

4 ways companies can benefit from business travel

Company culture has become a top priority for leaders across all industries. That's according to Quantum Workplace whose research shows that 66% of executives believe culture is more important than an organisation's business strategy or operation model.



Source: Supplied

It can be difficult to maintain a healthy company culture in a workplace that's increasingly remote or hybrid. With people spending less time in the office, opportunities to build connections – such as attending face-to-face meetings – have become increasingly crucial to strengthening corporate culture. This is why business travel has never been more important. In a way, travel managers are becoming the new custodians of the corporate culture.

New, hybrid work environment

People are still travelling to close deals, maintain business relationships and attend conferences. But interestingly, other drivers of business travel have picked up in recent months as companies try to regain some of the camaraderies they have lost since the pandemic began.

"We are seeing companies adapt to the challenges posed by hybrid work models and a disconnected workforce, with business travel creating opportunities for that connection and complementing the benefits employees experience thanks to remote work," says Oz Desai, GM Corporate Traveller.

"The lines between work and leisure are disappearing as the breeding ground for culture shifts away from the office to regular, coordinated travel. Companies should look at business travel as a new way to build a culture within the organisation. Gone are the days of daily face-to-face contact between colleagues; instead, weekly, monthly or quarterly get-togethers will be how employees bond, collaborate and innovate."

Four ways business travel can protect your corporate culture

Travel programmes are increasingly becoming a primary means of bringing remote teams together. There are a variety of ways that travel can be used to reinforce reconnection and culture, highlighting the necessity to relook business travel policies.

1. Business retreats to meet and make tangible connections

"Companies are beginning to think strategically about how business travel can create a corporate culture that combines business goals and training needs and positively impacts employee well-being. Salesforce is an excellent example of how they are looking for solutions driven by business travel," says Desai.

Salesforce has developed a solution to orient new employees as part of their onboarding process. As reported by the Wall Street Journal, the software giant has rented a resort near San Francisco for its new and current employees. The "Trailblazer Ranch" will provide employees with much-needed rest and relaxation, and training opportunities. They will also use the ranch for off-site team meetings.

2. Well-being is at the heart of corporate culture

Well-being programs are important to healthy workplace culture. When companies neglect employee well-being, it can lead to a burnout culture and high turnover, with the costs associated with those. In contrast, companies that embrace holistic well-being have more inspired, creative, strategic and productive employees that positively impact the bottom line.

More and more companies acknowledge this and are prioritising traveller well-being over cost in travel programmes. They are also exploring how they can incorporate initiatives like shutting down for wellness weeks, offering employees extra holiday days and partnering with wellness travel providers as a core value of the company culture. These new measures are a response to the growing trend of employees feeling overwhelmed and stressed due to their hectic work schedules.

"The difference between wellness efforts being viewed and treated as perks and their implementation as serious business strategies is a step in the right direction for companies," Desai says.

3. Travel can spur personal development

Employees need more than financial compensation and a promotion to be emotionally and psychologically satisfied with their work environment. The industry now sees combined travel and leisure, sabbaticals and "workspitality" hotel rooms as business and personal development strategies to explore.

Right now, companies should be reviewing their "bleisure" programs to ensure they choose their travel suppliers wisely and look at ways to improve staff retention by offering sabbatical travel programs based on individual length of employment.

4. Business travel is a way to illustrate corporate values

Values are essential to companies; they can communicate them through policies, relationships and the sustainability

practices of the partners the company selects. Therefore, choosing to invest in travel partners that reflect the company's values is an opportunity that travel managers should embrace.

"We see more companies opting for regenerative travel practices whenever possible. For example, by diversifying their supplier database, taking fewer but longer trips in the face of climate pressure, and opting for electric or rented ground transportation when possible," says Desai.

As companies continue experimenting with the hybrid work model, they must get creative in demonstrating their core values and protecting their company culture. Whether you work remotely or in a hybrid environment, your employees must have opportunities to communicate face-to-face to keep everyone on track and connected. For that, business travel is more important than ever.

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