverse portfolio of products, ranging from bread and rice to sweets, beverages and cosmetics. He explains: "The indirects category involves strategic sourcing of group spend that you don't see on store shelves – including logistics, marketing, consulting services, and of course, travel, to name a few."

When it comes to a company of Tiger Brands' size, it is extremely important to

ensure travel gets the priority it deserves. "We try to be proactive," explains Mahamba-Sithole. "We have monthly meetings with the TMC and table issues that have occurred throughout the month and retrospectively examine those, as well as any issues going forward." He adds that the difficulty with travel is that it is reactive by nature. "A lot of the issues are urgent – travel issues tend to pop out of nowhere, and simple problems can become very big problems if not managed properly."

Managing transitions

When he joined the company, the previous TMC was serving out the last month of its contract, so one of his main priorities was overseeing the transition to Club Travel. This was not just a simple case of moving from one company to another, as it included the transition to new booking technology, while at the same time refining processes so that they better suited Tiger Brands' needs.

"Constant communication was absolutely essential as the process moved along," he says. "We needed to explain how the change was going to happen and what people should expect, but it was equally important to explain the 'why' – always highlighting the benefits of changing from one system to the next."

About twice a week, the procurement team issued emails reminding employees of the change. This was followed by country-wide training on the new system. "We had to identify who the relevant

population were for the training, and then invited them to workshops, which took place in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town," says Mahamba-Sithole. "While employees had been introduced to the transition via email, this was the first time they really got to see what the change was going to mean for them. They saw some of the new things they would be able to do, while also highlighting some of things they were able to do before that they couldn't do any more and believed they needed. These issues then become topic points to discuss with the new TMC and were sorted out very quickly." This played a key role in staff's willingness to adopt the new system – the training was very well received and made the transition process much smoother. "This was

followed three months later by a survey and refresher training for those who had either missed the initial workshops, or those who attended but felt they could

benefit from going over a few aspects again," he adds.

At the same time, Mahamba-Sithole needed to engage with all the other stakeholders involved in the process. "This ranged from Diners Club to our car-hire company and then, of course, the new TMC and the previous one," he says. "The difficulty is that if corporates had booked a flight a month ago – and we then changed companies – the flight may only be two months after that, so you still need to ensure the previous TMC will manage and honour that booking, which is a delicate process. You have to ensure all the moving parts are taken care of. For example, all your corporate agreements have to

been moved to the TMC, but this process is more cumbersome than just moving them from one to the next. Everyone involved needs to be informed and new documentation needs to be issued," he says.

New technology

With the migration to the new TMC came new booking technology provided by Travellinck, which Mahamba-Sithole says is very user-friendly. "It captures all our travel needs within one system, from car hire to flights." Added to this, the support desk is very responsive and, as it is based in South Africa, problems can be solved within an hour or two. "The dashboard is also very good and allows us to track travellers and also provides us with an audit trail," he adds.

Drafting a new policy

At the same time, the company's travel policy was in need of an update. "One of the most important lessons I've learned while working in travel procurement, is the extent to which a well-defined travel policy can make every stakeholder's role clear and limit abuse to the system that may result in excessive spending.

"Our policy includes different bands, which dictates how much employees at different levels can spend on travel. Obviously over the last two years these amounts have changed, so we needed to amend these." While this process was fairly straightforward, there were also other aspects of the policy that needed updating. "For example, our processes had changed in terms of how we manage approvals, and how we make changes to travel bookings," says Mahamba-Sithole. In addition, the company had also changed the way it manages foreign currency, which is now

“Travel issues tend to pop out of nowhere, and simple problems can become very big problems if not managed properly.”

handled through the finance department. "In general, we needed to tighten up our systems, and where possible move to automated systems rather than manual processes."

Looking ahead

In the coming months, Mahamba-Sithole plans to focus on some of the company's remaining challenges, one of which is automatic booking. He says when a traveller requests a booking, the quote is sent to the authoriser to either approve or decline and is then sent back to the travel booker who uses the company credit card to make the booking and issue their tickets. "The difficulty is that the quote may only be sent to the authoriser after hours, who may then check their email at 10pm and approve it then. When the consultant wakes up in the morning, the price of the ticket has likely changed, but as the quote has already been approved, the booking will be made," he says. "We would ideally like the system to be able to issue the ticket – and while automatic ticketing is technically possible, legislation requires payment information to be processed by a person. This results in a great deal of rebooking and reissuing – but if we could move to an automated process, there are huge savings to be found." He says this is a major industry issue that he plans to try and take on.

Thulani's top tips for transition management

Managing change can be a difficult process but by following a few steps you can ensure a smooth transition for all stakeholders.

1. Communication is key – but avoid relying on email alone.
2. At the same time, engage with all your stakeholders and suppliers – by managing all the moving parts you will take care of any issues before they arise.
3. Make the most of training workshops to engage with employees. By listening to the voice of your customer, from travellers and bookers to authorisers, you can tighten up processes while addressing their needs.
4. Follow up with refresher training a few months later, so those who missed the initial workshop, or others who need issues clarified, have the opportunity to learn about the new processes or system.
5. A few months later, send out a survey so that employees have further opportunity to highlight any issues, which you can then resolve with your suppliers. ■

Airport venues seek to add value beyond location

It's no secret that corporates worldwide are continuing to tighten budgets and curb spending. **Liesl Venter** looks at the impact this has had on airport venues that can no longer rely on their location alone to attract delegates.

On the surface the benefits of choosing a conference or meeting venue close to the airport seem simple and obvious enough. With hardly any travel or transfer logistics to organise, less time is wasted sitting in congested traffic. However, cue the Gautrain and this flies out the window. It is affordable and fast, comfortable and easy to use and travellers can find themselves in the heart of Gauteng's corporate environment within minutes. While not all airport venues have had to contend with the impact of a Gautrain, for example, it does go a long way in demonstrating the new challenges these venues face.

Airport venues have to work harder than ever before to attract business, says **Michelle Bebbler**, revenue analyst – airport node for Tsogo Sun. "Not only has the competition increased drastically, with more venues around airports than ever before, but technology and improved infrastructure have had a massive impact. The tight economy has also had an effect and so one will find that, instead of paying for a flight, corporates will rather opt for a conference or video call."

