

# QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN BUSINESS TRAVEL 2.0

An illustration of five paper airplanes. One is blue and positioned to the left of the title, with a dotted line trailing from its tail. The other four are white and arranged in a vertical line to the right of the title, each with a dotted line trailing from its tail.

An ACTE corporate travel study  
in collaboration with BCD Travel  
**NOVEMBER 2019**

# BCD FOREWORD

Business travel is no longer a linear experience. Organisations want their travel programmes to be cost effective without compromising on employee well-being. And travellers seek a seamless consumer experience. For travel buyers and suppliers, this translates into delivering a high-quality travel programme. Yet, as an industry we have little consensus on how to measure quality. What constitutes a high-quality travel programme? What distinguishes it from those offered by competitors, and how can we track its progress over time?

In last year's study, it was found that an overwhelming 80% of travel managers surveyed want standardized quality metrics in place. And in that study, we sought to provide the industry with an entry point into establishing industry standards. In 2019, this effort was taken much further. At focus group sessions held at ACTE and BCD Travel events, members of the travel industry were asked for their insight, with an intent to understand the challenges they face in order to provide targeted recommendations.

Metrics such as trip success, traveller friction, and traveller engagement can be nebulous, making it tricky to measure. In this paper we identify the key components of each of these metrics. Correspondingly, we provide some guidance on how you can measure these metrics more effectively.

BCD Travel is proud to have collaborated with ACTE on this report. At every focus group session, we were met with overwhelming support and enthusiasm from our industry colleagues. We hope you find this study useful and thought-provoking. And we look forward to hearing from you.



**Miriam Moscovici**

Senior Director, Research & Innovation  
BCD Travel

# ACTE INTRODUCTION

Emerging technologies and digitalisation are constantly transforming managed business travel. As traveller needs increase in complexity, businesses are expected to adapt in response to these needs. Therefore, corporate travel programmes now have a greater need to focus on value of the traveller experience, in addition to cost containment.

In our 2018 study “Quality Management in Business Travel”, conducted in collaboration with BCD Travel, we found that this shift in focus needs to be reflected in how we measure the quality of travel programmes. As an industry, we need to re-evaluate our overreliance on data from booking statistics, spend /savings, and policy compliance when it comes to measuring quality. Our study found that metrics such as trip success, traveller friction, and traveller engagement are consistently overlooked despite their importance to travel managers.

In 2019, we set out to better understand why this gap exists. What is preventing organisations from gaining a fuller picture of the quality of a travel programme? How can we close these gaps in measurement? In our effort to answer this, we conducted focus group discussions with 221 members of the corporate travel industry at global events hosted by ACTE and BCD in the United States, Canada, and Brazil. In this report, we will discuss:

## **Understanding overall programme quality**

We revisit current metrics and data sources being used by organisations and define the challenges posed by the lack of industry standards.

## **Barriers to quality measurement**

We review the main obstacles that are preventing organisations from gaining a more complete picture of the quality of their travel programme.

## **The pathway to success**

We share suggestions on how you can overcome some of the current challenges – through use of a more well-rounded set of metrics, enhancing data collection methods, and engaging key stakeholders.



**Leigh Bochicchio**

Executive Director  
ACTE Global

# UNDERSTANDING OVERALL PROGRAMME QUALITY

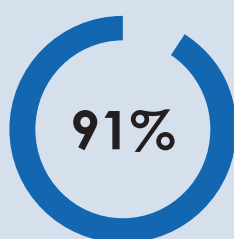
## HOW ARE TRAVEL MANAGERS CURRENTLY TRACKING PROGRAMME QUALITY?

### Commonly measured

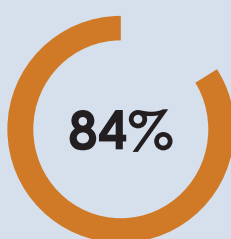
The 2018 quality management study revealed that as an industry, it was common to use incomplete or even outdated metrics to measure quality. Unsurprisingly, this trend has continued into this year's results with spend and savings (91%) continuing to be the most popular form of measurement among respondents.

