

An aerial view of a soccer field with several players scattered across the green grass. A white curved line is visible at the top, and a straight white line runs horizontally across the middle. The text is overlaid on the left side of the field.

Team Traveller: The Playbook for Engaging Business Travellers

Booking.com business

Contents

1 What is Engagement?

1 Business Travel and Engagement:

Perfect Opportunity

2 Social Engagement:

The Value of Relationships Creating Your Own Traveller Engagement Strategy

3 Creating Your Own Traveller Engagement Strategy

4 Taking Pulse:

Collecting Traveller Feedback

- Performance reviews
- Collect feedback
- Conduct a survey

5 Starting Small:

Easy, Low-Maintenance Traveller Engagement Initiatives

- Regular stand-ups
- Leveraging social media
- Giving Recognition

7 Scaling Up:

Larger-scale Traveller Engagement Initiatives

- Globetrotter's gala
- Bringing travel into the network
- Strategic education
- Being flexible

9 A Worthwhile Investment:

Engagement Makes a Difference

Team Traveller: The Playbook for Engaging Business Travellers

Traveller engagement has never been so important now that millennials are changing the face of the business travel community. As our Travel Trends 2018 Global Trends survey reveals, business travellers today, especially millennials, are interested in doing meaningful work and creating a happy work-life balance. This makes it more important than ever to keep employees engaged.

Whether you're looking to drive compliance to preferred suppliers, reduce travel costs, improve traveller satisfaction or mitigate risk, engagement can be one of your most powerful tools.

This is your playbook for turning your organisation's business travellers into a happy, social and highly engaged team. It provides research-based insights into how creating a more engaged staff promotes your organisation's business goals. It also examines the human psychological factors that contribute to motivation. Then, it shows you how to determine the best strategies for boosting engagement using your company's travel programme. So, get ready to explore the group dynamics at work among your travellers and learn how to take advantage of all the opportunities for boosting engagement.



What is Engagement?

When employees are 'engaged' at work, it means they see their role within the organisation as more than just 'making a living'. They draw personal satisfaction from their work and are emotionally invested in the success of their teams, projects and companies. They take a genuine interest in their company's performance and feel like part of a dynamic, interesting team.

Business Travel and Engagement: Perfect Opportunity

With its potential for combining work with exciting experiences, business travel is a perfect opportunity for any organisation to boost employee engagement. Smart, forward-thinking organisations are already revamping their travel policies and procedures today to align them with employees' changing expectations.

When travellers are engaged in their work, they gain greater satisfaction and feel more positively towards their employers. As a result, they perform better on the job and become more valuable employees all around. [Researchers](#) have found that higher engagement levels result in better employee retention rates, better business outcomes and stronger management teams. Employee engagement even results in better customer relations, because customers respond positively when dealing with happy, highly motivated representatives of a company.

In short, engaged employees are better employees. Engagement makes them more eager to contribute to the company's success by working harder and complying with company policies.

