

GBTA Foundation Study Finds Sustainability Initiatives Important to Managed Travel Programs



Sustainability initiatives are playing an increasingly important factor in managed travel programs, according to new research released by the GBTA Foundation, the education and research arm of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA). In conjunction with the regional GBTA Sustainability Committees, travel managers in the United States, Europe and Australia were surveyed for their opinions on sustainability or “green” efforts when it comes to their business travel programs.

The study revealed companies are focusing on sustainability measures that can generate savings for companies, influence traveler behavior to make better decisions and are looking to establish relationships with green-friendly suppliers. The report “2012 Sustainable Travel Policies Benchmarking Study,” also found that when it comes to sustainability, Europe is ahead of the US.

There were stark differences between the surveyed region’s approaches to future programs indicating room for collaborative growth developing key metrics, and sharing tactics to help established policies and shape best practices globally:

SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES

Europe/Aus

US

Environmental responsibility is more important now than it was even two years ago

56%

41%

Plan to incorporate more green measures

52%

41%

Anticipate using environmental sourcing criteria

59%

34%

Participates in at least one travel-related sustainability initiative

56%

41%

Of those who participate in at least 1 and also have four or more travel-related sustainability initiatives

35%

17%

“Companies worldwide are focusing their corporate social responsibility programs on their impact on our environment,” said Bernard Harrop, head of sustainability at the GBTA Foundation. “Travel has an outsized impact on the environment, but from this study we’ve learned that travel managers lack direction and accurate data to evolve their travel programs in the best interest of the environment.”

With the renewed focus on environmental policy, companies will be focusing on supplier relationships, searching for the vendors with the green services and solutions to curb waste, minimize carbon footprints and generate results. In Europe and Australia, more than one-third of travel buyers plan to make supplier changes in the next two years in order to comply with new sustainability travel policies. Between 37 percent and 43 percent of travel managers say they anticipate changing at least one of their airline, hotel or ground transportation suppliers.

When asked to provide helpful and actionable ideas to improve green efforts in travel programs, travel managers suggested taking an active role to influence traveler behavior by educating them about what they’re willing to do to help reduce emissions, like carpooling and actively promoting preferred vendors with green initiatives. Travel managers can also request reports from contracted suppliers and make CO2 emissions on various transportation methods on traveler search tools clear so travelers know just how to make the right decision.

“Travel managers around the world can learn from each other about what’s working in current programs,” continued Harrop. “GBTA has been at the forefront of this issue, which has been of strategic importance for the business travel industry developing programs like Project ICARUS, the first global travel management sustainability body, representing the interests of the global travel and meetings industry.”

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Date: 2012-07-03

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/sustainability-initiatives-increasingly-important-to-managed-travel-projects-news3317>