

Unlimited potential

A new award-winning model of business travel management



How a unique and innovative team achieved significant savings and vastly improved customer satisfaction

Summary

Microsoft



"This award is proof that a clear and shared vision can truly drive amazing results. The support of our partners and the willingness of all involved to challenge their own thinking has been critical to this success, as such I am thrilled to be able to showcase the value of a true partnership approach which triumphs over the traditional supplier client model. Simply put, this was a significant undertaking achieved by an outstanding group of true travel professionals"

Julia Heesterman
Head of Travel Services EMEA,
Microsoft

This case study outlines a ground breaking change in the approach to business travel management. American Express Global Business Travel, Microsoft and Amadeus joined forces to focus on how to create a better traveller experience, and together they engineered a unique way to deliver the best for the Microsoft traveller. The team came up with a new praxis which is based on **four key cornerstones**:

- Setting up expert relationships
- Putting the traveller first
- Enabling operational effectiveness
- Creating strategic alignment

Anchored in this new approach are **two tangible elements** which stand out and make it all possible:

- A **"One-Team" charter** that crosses organisational boundaries
- A **"Hybrid Model"** for managing online booking delivery

From the very beginning of the project the benefits for all three organisations were obvious and inspiring.

This unique initiative is recognised as a success story by its stakeholders and was awarded "Travel Team of the Year" by a consortium of experts at the Business Travel Awards 2011. Therefore we believe this case study not only identifies a new innovative approach to business travel for Microsoft, but also contains transferrable insights that could encourage and inspire the travel industry on the whole to rethink its approach.

The situation

The benefits

- **Enabling secure, efficient and cost-effective mobility for Microsoft's travellers.**

Providing the Microsoft business with the resources, tools and support to make informed decisions regarding travel investment.

- **Delivering proactive travel management** insight focused on prioritised opportunities and solutions to drive value for Microsoft's business partners.

- **Maximising shareholder value** through a reasonable balance between cost and traveller experience.

Microsoft uses American Express Global Business Travel as their global travel management company. American Express Global Business Travel uses Amadeus as their provider for advanced technological solutions.

When the global contract came up for renewal both teams leveraged the opportunity to revisit the kind of relationship they wanted and the type of travel experience they should create for the Microsoft travellers.

The mutual desire was to innovate, to create a new way of working that wouldn't just tackle problems: it would be commitment-based - striking the right balance between cost and traveller experience.

Travellers' needs

Flexibility, fast response and transparency are key elements for any large global company, and the business world of Microsoft and its travellers is rapidly evolving in a challenging and competitive marketplace. Putting their travellers' needs at the heart of the thinking shifted the focus from internal measures to the traveller experience.

Delivery challenges

The original structure was focusing the majority of its time on operational issues rather than looking at any systemic gaps that could be remedied to make the user experience and associated processes more efficient.

Technology bar

For any company, technology is expected to play a key role in travel management. But for Microsoft, a leader in technology, software and user experience globally, the bar would be even higher. American Express could only deliver a 21st-century experience to Microsoft's tech-savvy travellers with the help of online booking.

The pivotal challenge

The team had to improve the end-to-end travel experience for the traveller by putting control, transparency and flexibility into the traveller's hands through interactive processes and methods based on all behind-the-scenes structures, cultures and people that make this process happen.

Three key individuals put their heads together to evaluate how best the three companies could work together:



Julia Heesterman
for the client:
Microsoft,
Head of Travel
Services EMEA



Gillian Armstrong
for the service
provider:
**American
Express**, EMEA
Client General
Manager



James Grant
for the technology
provider:
Amadeus, Global
Partner Manager
responsible for the
reseller relationship
with American
Express



Andy Cruse joined the team as the
Microsoft Online Usage Manager.
Andy is an expert consultant from Amadeus,
contracted by American Express and
outsourced to Microsoft. His unique role is
key to managing this completely new way of

working between the client, the business travel services provider and the technology provider.

"This is a 'can do' relationship where the team are all much more open to new ideas and changes with an invigorated energy to make a difference."

The solution was to create a new and strategic position that drives their common commitment.



The solution

A new model with four key cornerstones

Cornerstone 1 Expert relationships

Microsoft, a creative, dynamic, responsive and globally integrated organisation, is full of vision, ideas and passion as well as travellers who need to be flexible and responsive in order to deliver their business commitments. American Express Global Business Travel is one of the largest and most experienced global travel management companies through its focus on excellence and dedication to process. Amadeus IT Group, a leading provider of travel technology was able to play a crucial role in delivering what both parties needed, especially in the light of their commitment to improving user experience and dedication to leveraging the potential of technology. The three companies united to form One Team, recognising that to deliver a seamless experience for the traveller they needed to be a seamless team.