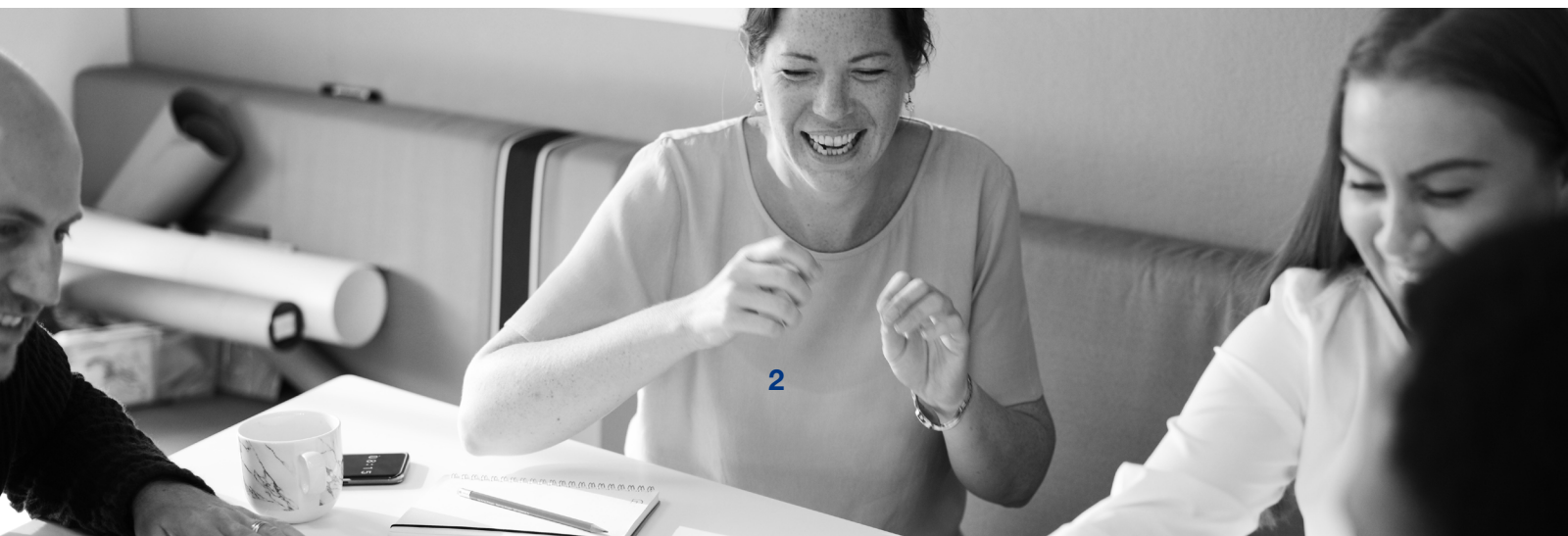
When it comes to business travellers, engagement may be even more important than for other employees. That's because business travellers face unusually high stress levels, often spending time away from their

families who are their support systems. It's easy for them to become distracted or discouraged under these circumstances. Feeling like they are part of something important motivates them and gives them a much-needed boost when they're miles away from home. Travellers also often have more freedom in planning and carrying out their tasks. Being engaged makes them more likely to comply to policy rules, for example, when charging travel expenses to the company.

Why does engagement have such a powerful influence on an employee's job performance? There are many theories on this, but most experts agree that our basic need for belonging plays an important part. Let's take a short look at the human psychology of engagement.

Social Engagement: The Value of Relationships

Engagement is visible most clearly in our relationships with others. High-engagement relationships are the most meaningful and satisfying connections we make with each other as human beings. We feel rewarded for investing in relationships that make us feel respected, accepted and appreciated. Think about being in love: you feel so strongly invested in the other person, there's nothing you wouldn't do to help them. Being a parent or a loving pet owner creates a similar level of engagement. We feel an intense interest in the well-being of our children or pets, and we are willing to make personal sacrifices to ensure they continue to thrive. Just ask any parent of a new-born baby how many hours of sleep they're getting in a night and you'll see how engaged they are with their little son or daughter.



Of course, most employees will never feel anything even close to the same level of engagement towards their company or employer as they do towards their family members. However, many employees find deep satisfaction in the professional and personal relationships they cultivate with their co-workers. Workplaces are a great opportunity for many of us to meet new people and establish lasting friendships. We feel loyal towards our friends and are willing to invest in the relationship – sometimes without even noticing we’re ‘working’.

Researchers have found that **69 percent of employees** who have multiple friends at work remain highly engaged on the job. The same research shows that less than one third of employees without friends at work are highly engaged. Clearly, a supportive, friendly and social working environment greatly improves employee engagement. That’s why travel managers can make a major difference in employee engagement levels by making sure travellers feel like they are part of a strong, caring team.

Creating Your Own Traveller Engagement Strategy

As you can see, engagement is a powerful factor for business success. It is also strongly rooted in human relationships. Therefore, travel managers can boost traveller engagement by creating a socially connected work environment. Below, we look at some options for engaging travellers by creating stronger team dynamics.

No two travel teams are alike. Therefore, you should always take a realistic, customised approach when designing initiatives to boost engagement. Consider what works best for your team members and company culture and what is feasible within your company’s structure and budget. The tips and ideas discussed below will get you thinking in the right direction.



Taking Pulse: Collecting Traveller Feedback

To figure out the most effective ways to boost traveller engagement in your own company, start by asking your travellers for their opinion. Does your company already give travellers an opportunity to submit regular feedback and suggestions for improving travel policies or interactions within the team?