Bebbler says in this environment, size of venues plays a role as well. "Small meetings or events that only involve a few people are rather being held at corporate offices," she says. "Airport venues, however, have for the most part been set up for these smaller events and so facilities to compete with the bigger events sector are limited. Often airport venues are just too small to attract the big events. The very locality of these venues means that in terms of size they are quite limited and there are really only a handful of venues near airports that can host very large events."

Debbie Botha, PR, marketing, training & development executive at the Federation of African



Southern Sun OR Tambo International Airport

Professional Staffing Organisations (APSO), which has a conference and meeting facility within two minutes' drive of OR Tambo International Airport, agrees, saying that the advantages of conferencing at an airport venue in terms of saving time and money no longer apply in the way they did several years ago.

"The competition has increased dramatically and drawing conferences is not simply based on whether one is close to an airport any more," she says. "In many instances the necessity for people to fly to a meeting or a conference has diminished as economic pressures have increased," she says.

Drawing delegates

Delivering out-of-the-box solutions is not necessarily an easy option for conference venues close to or at airports. "One has to remember that traditionally these venues are situated in industrial areas some distance out of city centres where space is very limited and there is also not a lot of green outdoor space available," she says. "Drawing delegates on the promise of a venue close to the airport just does not stand on its own any more."

Taking the cost of conferencing into consideration, the location, instead of being a draw card, can be a turn off. Botha says that while factors such as the saving of time in getting to and from the venue are still considered they are, however, no longer deciding factors. "What we have seen still playing a role is that venues close to airports do give delegates more conference time and a tighter and more full agenda can be incorporated, as getting to the airport is very quick."

According to Bebbler drawing delegates requires venues to focus on two things – rate and value adds. "When it comes to airport conferencing and meetings, it is now all about the rate and it has to be extremely competitive while the value being added is just as important." Excellent catering and top-class facilities are not negotiable while things such as free WiFi are a given. "The service that one is offering has to be exemplary," says Botha. "The facilities also need to be flexible and offer the conference organiser a range of options."

APSO, for instance, has two large rooms that can be used for training or conferencing, a variety of smaller meeting rooms as well

as a 30-seater 'pause' area that is perfect for networking. "It is all about the value that you add and the comfort and convenience that you are giving the client," explains Botha.

Rate advantage

Bebbler says it is in the practicality of conferencing that airport venues are proving their worth. "They are easily accessible and there is still no doubt that airport conference centres minimise travel logistics and complexity."

But it is especially in their rates that these venues are being extremely creative and competitive. "Airport venues continue to stand out because they offer exceptionally good rates. Even if one chooses to move delegates to a venue in town, with the variety of options available nowadays, the fact is, one still has to pay for that transport cost and so, when that is compared with the cost of the airport venues, then they are good value for money," says Bebbler.

At the same time there is a wide variety of venues around airports, which means one is spoilt for choice. "They are still the quickest way in and out of a city for someone who is on a tight budget and tight schedule," she says. Most of these venues offer complimentary transfers to and from airports where it is just too far to walk. Whilst there is no denying that airports and the immediate areas around them are busy and noisy, they are also ideal for those with tight deadlines.

"There are advantages and disadvantages to the airport location," says Botha. "What is essential though is that we realise it's not business as usual and that we have to work on better value-adds if we want to draw more business."

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A guide to Garden Route conferencing

Liesl Venter set out to discover which venues and activities are hot and happening in the world of Garden Route conferencing.

Mossel Bay

Venue options:

GARDEN Court Mossel Bay has three venues for different group sizes, a casino on the premises, entertainment lounge, wellness spa and several restaurants. Situated next to the Pinnacle Point golf course and Pinnacle Point Caves (Point of Human Origins) it offers several entertainment options.

The Protea Hotel Mossel Bay in the centre of town has two conference rooms for different group sizes. It has a restaurant and a cocktail bar on the premises and is within walking distance of all the main activities in town.

The Point Hotel, which is close to the lighthouse, St Blaize Cave and the promenade, has a conference room and sea view.

The Garden Route Game Lodge is easily accessible along the N2 and has a conference room with a view of wildlife. There is a restaurant on the premises and game drives are available.

Within walking distance of Diaz

Beach, the Oceans Hotel has two venues that can accommodate at least 200 people, and a restaurant on the premises. The Diaz Strand Hotel can host up to 300 people banqueting style, 400 cinema style and 350 classroom style, while the ATKV Resort in the town can easily accommodate 650 people in banqueting style and 1 800 in cinema style.

Top activities:

The Dias Museum Complex consists of South Africa's largest shell museum and the Maritime Museum, which houses the full-size replica of Bartolomeu Dias's caravel. There is also an indigenous ethno-botanical garden with a Braille trail, Malay graves and the spring from which Dias and his crew drew water. Visitors to the museum can also send a card from the world's oldest post office.

There are three game farms – the Garden Route Game Lodge, the Indalu Game Farm and Zorgfontein Reserve. At the Garden Route Game



The Point Hotel

Lodge visitors can have a two-and-a-half-hour guided game drive where the Big Five can be seen.

Situated next to the information office, the Arts and Crafts workshop is a collective space where local artists display their work and exhibit, sell, and teach.

Tours to the Point of Human origins start with an illustrated

lecture and discussion together with a visit to the Pinnacle Point Caves in the company of experts.

Shark cage diving is suitable for both the adventurous and less adventurous visitors, with non-divers able to enjoy topside viewing. Wet suits, dive equipment and catering are provided during these trips.

Sedgefield

Venue options:

There is a surprisingly large selection of top-quality conference facilities available for such a small, peaceful town as Sedgefield. Lake Pleasant Living, which is a Mantis Hotel, can accommodate up to 60 delegates, while the Lakeside Lodge and Spa Boutique Hotel offers a small and intimate venue, similar to that on offer at Pelican Lodge.

The Pine Lake Marina can host up to 200 delegates depending on the floor plan. It is ideally suited for both winter and summer conferences.