These metrics are more commonly measured since data on metrics such as booking statistics and spend/savings is readily obtainable. These metrics have widely shared industry benchmarks that are well-understood and familiar to different stakeholders, and therefore they have a ready audience.

**Chart 1:**  
**The most popular metrics for quality measurement**



Spend/Savings  
Compliance



Booking  
Statistics



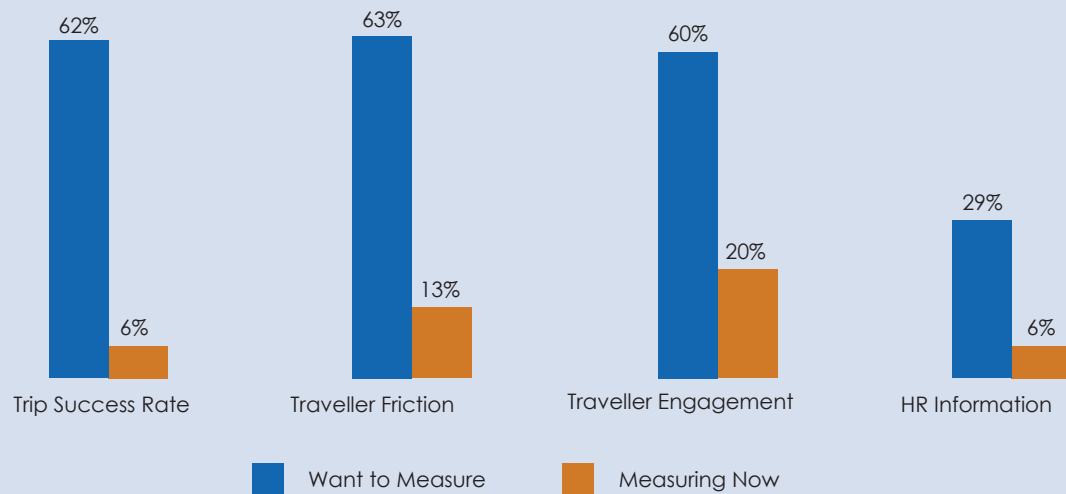
Policy  
Compliance

## HOW ARE TRAVEL MANAGERS CURRENTLY TRACKING PROGRAMME QUALITY?

### Consistently overlooked

We asked travel managers what they would ideally want to measure and compared it to what they are currently measuring. We found that metrics such as trip success, traveller engagement, and traveller friction are crucially underutilised. For example, while nearly two-thirds of those surveyed would ideally be measuring trip success rate, only 6% of travel managers are currently measuring it. This is a clear indication that despite recognising their importance, there are specific barriers that might be preventing travel managers from evaluating these metrics.

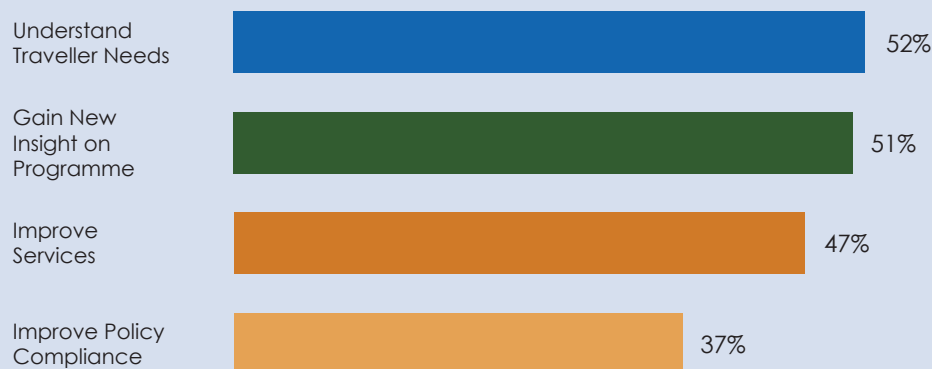
**Chart 2:**  
**The consistently overlooked metrics**



## MOVING TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE QUALITY

The three commonly used metrics outlined in the previous section provide valuable, user-friendly information. In addition to these traditional metrics, however, travel managers highlighted the various benefits of using metrics such as trip success, travel friction, and traveller engagement in order to gain a more complete picture of programme quality. For example, 52% said that using metrics such as trip success and traveller friction can help the organisation understand traveller needs better. Understanding traveller needs can help organisations devise different means and better solutions to address gaps. Other key benefits include gaining new insight into the travel programme, as well as improving services and compliance. This will likely identify additional opportunity to add value.

