

TECHNOLOGY REDEFINES THE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT COMPANY AS A TRAVELLER MANAGEMENT COMPANY FOR THE MODERN TRAVELLER

*Advantage Travel Partnership Launches Business Travel White Paper titled
'Harnessing Technology to Empower Your People'*

London, UK – February 2018 – The Advantage Travel Partnership (Advantage) latest business travel White Paper, titled *Harnessing Technology to Empower your People*, delves into the balance of man and machine and the impact of this on the role of a Travel Management Company (TMC). With 87 per cent of buyers (ITM research) excited about what the future of technology holds, findings from the 2017 Advantage Conference and Business Travel Symposium contributed to the paper on how the industry can address the opportunities this presents.

Through the emergence of technology, the role of a TMC has evolved. This changing role is highlighted by how TMCs are describing themselves, one suggested they are no longer a Travel Management Company but a Traveller Management Company. One Advantage member, CTI, now refer to themselves as a Travel Partnership Company. This is about putting the traveller at the heart of the process, understanding their pain points and how to relieve them. The modern traveller wants an improved experience, simple connectivity and convenience, with many utilising up to five mobile devices, they want it their way - anywhere, anytime, on any device.

The findings were also explicit in recognising that technology is not an answer on its own, satisfying the needs of both the Travel Manager and the traveller means that the TMC must harness the full power of both the people and the technology available. The human element remains incredibly important, anyone who has worked in the industry would agree that its power lies in its people first and foremost.

Neil Armorgie, CEO of WIN & Global Product Director for Advantage Travel Partnership, commented; "Through continuous discussions with members and research undertaken with travel buyers from ITM, we noted that technology strengthens the service of a TMC. Human interaction remains the vital ingredient that business travellers and clients are ultimately looking for. Technology enhances this partnership making for a more seamless relationship and therefore achieving better productivity for the client, which ultimately helps them grow their business."

The role of the TMC is, undeniably, a critical one in the world of the business travel buyer and even more importantly, the traveller. Changing times provide more opportunities to demonstrate TMC's relevance and to further deepen the role of the TMC as a trusted advisor and business partner. The TMC is able to support and work with the buyer, to help them understand and engage with their employees. Advantage is seeing a change in the TMC role, widening it from just travel management to one of a technology provider. This is supported by the research which shows that 86 per cent of ITM buyers want help keeping abreast of the latest technology developments. The White Paper reports that with this change in the role of the TMC, technology can be harnessed to empower employees by creating greater productivity and personalisation using services such as chatbots and artificial intelligence. Employees do not need to fear technology but should embrace it as travellers desire personal service and interaction.

The White Paper looked at the demographic of the today's traveller and found that technology has also altered customers desires as it is not just Millennials who request the use of technology in their booking and travel experience, so do the Baby-Boomers. Travellers can no longer be pigeon holed into age related customer segments but must be identified by the customers state of mind. The largest proportion of business travellers today can be branded as a 'Modern Traveller' – those who look for convenience, connectivity and the ability to replicate their leisure experience in a business environment. The Modern Traveller can have a short attention span but is able to process information quickly. A TMC has to offer quick, visual and easy to digest services that meets the use of one of the five preferred mobile devices.

The White Paper summary states that finding the balance between human service and technology is central to staying relevant in the successful travel management space. TMCs must ultimately place themselves in the shoes of their customer and use technology to aid travellers throughout their travel experience from the booking to airline and hotel check-ins, car transfers, restaurant reservations and recommendations to sightseeing and attraction bookings.

A TMC provides the centre of excellence and information. A TMC offers solutions as they are the sole holder of information, creating a personal, trusted and relatable relationship with clients that technology can never replace. The White Paper advises readers to think creatively about where they wish to invest in technology and people to ensure they have the right balance of Hi-tech vs Hi-touch.

Harnessing Technology to Empower your People will be available to download as a PDF White Paper from Wednesday 21 February 2018, from the [Advantage Member](#) website. Featuring video and written insights from Advantage members, the White Paper was produced by Advantage supported by business travel expert consultancy Festive Road.

Advantage Travel Partnership (www.advantagemembers.com).

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Note to editors: Advantage Travel Partnership is the UK's largest independent travel agent partnership. Advantage leisure and business travel agents who are part of the group are each independently owned, but as a collective they produce over £4.5bn of travel sales each year, making members experts in every aspect of the travel industry.

Advantage Travel Partnership members include more than 200 independent business travel locations across the UK. Advantage Business Travel is able to secure excellent deals with a range of business travel suppliers including flights, hotels, car rental, rail and ancillary services. Additional benefits are available to the business travel members who choose to be members of the Advantage Focus Partnership.