Top activities:

There are three different Saturday markets that are always worth a visit. The Wild Oats Community



Sedgefield

Farmers' Market is an old-style country marketplace where local farmers gather to sell their produce, while the Mosaic Middle market offers more food and crafts. The Scarab Market is

Sedgefield's one-stop arts and craft market and embodies the 'local is lekker' South African philosophy.

The Masithandane Mosaic job creation project offers a slow

art tour of the more than 40 public mosaic pieces scattered throughout the town.

Sedgefield is a veritable paragliding mecca with no shortage of breathtaking flight spots. Drive up to the Cloud 9 restaurant for a spectacular view. Those who are not up to flying can enjoy watching the paragliders take off.

The town offers a variety of water encounters. Beaches and lakes are integral to this part of the world and water-based activities like kite surfing, surfing and bass fishing, boating, canoeing, waterskiing, stand-up paddle boarding, swimming and a starlight night educational beach walk called 'The Moonlight Meander' are available.

Knysna

Venue options:

Belvidere Manor on the Knysna Lagoon is a nature-lover's paradise. Its conference facilities are suitable for everything from small intimate 'think tanks' and brainstorming sessions to larger meetings seating up to 40 delegates. Situated at Brenton on Sea, Brenton on Rocks is a guesthouse that offers unspoiled views and the sound of the ocean. It is suitable for smaller conferences.

The Knysna Hollow Country Estate has set up its conference facility in a lush garden. Equipped with all the usual modern amenities it is a peaceful setting where delegates can get down to business.

Located on the banks of the Knysna Lagoon, The Premier Hotel Knysna – The Moorings is set in the midst of enchanting woodland gardens. Its conference venues can accommodate up to 240 delegates in a variety of settings. The Turbine Hotel is a boutique five-star property offering luxurious accommodation and conferencing in an old transformed power station. It has two state-of-the-art conference/function rooms that can each seat 20 guests in boardroom and 40 in cinema-style and are inter-leading for larger functions.

Top activities:

From gentle trails to energising hikes, nothing is guaranteed to delight more than a walk in the world-renowned Knysna forests. With an array of bird and wildlife this is an experience of a lifetime.

The Knysna Heads are two dramatic sea cliffs that guard the entrance to the lagoon and can be reached by ferry or on board a catamaran. The more adventurous can kayak out.

Mitchell's, South Africa's oldest microbrewery, offers English-style brews that are a great treat. With six beers in its repertoire it's a unique experience for most visitors.

The Bloukrans Bungy at Tsitsikamma is a one-of-a-kind activity along the Garden Route. It is the world's highest commercial bungy bridge. It is also the highest commercial natural bungy jump in the world. Operations are open 365 days a year for those wanting to take the 216-metre plunge.

Venue options:

Probably the most famous is Fancourt Hotel and Spa, a global landmark for business and offering a range of facilities. The Oubai Hotel is only seven minutes from George Airport and offers 1 200 sqm of conference and event space, which includes a ballroom.

The George Lodge International prides itself on being able to cater directly to the needs of out-of-towners. It has a range of breakaway rooms, a boardroom and large conference venue on offer.

While the Protea King George Hotel provides a comprehensive solution to any conference needs, Carmel Guest Farm offers a more intimate setting with its quiet garden areas. Other options include the Step-Aside George conference centre, which offers a tranquil and relaxing farm feeling. Up to 150 delegates can be accommodated.

The Let's Meet conference venue in George has two conference rooms and can tailor make packages to suit organisers' needs. Another option is the Wilderness Hotel, which can accommodate two to 300 guests.

George



Outeniqua Power Van

Top activities:

Outeniqua Power Van is a unique rail experience that allows visitors to see the breathtaking scenery from the comfort of a car. The train takes visitors up into the Outeniqua Mountains.

Take a trip down memory lane at the Outeniqua Transport Museum where a variety of steam locomotives are on display. The museum can also be booked for corporate functions.

Pick strawberries and have some

fun at the popular Redberry Farm, where over 400 tons of strawberries are produced here every year.

From canoeing to canyoneering there are a range of adventure activities available in George. Klooing requires participants to hop from boulder to boulder, swim down narrow canyons and be brave enough to jump off a few cliffs.

There are several organisations that offer horse riding, and public trails take visitors on scenic walks through the indigenous forest.

Plettenberg Bay



Beacon Island Hotel

Venue options:

The White House in the centre of town is a simple and elegant venue that can comfortably accommodate anything from 60 to 180 people. With breath-taking ocean views, the Beacon Island Hotel has superb conference facilities capable of hosting everything

from small intimate meetings to large conference groups and elegant banquets. The Dunes Resort & Hotel on Keurbooms beach has an indoor venue that can cater for up to 150 people.

Another option is the Barnyard Theatre, which has several small and intimate venues.

Top activities:

The town's wine route is fast developing and at least 20 wine-producing vineyards can be found in the region.

Just 8km south of Plettenberg Bay, Robberg Nature Reserve is not only a nature reserve but also a national monument. Rocks from this region date back 120 million years to the break-up of Gondwanaland and evidence of middle and later Stone Age habitation has been found.

It's a powerful experience seeing whales and dolphins up close and tour operators in town offer a variety of options to meet the sea's gentle giants. Note that whale watching is only in winter, while in summer the area is home to the rare Humpback dophin.

The Old Nick Village is a landmark shopping destination with an range of shops owned by a range of creative people. ■

PHOTO: TSOGO SUN

HOW TO DRAW UP the perfect duty-of-care policy

In an increasingly volatile world, it is essential not to underestimate the importance of a well-devised duty-of-care policy. **Dorine Reinstein** spoke to experts to get their tips for drawing up the perfect programme.

IF 2015 has taught us anything, it is that extraordinary events affecting business travel have become commonplace. We seem to have become accustomed to the escalation of terrorism, infectious diseases and natural disasters. However, no matter how accustomed business travellers have become to this, corporate liability and the responsibility to safeguard employees and assets has continued to grow.

"In today's climate of global risks, ensuring the safety of travellers and employees travelling on business or on long-term work assignments is a fundamental requirement of corporate travel management's duty-of-care responsibilities for their employees," says **Mike Gray**, ceo Uniglobe Travel – Sub Saharan Africa.