Cornerstone 2 Traveller is King

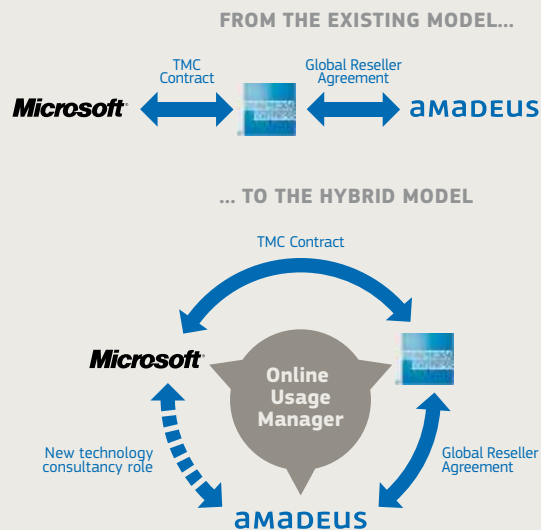
Most successful global goods and services businesses have revolutionised their attitudes towards the end user during the past decade, and many consumer businesses restructured and strengthened their relationships with retailers and suppliers. Microsoft, American Express Global Business Travel and Amadeus felt that the time was right for the business travel industry to take the same approach. The One-Team approach was the logical next step and allowed for solutions that otherwise would have been missed. Once it had been decided that the traveller is King, all three companies become suppliers.

Cornerstone 3 Operational effectiveness

In order to deliver a truly transparent, empowering and seamless experience to the Microsoft traveller, the team had already identified online booking as the core component and therefore needed central coordination within their One-Team set up. Consequently they created a 'Hybrid Model', *figure 1*, which, to our knowledge, is revolutionary in the travel industry.

Then the team put into place a crucial individual whose role was to vision, champion and manage the online solution.

Figure 1: The hybrid model



Cornerstone 4 Strategic alignment

Aligning everyone behind one vision and set of objectives is a major challenge, and the team decided to tackle it on a four-day offsite workshop with an external consultancy company, Achieve Breakthrough.

This workshop brought together the Microsoft and American Express Global Business Travel EMEA teams as well as key global team members and was supported by Amadeus.

Three key principles were recognised:

- All key individuals need to be given a chance to express their ideas both to create a better answer and to ensure shared ownership.
- A new culture needs to be established since this team is not composed solely from any one of the three organisations but represents a new and fresh combination. Best-practice change-management methods will first identify where change is needed and then document how the team wants to work together.
- Clear business objectives which apply to all parties need to be agreed as a set of shared goals for the One-Team.

From this meeting the team created the "One-Team Charter" and their vision: "To develop a best-in-class travel programme that is recognised by the traveller".

"I have been using the booking tool from the start and have noticed the site changes, less text and better flight options returned"

UK Microsoft traveller during a travel forum

Conclusions

Key learnings

- Focusing on the traveller unites the team
- Treat each other as equals and identify key champions
- Ensure that clear structure and roles support the vision
- Be explicit about creating and documenting the desired culture - attitude, goals, shared ideals
- Review, revise, experiment - be prepared for on-going change

Key learnings

- The hybrid model of online delivery
- The shared "One-Team Charter"
- The "traveller is King" mentality made real

In summary

American Express Global Business Travel, Microsoft and Amadeus have together built a new culture and working model in their efforts to improve the traveller experience, and together they are more than the sum of their parts. Already showing success, the model was recognised as the "Travel Team of the Year" at the Business Travel Awards.

Within a shared culture of innovation and change there is a passion for improvement that has been created by the overlap of three distinctly different businesses each with their own culture and strengths. As a result, the tagline representing Microsoft's innovative nature has never been more apt for a business initiative: "Unlimited Potential".

The impact

The effect so far has been dramatic, and some key successes include:

- A very strong feeling when working together as equals - being better together - and putting the traveller needs at the forefront of everyone's mind.
- Traveller satisfaction across EMEA steadily increased.
- A new joint EMEA strategic business plan has been developed which focuses on the safe, efficient and cost effective mobility of Microsoft travellers.
- Microsoft is now the largest EMEA online customer for American Express who uses Amadeus e-Travel Management in terms of combined market roll-out and adoption levels.
- Considerable savings in terms of transaction fee and average ticket price have been achieved through the online booking tool in Microsoft's last fiscal year.

Find out more!

- Amadeus works closely with its TMC partners and customers to connect Corporations to the centre of travel and deliver outstanding travel management services.
- For further information, visit www.amadeus.com/corporations or speak to your Amadeus Account Manager.

About American Express Global Business Travel

American Express Global Business Travel, a division of American Express Company, is a global industry leader in business travel and meetings management committed to helping businesses succeed through cost-effective

programme management, world-class customer service, and enhanced traveler productivity and support worldwide. Through leading online, offline and on-the-go solutions, consulting services, business insights and research, supplier

negotiation expertise, and meetings and events capabilities, innovative services are delivered to clients to maximize their return on investment. Learn more at www.americanexpress.com/businesstravel



About Business Travel Awards

The annual Business Travel Awards brings together the travel industry to recognise and reward the efforts, innovations and services of those organisations that have excelled during the past twelve months. An independent

panel of judges, comprising mainly leading travel buyers, and a rigorous assessment process ensure the Business Travel Awards are the most valued and respected of all accolades in the corporate travel arena. The Business

Travel Awards are organised by Buying Business Travel which is the UK's No 1 corporate travel magazine for large and mid-size company travel/ meetings buyers, managers and arrangers.



About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that

help people and businesses realise their full potential.