



Managing Business Travel Risks In Post-Pandemic Situation

Vikash Khanna was required to be in Hong Kong to take over a new role in the Asia Pacific region. The last 6 months had proved to be a challenge, not only in the logistics of everyday business, but also from the perspective of long-term assignments and role responsibilities.

Charles Nguyen had a different challenge. His technical team, of highly skilled professionals, was located over several continents, and frequently criss-crossed time zones on long term visas at short notice to firefight as required.

With countries having sealed their borders globally, and in some cases to specific nationalities where the pandemic still continues to escalate, both Vikash & Charles were having to create and manage a flexible yet robust travel policy in the constantly evolving environment, one that would allow their organisations to continue to operate seamlessly, and at the same time not expose their employees to any risk.

What is the specific need of the hour? It comes down to certain salient points.

Is it essential travel?

In the current scenario, it has been sometimes easier to define which business trip can be deemed absolutely necessary. Ever evolving technology has meant that the virtual workplace is a more efficient environment as it limits contact and allows more productivity due to the stress of travel being minimised. However, human beings are social creatures, and human interaction is an important factor towards building strong business ties. In certain cultures, face-to-face meetings is as critical as experience & knowledge

Restructure Travel Policy

Having decided that some travel is necessary, companies now require to re-look at their existing travel policies and bring them up to scratch with the times. Pre, on & post trip evaluations need to cover several points of concern.

Pre-Trip

What are the risks at the destination, including quarantine rules?

What standards of medical care is available?

Is the traveller susceptible to higher risk because of existing medical conditions?

Is the traveller open to travelling to said destination? If not, what are the options for someone else to take his/her place?

Is the traveller open to an extended stay in an unfamiliar place during these times?

Do we have the right Technology in place to manage every step of travel monitoring?

This factor plays an important role in managing travel in a way that extends full support to the traveller.

It is important to invest in top of the line integrated risk management software that will constantly track the traveller, monitor the changing global environment and provide effective, two-way communication throughout the trip. “Many organisations were unable to locate employees during the height of Covid-19, which caused delays in response and repatriation for some,” explained On Call International’s Davidson. (As quoted in ITIJ <https://www.itij.com/latest/long-read/travel-risk-management-evolving-landscape>) In case of an escalation in the situation, the right information will also assist in taking the appropriate decision as to whether the travel should continue sheltering in place or immediately return to home base.

Let the traveller decide

The informed business traveller is more often savvy than not, and pragmatic. While restructuring the policy, it helps to engage those it will affect in deciding the changes. It is also critical that they understand the benefits of the travel assistance due to them.

Quoting from ET’s Hospitality World.com, “A recent survey from Collinson found that while half of business travellers say their employer has invested in medical and security assistance to support them, 51% of those aren’t sure what it means or offers.” (<https://hospitality.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/speaking-heads/business-travel-after-covid-19-5-considerations-for-employers-travellers-and-the-industry/76659350>)

Covid-19 may have changed the face of business travel forever, and perhaps in a good way. It is time for each of us to understand the specific needs of the business traveller, and to take steps to put in place robust Duty of Care programs that make travelling secure & fulfilling. Corporates will need to continue to be alert to the changing scenario and be flexible enough to adapt to new norms. This could include one on one association restrictions, airport guidelines or border rules for foreign countries.

We are living in unusual time; with practical solutions and the advice of experts, we can make it safe to travel!



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