Monique Swart, founder of ABTA, says companies that are looking to draw up a duty-of-care policy should firstly understand some of the basic principles around duty of care and business continuity. They should then look at travel data, plot the destinations and frequency of travel to all of their relevant global regions, look at risk assessments for these regions, and then put measures in place for ensuring traveller safety and measures for 1) preventing risk and 2) dealing with threats when they occur.

Tracking is essential

Adrenè van der Merwe, programme manager for Carlson Wagonlit Travel, explains that

traveller duty of care rests largely on the organisation's ability to successfully track their employees whilst on the road and, with the technologies available today, it can either be done through an Online Booking Tool (OBT) or via the Travel Management Company (TMC).

Swart agrees and warns that although many companies have great theoretical policies in place, they often do not spend enough time actually testing their theories. "Companies should regularly do spot checks – how many travellers can they accurately track around the world at any given time? Many will tell you they know exactly where their travellers are, but when they actually test this, they find this is not actually the case at all."

Common mistakes

Van der Merwe says the most common mistake made when drawing up a duty-of-care policy

is the failure to successfully identify all associated travel risks. "Companies often focus their attention on a specific threat and completely – though often times unintentionally – ignore another. For instance, a company may have a very strict policy when it

comes to corporates travelling to a perceived high-risk destination but would allow a traveller to use any airline, even one with a questionable track record."

Van der Merwe warns that companies should remember that risk to travellers, and the company, begins when travellers

leave the office and continue on to the airport, hotel, surrounding community and all the points in between.

Kim Parker, head of business development, corporate, Sub-Saharan Africa, at Wings Travel Management, says a common mistake is to allow executive and senior managers to travel on the same flights, or in the same transfer or car. The consequence of this could be the loss of an entire board of directors due to a car accident or air crash.

Handling rogue travellers

Even for companies with established travel risk management processes in place, Van der Merwe says the challenge remains, due to so-called "rogue travellers". "These are travellers that do not follow the recommended or mandated booking channels. They pose a significant risk to both themselves and the company as even the best mitigation strategy is rendered useless if the information of the risk cannot be communicated to travellers timeously."

Swart agrees and says regular travellers particularly tend to be very hardy and fail to give emergencies much thought until it is too late. The solution, she says, lies in education. "Case studies always work nicely. Tell them about the number of incidents where travellers needed emergency assistance, and make the travellers understand that their safety is your number-one concern."

Van der Merwe stresses that employees must be educated as to the importance of adhering to the duty-of-care policy with clear repercussions being stipulated. She adds that the responsibility of duty of care does not lie entirely



Monique Swart, ABTA founder

with the company. "It is their task to create, educate and enforce the risk management initiatives but the travellers themselves must also accept personal responsibility to act prudently and abide by the local laws in each country. Continuous education of the duty-of-care policy should take place."

Consult the TMC

Swart says it is important that travel buyers aim for prevention. The best way to do this is by using specialist companies to help manage the risk and to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy regularly.

Claude Vankeirsbilck, chief sales and marketing officer of Tourvest Travel Services, says a duty-of-care programme is a critical part of the TMC value proposition. "A full scope of service is mapped out according to the clients' specific needs and we then put in place a duty-of-care programme for the client." According to Vankeirsbilck, corporates should engage a TMC with the relevant capabilities to gain insight into the intricacies of duty of care.

Many will tell you they know exactly where their travellers are, but when they actually test this, they find this is not actually the case at all.



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Consequences of an inadequate duty-of-care policy

NOT having an adequate duty-of-care policy in place could have far-reaching consequences for any company. **Monique Swart** says, besides the legal consequences, companies will also be faced with ethical and moral consequences.

She adds that also the reputational risk is great. "Even if a company is on the right side of the law on something, they could face disastrous reputational damage if they drop the ball and don't look after their staff and this gets out into the media."

Zika virus impacts corporate travel

THE fast-spreading Zika virus that causes birth defects in babies is becoming an increasing cause for concern in the corporate travel sector.

The WHO has issued a global emergency status on the Zika virus, while the American Centre for Disease Control called on corporate travellers to consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission was ongoing. "If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first and strictly adhere to the necessary precautions," reads the statement. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office has also issued travel advisories for the worst-

affected areas in South America.

Countries currently on the travel watch list include Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, Venezuela and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

However, despite international concerns, a poll conducted by *Travel Buyer's* sister site, *eTNW* showed that for the most part, South African travellers remain undeterred, with 60% of travel agents stating that their clients are unconcerned. Just 32% said clients are concerned, while 8% were worried enough to cancel bookings.

Six steps to a successful duty-of-care policy

ACCORDING to Van der Merwe, risk management is not a formula, it is a continuous 24/7 process.

She adds that when starting to compile a duty-of-care policy, travel buyers should make sure to include the following steps:

1. Identify relevant threats:

According to iJet (CWT's Travel Risk Management partner whose core competency is risk management solutions) there are 10 threat categories to consider:

- Security
- Transportation
- Health
- Entry/Exit
- Financial
- Languages
- Cultural
- Environmental
- Legal
- Technology

2. Evaluate threats in relation to a traveller's profile:

Establish the relevance that the threat holds to the traveller

3. Set an acceptable level of risk for the organisation and employee:

A company's risk of being negatively impacted by natural disasters, civil unrest or even everyday disruptions is higher than one might think and unfortunately these incidents are inevitable. By taking a proactive approach to travel risk management, companies can protect their employees and business interests. By allocating appropriate risk levels to the various identified risk factors, a company can easily recognise when a certain practice it is no longer in the best interests of the company and its employees.

4. Implement mitigation strategies that reduce threats to an acceptable risk level.

5. Monitor for any changes in threats or a breakdown in the mitigation strategy.

6. Respond to an incident when it occurs.



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What does SA law actually say about duty of care?

EMPLOYER duty-of-care obligations in South Africa are provided for statutorily, which legislative requirements enact the common law position in either specific or general circumstances. To the extent that the relevant statutes do not cater for a particular situation, an employee may be able to rely on the underlying common law position to hold an employer liable for its failure to adequately discharge its duty of care." This is according to a research paper compiled by SOS International in conjunction with Werksmans Attorneys.