**Chart 3:**  
**Benefits of measuring overall programme quality**



In moving towards an industry standard, the metrics used need to be scrutinised to ensure the focus isn't solely on savings and transaction volume, but also to assess factors such as traveller experiences and trip success. Since we can't manage what we don't measure, identifying that which prevents us from moving forward is crucial.

### Quotes from focus group participants

*"I definitely should be measuring these components. It doesn't hurt to know what people are saying in their exit interviews and also in terms of friction what people want to leave the company for"*

*"HR exit interview data or engagement survey revisions where mention of travel program is made. Also, benchmarking of policies of similar companies to make sure we're competitive and attractive (and/or turned down offers)."*

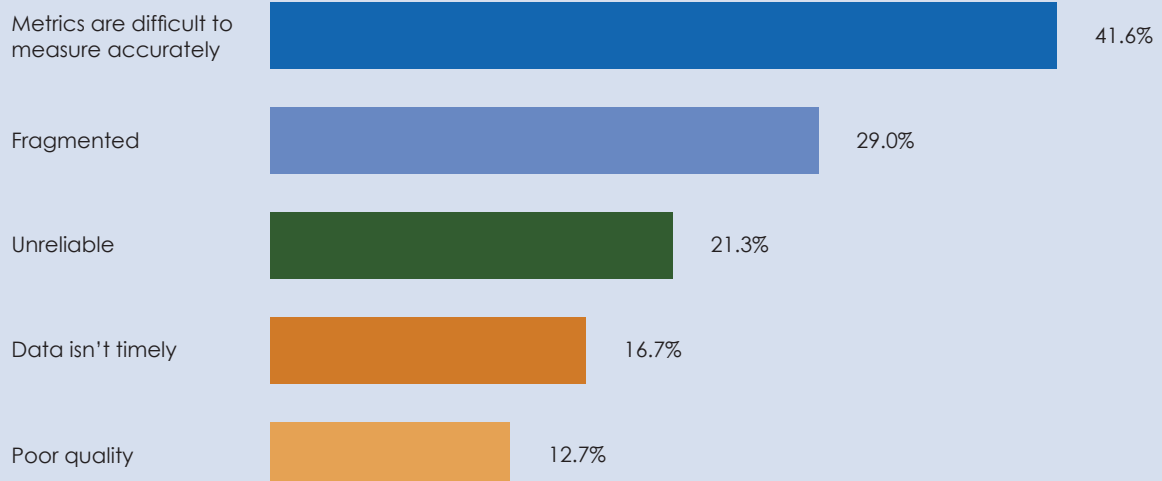
# OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO COMPREHENSIVE QUALITY MEASUREMENT

Travel managers recognise the importance of measuring the travel experience and highlight the need for standardised metrics. So, why are we not there yet? We asked our respondents to identify the key barriers that are holding us back as an industry. Based on their responses, we identified three key challenges.

## CHALLENGE 1. AVAILABLE DATA

One of the main obstacles on the path to better quality measurement is the challenge in data available. Most notably, 41.6% of respondents found that many of these metrics are difficult to measure accurately. Also commonly reported is the issue of available data being fragmented, unreliable, or poor quality.

**Chart 4:**  
**Available data**



## Creating an industry standard

One of the main challenges associated with measuring these additional metrics is the lack of an industry standard. Currently, there are no consistently used metrics to help travel managers better understand the traveller journey, identify areas of improvement, and demonstrate value of the programme.

