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THE BIG IDEA

Travel and The Law of Attraction

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THE BIG IDEA:

Travel and The Law of Attraction

What's in store for the future of business travel? How can the industry remain relevant and convey its value and purpose to those inside and outside of the industry?

300 representatives from all sides of business travel gathered in Brussels during GBTA Europe 2022 for The Big Idea session sponsored by BCD Travel. The travel management company developed the theme for the session "Travel and The Law of Attraction" to discuss pain points and solutions that appeal to talent both in and outside of the industry. Conversations centered around four core pillars: industry image; diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI); traveler well-being and technology. The Big Idea attendees split into groups and summarised their discussions into a series of tangible actions for each of the four pillars with an accompanying slogan.

Travel4Good: invest / thrive / connect / prosper

Boosting the image of business travel starts with identifying the underlying reputational issues about the industry. A sense of 'risk' attached to a sector that was so directly impacted by the pandemic may discourage new entrants to the travel industry. There is a clear need to better frame business travel's value proposition as 'travel for good,' accentuating not only the benefits the sector brings to the economy and society but also the flexibility, inclusivity and long-term career path potential within the industry.

What can you do?

- Highlight the reasons for travel: What stories do you have to tell about the value of travel and meeting in person? Those personal stories can form the basis for broader narratives deployed elsewhere (see below).
- Participate in outreach efforts: Job fairs, university and secondary school career days and internships are great environments to promote our industry. Take time to cultivate the next generation of talent by promoting travel as a business and personal growth enabler.
- Promote diversity of career opportunities: As our industry has grown, specialized jobs have skyrocketed.

Draw attention to the dizzying array of new roles, with travel agents and flight attendants being joined by cocktail curators for luxury hotels, travel buyers for well-known consumer brands, customer experience directors, and chief health officers.

- Leverage influencers: Consider partnering with well-known or emerging influencers to promote the industry, individual companies and/or specific job postings. Recognize that you may have 'influential' talent within your own organization and create opportunities for them to build their personal brand while promoting yours.
- Bring the fun back to travel: With 'fam trips' an increasingly endangered species, there are infinite opportunities to partner with industry players to expand travel-related benefits for those in the field.

A shared journey, individual paths

A new generation of industry talent and business travelers should reflect all facets of diversity, including race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mobility and socioeconomic group.

The sense of community that unites business travel and the role of every single player as an actor of change is a core part of what can help build a diverse, equitable and inclusive future for business travel.

What can you do?

- Fish from different ponds: Review your current recruitment and talent development channels. Consider targeting underserved, under-resourced or non-traditional talent populations through apprenticeships, government partnerships, school relationships or trainee programs.
- Reduce barriers to entry and success: Ensure that workplace technologies and processes can accommodate those new to the industry as well as seasoned experts.
- Promote cultural awareness: Give employees opportunities to experience and appreciate the diversity in your organization (for example, through 'cultural café' discussion forums or promoting

celebrations and rituals across different cultures). Help travelers familiarize themselves with social norms in foreign countries (for example, through destination guides).

- Ensure that traveler diversity mirrors overall workforce diversity: Review your traveling population and consider opportunities for those in underrepresented groups to travel.
- Provide duty of care for a diverse workforce: Companies must look after the safety and well-being of all travelers, but certain diversity dimensions such as traveler race and ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, and accessibility for travelers with disabilities may require special consideration. Educate travelers about risks, precautions and resources, and make it easy for them to communicate concerns or incidents.

Happy traveler, healthy company!

Making sure that business travelers and their well-being are 'front and center' is critical to spur employee engagement, encourage travel, and appeal to job seekers. As work-life balance shifts firmly from 'nice to have' to 'must have,' promoting both the professional and personal benefits of business travel is critical. New generations such as Gen Z and Gen Alpha don't want to choose between professional advancement, personal growth and social responsibility. Participants called for re-establishing the excitement of business travel post-pandemic by highlighting the benefits of 'working from anywhere' and the thrill of reconnecting with the larger world.

What can you do?

- Know your traveling population: Create opportunities to solicit input from travelers on their needs and concerns. Surveys, spot polls and focus groups are all great channels to learn more about what drives traveler priorities and decisions.
- Get to grips with blended travel: Whether it's adding a few fun days to a work trip or embracing the life of a digital nomad, bleisure is big. Engage the right stakeholders within your company to update – or create from scratch – a policy that balances what employees want with what your organization can support.
- Offer incentives that matter: Leverage your own service offering, work process or company culture to create advantages that resonate with your workforce and targeted talent. For example: follow-the-sun worktime flexibility, hotel spa massages for housekeeping staff, etc.

- Highlight the perks: Both new and seasoned employees want to know about travel-related benefits available to them. Strongly promote those benefits right from the start. Consider allowing business travelers to use loyalty points and membership benefits for personal/leisure travel.
- Focus on safety: As you give employees wings to fly make sure they have a safe place to land. Make sure your duty of care encompasses pre-, during- and post-travel, with easy access to support whenever needed.

User first - elevate the experience

Last but not least, technology is a key lever to appeal to new and existing talent. Digitization is a real opportunity to build personalized career paths for travel managers, travel services and solution providers alike. Part of building the 'tech appeal' of the industry will be to accelerate the shift in mindset and get players to embrace technological solutions faster to realize the potential offered by digitization.

What can you do?

- Design a digital workplace: Just like brick-and-mortar offices, digital workplaces should feel comfortable, foster connection and enable productivity. Consider an audit of the digital platforms your workforce use: Do they make it easy to get information and perform tasks? Do they offer ways for people to connect with colleagues? Identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- Think like a digital marketer: To meet travel program goals, you need to influence travelers with the right message in an engaging way at the right time in their journey. Use all of the digital touchpoints at your disposal, including booking tools, intranet and mobile app.
- Change (or add to) the channel: Traditional channels like trade media and LinkedIn will remain key for broadcasting travel-positive messages. But building a creative, authentic presence on Instagram and TikTok will help reach new generations.
- Make mobile a must: From shopping to expense submission, every key moment on the traveler's journey should be accessible and actionable on their mobile device – including those moments when things go wrong.
- Support sustainability: Both travelers and service providers need easy access to information to power sustainable decisions. Does your booking tool include hotel eco-certification data, flight carbon emissions? Does your mobile app offer healthy restaurant recommendations? They should!



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