The primary piece of legislation that generally regulates and provides for an employer's duty of care in respect of its employees is the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993 (OHSA). The OHSA stipulates that the employer has a duty to provide and maintain a working

environment that is safe and without risk to the health of employees.

The workplace is defined in the OHSA as being "any premises or place where a person performs work in the course of his employment". Business travellers and expatriates who perform work outside South Africa for a South African employer will be entitled to protection afforded to employees in terms of the common law and the OHSA.

The basic concept of duty of care has its grounding in South African common law, more specifically within the civil law concept of delict (or tort), according to **Pine Nel**, senior manager Integrated Solutions CWT. He says in simple terms this means that one is required to, when creating a dangerous situation, take reasonable steps to protect others from damage that may arise from that situation. "A simple example



Pine Nel, senior manager, CWT

would be placing a 'wet paint' sign on a newly painted park bench."

Also the Protection of Personal Information Act extends duty of care to personal information a company may hold and use (this includes

employee records), according to Nel. He says a responsible party must secure the integrity and confidentiality of personal information in its possession or under its control by taking appropriate, reasonable technical and organisational measures to prevent (a) loss of, damage to or unauthorised destruction of personal information; and (b) unlawful access to or processing of personal information.

The Mine Health and Safety Act on the other hand requires employers "to provide conditions for safe operation and a healthy working environment". Says Pine: "It therefore becomes clear that although a simple concept, duty of care is reflected and included in a wide range of general – and industry-specific – legislation and its impact needs to be carefully evaluated against company-specific activities and environment."

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How to draw up a security plan

EMERGENCY response plans (ERP) have a variety of names, including evacuation plan, contingency plan, security plan, medical emergency plan, and emergency action plan.

No matter which name they choose, companies need to ensure that they build an ERP into their overall crisis management plan, according to International SOS. A spokesperson for International SOS told *Travel Buyer*: "ERPs are needed because of regulations, remote or difficult locations, and the focus on safety in the industry."

He explained that an ERP needed to be developed following this sequence:

- A list of hazards (safety and occupational health related; i.e. rabies, machinery collapse or injury);
- Identify the possible major consequences of each hazard;
- Determine the required countermeasures;
- Inventory the fixed resources needed to minimise the disaster;
- Inventory the resources needed to carry out the planned actions;
- Based on these considerations, establish the necessary emergency organisation, resources and procedures and document these;
- A Disaster Recovery and Business Resumption plan should also be developed

that identifies issues in recovering from a disaster and resuming business and the actions needed to recover.

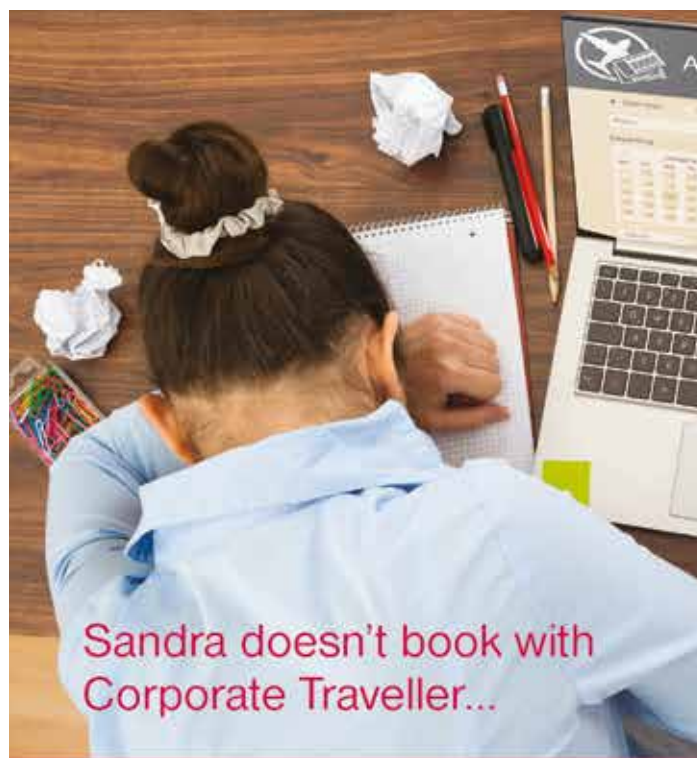
He adds that a Medical Emergency Response Plan (MERP) should also be developed as part of the ERP.

There are three levels to address for a MERP:

1. For the individual – what to do when travelling.
2. For the operation – what to do onsite.
3. For the country – what to do in the case of a crisis and how to manage the medical aspect.

The spokesperson for International SOS cites an organisation in Uruguay with a dozen expatriates living onsite as an example. "One month into the project, an executive fell from his balcony three storeys down. No one knew where to go or who to call because there was no plan in place. In Uruguay, the most reliable ambulances are private, so in an emergency like this, you may be better off going by car unless you have a subscription to the private ambulance service."

He says this example shows how important it is to have a plan in place indicating how to get to a medical facility, where the facility is located, who should be notified, and what financial arrangements may need to be made for the individual to be seen at that facility.



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TB2050SD

SMEs tap into **TECHNOLOGY** to save on travel

While large corporate companies have a designated travel person or department, as well as a sizeable travel budget to match, the same cannot be said of smaller businesses. However, this does not mean that they cannot make the most of the latest technological solutions, especially if they have partnered with the right TMC. **Carina Borralho** investigates further.

TECHNOLOGY plays a pivotal role in assisting SMEs to compete with other national and international organisations. A study commissioned by Microsoft and undertaken by the Boston Consulting Group found that information and communication technology gives smaller businesses a competitive advantage. The study comprised 4 000 SMEs in the US, Germany, China, India and Brazil, and found that entrepreneurs who were early technology adopters increased their annual revenues 15% faster than their competitors. Another important benefit of properly utilising technology is that it helps buyers and SMEs save time, as it alleviates a great deal of admin.

Tourvest Travel Services has realised that the vital SME

market segment can benefit from powerful cost-saving tools that were initially developed for the larger corporate market. This is according to Tourvest Travel Services chief sales officer, **Wayne Muirhead**. "These solutions allow SMEs to access a wide range of low fares and prices across all travel categories (air, car and hotel) for domestic and international travel," he says.