The lack of industry standards poses very specific challenges:

- There is very little consensus around how to **define** metrics such as friction, engagement, or trip success. Without agreed upon definitions, it is hard to know what to measure and how to measure it.
- Consequently, for many of these categories there are no **baselines**. Having a baseline enables organisations to measure their progress over time. For example, knowing your organisation's baseline numbers for traveller friction might enable you to assess how particular changes in travel policy affect the traveller.
- **Benchmarks** provide organisations with a reference point to benchmark against and to understand how they compare. This will enable an organisation to make an informed decision on how competitive or attractive their travel policies are compared to similar organisations.

## Quotes from focus group participants

*"Quality of some of the data is suspect - Does the data accurately reflect the missed opportunities based on our booking parameters?"*

*"[current data shows] one picture - it's one-dimensional but my program is three-dimensional. I need to know if our program is actually helping us grow business"*

*"There are no formal mechanisms to collect traveller sentiment"*



## The path to success

How can we overcome the data challenge?

As an industry, defining what some of these metrics are as well as identifying how we can be measuring them is crucial. In our data-driven world, measurement is always evolving. Staying ahead of new data sources such as Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and “digital engagement per trip” is important.

In the meantime, here are some concrete steps travel managers can take right now:



## CHALLENGE 2. PEOPLE VS. DATA

Respondents expressed apprehension around relying on traveller data. There is a general opinion expressed, using surveys or traveller feedback makes the data subjective, effecting its reliability and accuracy.

As a result, respondents find it difficult to make decisions from traveller experience-based surveys, where often travellers only respond when they want to report either a negative or a great experience.

**Chart 5:**  
**The challenges associated with traveller feedback**



### Quotes from focus group participants

*"Self-reporting of success is very subjective"*

*"[Traveller feedback] is subjective - and answers depend on the mood and recent experiences of the traveler"*

*"Our policy is generous so often some "friction" is just whining"*

## The path to success

There are various ways to collect better data through traveller surveys:

Do not underestimate the power of good surveys. A well-designed survey can control for biases due to a traveller's mood and/or circumstances. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- ✓ Ensure that your surveys are worded neutrally, without asking leading questions.
- ✓ You may want to randomize question order or response options wherever appropriate.
- ✓ Keep surveys short. If you can get demographic data about the traveller easily from other sources, consider not having any.
- ✓ Time your surveys well in order to avoid causing survey fatigue and low response rate. Find the optimal time to survey travellers and be mindful of the demands made on their time. Surveying travellers when the trip is still on the top of their mind is important.
- ✓ Consider embedding critical questions into other employee surveys that your organisation may already be conducting.
- ✓ Include questions that help assess whether the processes in place worked for the traveller. Simply asking about satisfaction or feelings may lead to misleading data
- ✓ Consider pilot testing your survey. Evaluate your traveller surveys periodically to ensure they are still relevant.
- ✓ Consider adding questions that can help you calculate a Net Promoter Score for key dimensions of the traveller experience, or about preferred suppliers etc.
- ✓ Consider getting outside help to assess your data collection tools. Or ask your TMC how they can help you design the perfect survey for your travellers.

Finally, remember that surveys are not the only data collection method. Consider interviews, focus groups, process recordings, or journaling. Leverage enterprise social media platforms such as Chatter, Yammer etc. And share your findings with your travellers so they know they are 'heard'.

## CHALLENGE 3. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Corporate travel managers increasingly find it challenging to identify how to measure all metrics in a comparative way that is easy for stakeholders to engage with. In fact, organisational buy-in is an ongoing challenge for travel managers, with 26.7% of respondents finding it difficult to get traveller buy in and 24% finding it difficult to get senior leadership buy-in.

### The path to success

Understanding who your stakeholders are is vital to identifying the best quality metrics for your company. As an industry enabling measurement is only valuable if it can be relatable – so what are the ways to engage stakeholders to help meet the larger goal of continuing to build on excellence within the corporate travel industry?

**Evaluate** when you need stakeholder buy-in. How far along the journey do you need to engage your stakeholders?

Here is some additional controversial advice: “Do you really need buy in from organisational stakeholders to get started?” Or, can this be an opportunity to lead and pursue results.