Tourvest's technology solution offers the following:

- Online approval – all bookings need to be approved before tickets are issued. The benefit is that buyers can hold the

availability and price while waiting for the travel authoriser to approve.

- Online quoting systems that enable bookers to compare various flight options.
- 24/7 support and service from trained travel experts and consultants.
- Policy control to limit the choice the SME employees have when booking travel in line with travel budgets.
- Simple reporting to track spend by traveller, cost centre, access to online invoices and statements.

"This solution incorporates ease of set up and implementation, while simultaneously catering for simple business rules and negotiated vendor deals. Our strategic and preferred vendors have provided content and pricing to meet these target

market objectives," says Muirhead.

Meanwhile, he says mobile is where the world is moving, and to ensure clients have access to Tourvest's travel solution wherever they are, it is accessible through the web and smart devices. "Clients

that use the product save in excess of 30% on their travel bill, and we have rolled this product out to over 50 SME clients."

Meanwhile, Muirhead says the SME market has been largely serviced by airlines, car-rental and hotel companies, who offer standard public fares to both the leisure traveller and the SME market.



Wayne Muirhead, Travel Services chief sales officer, Tourvest

"OTAs also provided the SME market with online comparisons of rates across various vendors," he adds. However, the corporate market makes use of traditional travel consultants, TMCs, and technology, as well as the use of sophisticated online travel management companies to assist them manage and control their large travel spends.

The latest technology solutions for SMEs include high-tech online travel management solutions, according to Uniglobe Travel ceo, **Mike Gray**.

These solutions include the following features:

- Online and mobile requisitioning and trip planning.
- Online and mobile requisition approval.
- Online booking systems.
- Online ticketing and itineraries.
- Mobile itineraries that are updated in real-time with trip delays, changes, weather, and extra information like maps, as well as ground travel alternatives like Uber, taxis, rail and bicycles.



Mike Gray, ceo, Uniglobe

- Online travel management reports, which include duty-of-care, passenger, and security reports.

Gray says the best solution for an SME includes all of these features. "Other simple solutions can be implemented, which only incorporate some of these features. These simpler solutions should be used when a travel buyer is only seeking an approval system, or an itinerary solution."

"A basic online booking tool solution proving online booking capabilities and automated approval of travel has proved very successful within our SME market," says Wings Travel Management business development head, corporate sub-Saharan Africa, **Kim Parker**.

Parker says a simple solution allows SMEs – who would normally make an Internet booking directly with airlines, hotels and car suppliers – to consolidate and manage their travel on an easy-to-use technology platform that assists with travel policy management, approval workflow and reporting.

Clients that use the product save in excess of 30% on their travel bill, and we have rolled this product out to over 50 SME clients.

SME technology success stories

Tourvest

Speaking about Tourvest's online travel solution, mPowered, MD **Bruce Rowe** says there is no costly implementation required, and the solution is self-set up and easy to use. "We have welcomed the technology into our business and have saved in excess of 25% on our complete travel bill." Meanwhile, Rowe says mPowered's business rules have been aligned and now there is access to reporting on all travel requirements. "I am able to access multiple vendors on various sectors, including air, car, accommodation, transfers, visas, forex and parking, with negotiated deals and pricing that suit my business needs, which is something

"We have welcomed the technology into our business and have saved in excess of 25% on our complete travel bill."

I could not enjoy previously from vendors' direct websites."

He adds that, in the past, he has used leisure sites to complete bookings but does not receive the benefits and convenience that the Tourvest online travel solution offers. "The Tourvest solution allows

me to receive electronic invoices, and complete domestic, regional, and international booking requirements on one single platform, while I know that there are no missed

savings and my policy rules have been configured for each of my employees," he says.

Rowe needed to have peace of mind with regard to payment for travel requirements that came off his corporate credit card. "I needed the necessary reporting to

tie up the charges on the card to the invoices generated." He adds that he also requires back-up and support for trips where he can deal with a professional consultant available at all times of the day.

Uniglobe

Uniglobe Travel CEO, **Mike Gray**, says one small low-tech company was shown that if they made use of tour packages they would save money, compared with doing air, hotel and car separately. "As they had fairly predictable trips without changes, this was easy to implement and manage, and they have saved significant amounts of money," he notes. Gray highlights that Uniglobe also implemented an online virtual card solution for settling B&Bs, hotels and cars to prevent fraud and manage payment reconciliation more effectively, which would ensure no overcharges by hotels.

Wings Travel Management

Wings Travel Management has implemented the Amadeus-driven online booking tool for an SME corporate client who was using the Internet for domestic travel arrangements and various TMCs for Africa travel bookings. "The tool has streamlined their booking process and allows their travel buyer control over day-to-day travel bookings," says Wings Travel Management Business Development Head, Corporate Sub-Saharan Africa, **Kim Parker**.

The client now books all domestic travel and point-to-point Africa travel on the online booking tool, and this has created many benefits for the client, including improved booking process, quick turnaround times, seamless approval workflow, cost savings and access to reporting.

Five reasons why SMEs should go high tech

A report compiled by global cloud technology company, Fraedom, has put together five tips for SMEs that want to save time and money on travel and expenses.

1. Remove manual processes

Technology allows buyers to quickly search, compare and book all the best options in one place. Spend is also captured in the same system, and travel bookings are automatically uploaded to an expense report so buyers can add receipts from the trip.

2. It's easy

According to the report, there are three key things to consider when choosing a travel and expenses solution:

- **Simplicity** – Most businesses have a similar process so there are standard tools available that have been designed for small businesses.
- **Cost** – SMEs should ask what the implementation and usage fees are versus how much it is going to save.

- **Implementation** – How long does it take to get up and running? If it is a simple solution it could be a matter of days.

3. Capture all spend in one place to improve control

Using technology to capture all of this in one place gives buyers a more accurate view of the total trip cost.

4. Get better travel rates

There are business travel booking tools available that offer businesses the negotiated rates that TMCs get for their big corporate clients.

5. Free up staff to get on with their jobs

According to the report, an average SME books about 580 flights per year, which equates to 2 320 hours of researching trips, which means 331 working days are lost. Giving all staff access to a specific business booking tool means SMEs can be confident they are getting the best rates, while all the information is consolidated, and the process automated. ■



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TB2045SD

SAA launches second gateway into Nigeria

SAA has expanded its presence in West Africa through the launch of flights to Abuja – the airline's second destination in Nigeria. **Darise Foster** attended the launch trip as a guest of SAA.

THE introduction of SAA's flights to Abuja is expected to result in easier, seamless and increased connections into West Africa for both South Africans and Nigerians.

The airline says a second gateway in Nigeria strengthens its position in West Africa, where it plays a significant role in enabling the movement of goods and people between Southern and West Africa.

Lagos has always featured among SAA's top three performing routes in Africa. The airline has been flying directly from Johannesburg to Lagos for 19 years and the route has become the airline's biggest revenue earner.

As such, SAA conducted studies to identify where passengers were connecting to from Lagos and discovered that many travelled on to Abuja – indicating a demand for flights from Johannesburg to Abuja.

"A significant benefit of the new route is that those using Nigeria as their entry point into West Africa will not have to travel through Lagos Airport to connect on to other destinations because it is known to be quite a nightmare," said **Dianna Games**, ceo of African business consultancy, Africa at Work. The international airport in Abuja is safe and processes are less tedious as travellers navigate through immigration, she added.

Abuja is the capital of Nigeria and is home to the Presidency,



SAA internal communications manager, **Sarah Uys**, and group corporate affairs officer, **Marcia Mohoje**, welcomed guests on the launch trip of the airline's newest route.

the national Parliament and all ministries of Government. Nigeria also has the largest economy in Africa and South Africa plays a critical part of that economy in terms of the investment its business people bring into the country. According to Africa analyst, **Adetunji Omotola**, there is a lot of travel between the two nations as a result – making increased connectivity into Nigeria a major benefit.

Osuagwu Chikezie, ceo of local tour operator service CGSK

Tours, said the flights will open up opportunities for those Nigerian residents living in the north of the country.

"Previously, people would have to travel to Lagos just to catch a flight to Johannesburg and the bad traffic in Lagos is well known," he said. "Additionally, this was obviously not ideal for the many government officials who travel to South Africa."

Omotola said, from SAA's point of view, this means the aircraft is always likely to be full of business and government passengers on both legs of the trip.

Enough frequency?

Commenting on the route frequency of three times a week, SAA spokesperson, **Tlali Tlali**, said the days of business travellers spending only one night in a destinations were long gone, especially destinations such as Abuja and Lagos, which are about six hours' flying time from Johannesburg.

The launch of SAA flights to a second destination in Nigeria was described as "historic" and "ground-breaking" because of the tainted history between the two nations. It

is also seen as the first step toward the integration of African countries and their people.

"At least 80% of African air traffic is carried by non-African airlines. Five years ago, that number was 70%. If we do not work together, our travellers will continue to fly non-African airlines," said SAA board member, **John Thambi**, speaking to a crowd of government officials and corporate representatives at the inauguration of SAA's Johannesburg-Abuja service.

"This route is a symbol of us working together to connect Africa and ensure that African air travellers are not flying non-African airlines," Thambi said.

"Direct flights from Johannesburg to Nigeria further signify the commitment by SAA to enhance connectivity in West Africa and into Africa as a whole," agreed Tlali.

Thambi added that SAA's commitment to connect African countries through air travel was in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063 which, among other goals, seeks to create free movement of people through the unification of African airspace as per the Yamoussoukro Decision.

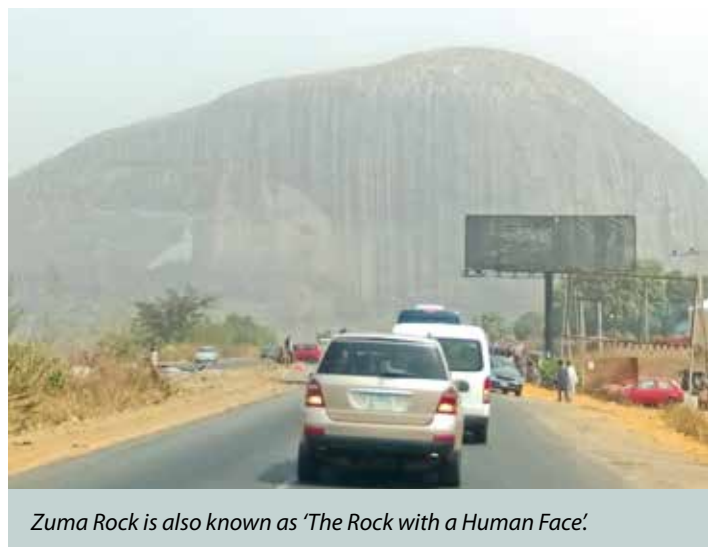
"With seamless air connectivity, we can integrate Africa," Thambi concluded.

The flight schedule

SAA's non-stop flights between Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport and Abuja's Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport will operate three times weekly using an Airbus 330-200 aircraft.

Flight SA088 departs Johannesburg at 23h00 on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays to arrive in Abuja at 04h10 the following day.

Return flight SA089 departs ABV at 08h45 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays to arrive in JNB at 15h40.



Zuma Rock is also known as 'The Rock with a Human Face'.

Plenty to do in leisure time

ABUJA generally attracts South African business people, who, while waiting for the return flight to Johannesburg, can explore the considerable history of the city. Local tour operator, CGSK Tours, hosts four-hour excursions around Abuja that focus on either the city, the environment or the hinterlands.

"Each four-hour excursion costs the equivalent of \$50 (R809), which includes lunch for a minimum of two people," CGSK Tours ceo, **Osuagwu Chikezie**, explained. "To include an experience of the nightlife, the cost could increase to \$65 (R1 052)."

Chikezie said March and April are the hottest times of the year and Abuja welcomes the bulk of its visitors between September and November. "The weather is cool and calm during that latter part of the year and people come to Abuja to finalise deals and are usually in the mood to spend more than usual as well," he says.