What small and simple steps can you take now to show some quick results?

**Demonstrate** the value of your travel programme using the data you have. This will be a necessary step towards getting buy-in. Demonstrating the value of measuring key indicators such as trip success and the effects of travel friction might, for example, get organisational leaders excited.

**Educate** your travellers. Communicate what you find to demonstrate that you are listening. It is important to showcase for travellers that the feedback they share is directly shaping their travel programme.

# DEFINING TERMS TO EFFECTIVELY MEASURE TRAVEL PROGRAMMES

As we highlighted in the previous section, defining some of these key metrics is a crucial first step in assessing them better. To do this, we solicited feedback from our respondents. We asked travel professionals to define each term based on how they understood or measured it. Based on these definitions, in the table below, we summarise the general thoughts of corporate travel industry professionals.

For each of these definitions, there are recommendations on how travel managers can start to measure each right now. Capturing data on some or all these indicators will be an excellent starting point to establish a baseline for your own travel programme.

COMPONENTS FOR MEASUREMENT	HOW CAN YOU MEASURE IT?
<b>Traveller Engagement</b> <b>Knowledge:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An engaged traveller is aware of and understands the company's travel policy and knows how to use the company travel tools effectively</li> <li>2. An engaged traveller understands the value of "good traveller behaviour"</li> </ol> <b>Behaviour:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. An engaged traveller is compliant with the company's policy and uses the organization's travel tools</li> </ol> <b>Involvement:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. An engaged traveller is responsive and provides constructive feedback that help enhance service and close gaps</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of automated outbound notifications</li> <li>• Number of digital engagements per transactions</li> <li>• Number of mobile engagements per trip</li> <li>• Number of phone/chat/text/email sessions</li> <li>• Information or behavioural messaging (such as pop-up messages) in the booking path</li> <li>• Social enterprise messaging (Chatter, Yammer etc.) - user engagement in travel collaboration space</li> </ul>
<b>Traveller Friction</b> <b>Travel disruption:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traveller friction may be caused by disruptions or delays before, during and after trips.</li> </ol> <b>Effect on the traveller:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Traveller friction may lead to negative experiences among travellers including wear and tear on the traveller, impact on work life balance, or long stays away from home.</li> </ol> <b>Effect on the organisation:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Increased traveller friction results in poor compliance of travel policy, poor adoption, and leakage, with travellers searching outside of the channel. It can also cause diminished performance, reluctance to travel and stress on the professional and personal life of the traveller. All of this ultimately has impact on the productivity of the organisation.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nights away from home</li> <li>• Overnight flights in coach</li> <li>• Nights in a 2-star hotel or lower</li> <li>• Frequency of trips</li> <li>• Lengths of trips</li> <li>• Long haul vs. short haul</li> <li>• Back to back trips</li> <li>• Trip disruptions (delays, cancellations)</li> <li>• Total travel time</li> <li>• Number of transportation modes/connections</li> <li>• Time spent on the expense process by travellers</li> <li>• Access to digital support in real-time</li> <li>• Country-specific requirements to be met (immigration, immunization etc.)</li> </ul>

## COMPONENTS FOR MEASUREMENT

## HOW CAN YOU MEASURE IT?

### Traveller Satisfaction

#### Happiness and well-being:

1. Satisfaction with the overall travel experience from beginning to end. This includes travel planning, booking, actual travel, and the expensing a reimbursement process.
2. Satisfaction from minimum disruptions and delays in the travel process and travelling is seamless.

#### Happy to comply:

3. A satisfied traveller adheres to the company travel policy.
4. A traveller is satisfied when they like the company's preferred vendors and find the travel and booking tools easy to use.

#### Happy to engage:

5. A satisfied traveller advocates the travel process, services, products, or supplier to others if they are satisfied.
6. A satisfied traveller feels safe and comfortable and is willing to travel again. Travel satisfaction helps the company retain employees.