An ideal trip for travellers



The Federal Capital Territory Arts and Craft Market.

hoping to fully experience Abuja would need to fall over a Friday so that they can experience Abuja's nightlife and entertainment offering, Chikezie said. "The traveller could arrive on the Wednesday morning then rest before doing a city tour that afternoon."

"On Thursday, they could visit

the hinterlands and learn about the historic Zuma Rock – the entry point into Abuja and a symbol worshipped by some locals – or visit the Nike Centre for Arts and Crafts to find out how the locals design and hand-make the famous Nigerian attire," said Chikezie.

The city starts shutting down on Fridays around midday when many

Muslim locals go to their various mosques, says Chikezie. "This is the time for travellers to visit the malls and the markets when they are quieter and not as crowded as usual," he says. "That evening, we will either go to a local lounge or to a nightclub before the travellers fly back to Johannesburg on the Saturday morning."

Advice for your travellers

SAA compiled the following fact file for passengers to Abuja:

- The best time to travel is during the dry season months of November to February.
- While Abuja is a slow and friendly town, it is advisable that travellers do not wander the city alone – it is always safer to be in the company of a Nigerian who knows his way around.
- It is dangerous for travellers to drag a travel case about any town in Nigeria, especially if the traveller is Caucasian or does not 'look Nigerian'.
- Travellers should keep their boarding passes on hand. As they exit the airport officials will check if they are leaving with the correct luggage.
- South African rands are not accepted when exchanging currency. It is advised that passengers exchange their rands for US dollars while at OR Tambo International Airport, then exchange their US dollars for Nigerian naira at Abuja's



Guests are welcomed by a traditional dance at the Nike Center for Art and Craft Market.

Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport.

- Food in Abuja is generally spicy and will take some getting used to.
- Travellers should only drink bottled water unless they have stayed in Nigeria long enough to have acquired some immunity to locally endemic pathogens.
- Haggle for the best prices at most craft shops. Conversation

is usually conducted at higher decibels than travellers may be used to – consequently travellers should simply shout back, always with a smile.

- Finally, most Nigerians will go out of their way to assist a foreigner – a courtesy they do not necessarily extend to fellow Nigerians. Enjoy the cheerful glances in Abuja, the frequent offers of assistance and ready smiles from the locals.

4 TOP TIPS

CGSK Tours' **Osuagwu Chikezie** provides his top four tips for travellers visiting Abuja:

1. Travellers should take all necessary safety precautions. Do not flaunt phones, cameras or other electronic devices.
2. They should also take antacids before departing South Africa, or bring them along, to help with the spicy Nigerian food.
3. Malarial preventative tablets should be taken before departing South Africa.
4. Travellers should dress casually but females should be careful not to show too much skin as this can offend the Muslim locals.

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. To get connected, e-mail lindav@nowmedia.co.za.

1. Thailand

Checkout Tours. Phuket long-stay specials from R11 195pp sharing. Rate includes return flights from Johannesburg (including taxes), return airport transfers, 12 nights' accommodation at the ibis Phuket Patong Resort with breakfast daily. 14-day option available. Valid from May 1 to October 31.

2. Zambezi

Ventures into Africa. A'Zambezi River Lodge special from R5 729pp sharing. Offer includes return airport transfers, three nights' accommodation with breakfast daily, sunset and sunrise cruises, and a guided tour of the Falls, including park fees. Accommodation at Victoria Falls Rainbow Hotel available from R5 211pp sharing. Valid for SADC residents only. Offer excludes flights. Valid for travel until March 31.

3. Spain

Holland America Line. Visit Spain on board *MS Eurodam* from R14 000pp sharing. Offer includes seven nights' accommodation in an inside cabin and includes all meals, on-board entertainment and port charges. Barcelona-Sardinia-Sicily-Rome-Florence-Monaco-Barcelona. Set departure April 10.

4. Namibia

Dreams. Pay for two nights, stay for three, from R3 925pp sharing. Rate includes economy flights from Johannesburg to Windhoek, three nights' accommodation at the Avani



Windhoek in a double room, one dinner from the in-room menu, WiFi, full-body massage, gym voucher, glass of wine/beer, two-hour city and township tour, Dreams travel bag and four days' travel insurance. Offer excludes approximate airline levies of R2 600pp. Special valid for SA residents only. Valid for travel until March 31.

5. Cape Town

The Westin. Two Oceans Race special from R2 600 per double occupancy per night. Offer includes return transfers from the Two Oceans Marathon starting and finishing points, accommodation in a deluxe room, drink on arrival, scheduled wake-up call service, superfoods breakfast, access to sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi in the Heavenly Spa. Pre-race carbo-loaded menu options will be available.

6. Mauritius

World Leisure Holidays. Long-weekend rates from R11 050pp sharing. Rate includes return Air Mauritius flights from Johannesburg to Mauritius, return transfers, eight nights' accommodation at Veranda Grand Baie with breakfast daily, all land and non-motorised water sports, daily entertainment. Package excludes approximate taxes, levies and surcharges of R4 500pp. Set departure April 23.

7. KwaZulu Natal

Kulula holidays. Two-night stay from R2 341pp sharing. Offer includes return economy-class flights from Johannesburg to Durban

8. Monaco

Edusport Travel. F1 Grand Prix offer from R12 510pp sharing. Offer includes three nights' accommodation with breakfast daily, official two-day Le Rocher/general admission tickets. Offer excludes flights, taxes and transfers. Validity May 27-30.

including taxes, two days' car rental (group T) on standard cover, including 200km free per day, two nights at the Protea Hotel Umhlanga in a standard room. Valid April 1 to September 30.

9. United Kingdom

Team Sports. Barclays Premier League, Arsenal versus Aston Villa from R8 115pp sharing. Offer includes two nights' accommodation, hospitality package, club level seats, full bar and a stadium tour. Chelsea packages available. Rate excludes flights. Match date May 15.

10. Zanzibar

Rove Africa. Spice Island special from R11 740pp sharing. Offer includes return flights from Johannesburg to Zanzibar on Mango (including taxes), return transfers, seven nights' accommodation at Ngalawa Beach Village with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily and free excursions worth R2 500pp. Rates also available from Durban, Cape Town, East London and Port Elizabeth. Valid for travel until April 30.

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

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