- Satisfaction surveys
- Transactional and relational NPS (Net Promoter Score)
- Issue resolution (issue submissions, error rates, resolution rate, resolution success, support case resolution)
- Road show and stakeholder meeting feedback
- Travel programme satisfaction sourced from other employee satisfaction surveys

### Trip Success Rate

#### Meeting business objective:

1. The Traveller meets or exceeds the business objectives associated with the trip.

#### Contributing to ROI:

2. The return on investment is positive. The savings or revenue generated due to the trip are greater than the cost of the trip, and therefore, the trip is "worth the money."

- Assess trip success as well as trip failure rates through brief survey questions
- Ask questions on contribution of travel experience on success/failure
- What other factors can you measure that contribute to success/failure? (e.g impact of traveller productivity, technology etc.)
- Review correlations with travel friction, attrition risk, attrition rate, and burnout

# SUMMARY AND ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

The previous sections highlighted some pathways to use to overcome the barriers that travel managers currently face when it comes to quality measurement. We also shared our recommendations on data you could be collecting to measure some of these metrics better. How does this all tie together? What are some of the steps you can follow to start measuring your travel programme quality now?

## Checklist/Action Items

1.

### ***Conduct an internal audit of what you have***

- Understand what data you have available to you
- Ascertain what data is being collected by other internal stakeholders that might be of interest to you and agree how best to work together
- Determine what data collection tools you have access to, for example, internal enterprise capabilities, social media vehicles such as Chatter, Yammer etc.
- Evaluate what professional assistance you may need to conduct this audit

2.

### ***Meet with suppliers, TMCs, and internal stakeholders to see what data they might provide you.***

- Ensure TMCs and suppliers are aware of your goals and objectives
- Establish ways of working to ensure streamlined buy-in

3.

### ***Assess what is additional data that you might need and set up a plan on how to get that information, for example consider:***

- Embedded surveys
- Targeted surveying
- Other alternate data collection tools (Focus groups, process reports, journals, interviews)
- Automated/electronic notifications or brief surveys along the travellers journey
- AI/Chatbot

4.

### ***Use this data to demonstrate your value, where possible:***

- Use this information to establish a baseline for your travel programme
- Share relevant data you collect with other departments
- Share your findings back with travellers. This might be an excellent way of "member checking" – demonstrating that travellers are being heard and their stories are being accurately told
- Track your programme quality over time. A lot of this data might be fairly accessible to you. Capitalizing on this available information can help you demonstrate your value to organizational stakeholders.

## About the study

In 2019, ACTE and BCD collected data for this study from 221 members of the corporate travel industry at ACTE, BCD, and ACTE partner events in United States, Brazil, and Canada. During education sessions at these events, the attendees worked in small focus groups to answer several closed- and open-ended questions. Insight sheets were used to collect their responses. The data for this study was collected between April – September, 2019. The research aimed to better understand specific travel program quality components and their measurement via qualitative and quantitative data collection. The open-ended responses on definitions of the four metrics were analysed by ACTE using thematic analysis, after the responses were qualitatively coded. Aggregate responses to the closed-ended questions are displayed using graphs and charts in the whitepaper.

## About the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE)

The Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) has a 30-year reputation for leading the way corporate travel is conducted. As a global association comprised of executive-level members in more than 100 countries, ACTE pioneers educational and technological advances that make business travel productive, cost-effective and straightforward. ACTE advocacy and initiatives continue to support impactful changes in safety and security, privacy, duty of care and compliance along with traveller productivity that supports global commerce.

Learn more at [www.acte.org](http://www.acte.org).

## About BCD Travel

BCD Travel helps companies make the most of what they spend on travel. We give travelers innovative tools that keep them safe and productive, and help them make good choices on the road. We partner with travel and procurement leaders to simplify the complexities of business travel, drive savings and satisfaction, and move whole companies toward their goals. In short, we help our clients travel smart and achieve more. We make this happen in 109 countries with almost 13,800 creative, committed and experienced people. And it's how we maintain the industry's most consistent client retention rate, with 2018 sales of US\$27.1 billion.

For more information, visit [www.bcdtravel.com](http://www.bcdtravel.com).

## For more information

To learn more about other ACTE research studies:

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