If so, be sure to carefully read through feedback at regular intervals and discuss it with your fellow managers. Look for opportunities for improvement or sweet spots where you can take advantage of what's already working.

If your company isn't collecting traveller feedback already, why not start now? You can always use the traveller feedback form contained in the [Handy Toolkit for Busy Travel Organisers](#) from Booking.com for Business.

If you want the feedback to accurately represent how employees really feel, you need to get as many people to submit their opinions as possible. Try one of the following feedback methods:

Performance reviews: Most companies conduct regular performance reviews and feedback sessions such as one-on-one meetings between employees and managers. Ask supervisors to include a simple question about travel policy during the review process for employees who regularly travel for work. Employees' responses will enable you to determine any trends that might help improve engagement through reasonable policy adjustments.

You probably won't be able to make every employee's wishes come true but asking their opinion in the first place will already make them feel more engaged.

Collect feedback: Create a feedback system that asks employees for their opinions about the current travel policy. This could be an old-school suggestions box, depending on the size and structure of your company. Alternatively, set up an e-mail address or online form where employees

can submit their feedback about the travel policy. If your company uses online travel expenses management, see whether a feedback form can be added to the expenses declaration process for employees.

This open feedback collection method is relatively easy to implement but has some limitations. The response rate will be lower, and the messages you receive may vary in form, which makes it harder to compare them.

Conduct a survey: Use an online survey generator like SurveyMonkey to create a short poll for travellers. To keep the feedback focussed and specific, ask clear questions like “Do you think our travel policy makes our company a better place to work?” Polls are particularly useful for helping you identify general areas that need improvement, though they may not give you as much specific information as a feedback session would, for example.

Starting Small: Easy, Low-Maintenance Traveller Engagement Initiatives

After you’ve gained an overview of what employees expect and what might help engage them, it’s time to start designing initiatives.

Boosting engagement can be simpler than you think. The goal is always to create better relationships within your team. Remember that the key to better relationships is communication. Here are some inexpensive, low-maintenance options to really get the team vibes flowing:

Regular stand-ups: A ‘stand-up’ is a regularly scheduled, general team meeting. Ideally, it is held at least once a week, and some teams even prefer to hold a stand-up every morning. This is a

practice that originated in Silicon Valley start-ups and has taken the corporate world by storm in recent years. That's because it's such an effective way to get everyone involved and let them feel they are working together as part of a greater whole.

Stand-ups should only last about 10-15 minutes and should be held at the beginning of every month, week or day. All employees in a team or project come together, ideally face to face in one room. Travellers can easily dial in using free teleconferencing apps like Skype or Zoom, if necessary. One person is responsible for opening the meeting with a quick summary of the latest developments, successes and setbacks. They end by giving a summary of things that still need to be done to reach specific short-term goals. Then, the floor opens for quick questions and input from everyone in the team.

It may take some practice and organisation at first, especially to avoid taking up too much time. However, the stand-up is a great method for making sure everyone in the team is on the same page. This creates a much stronger sense of unity. It's the perfect venue for giving recognition to employees for a job well done. You can also use the stand-up to introduce and collect quick feedback on travel policy changes, for example.

Leveraging social media: Social media is a powerful force for building personal relationships today, not just among millennials. Statistically speaking, most people in the workforce are active users on social media apps. Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are the three most popular platforms according to [recent market research](#).

Starting an initiative to improve traveller engagement using these popular platforms makes good business sense. Your company's travellers are generally already familiar with them, so no additional training or setup is required. Plus, there are no extra costs involved.

Photo competitions are a great way to get travellers exchanging experiences and liking each other on social media. Ask travellers to post their most interesting travel photos. You might want to choose a theme like 'best business travel food' or 'unforgettable business travel experiences'. Set a deadline for employees to post their pics

on social media using hashtags, then hold a vote to see which picture wins.

Just remember to keep the themes positive and encourage employees to do the same. Since posting travel experiences on social media has become intuitive for most of us, initiatives like these enjoy a high acceptance rate. Also, by including your company's name as a hashtag, social media initiatives help raise brand awareness.

Giving recognition: Everyone loves to be acknowledged for a job well done. The feeling is even better when we receive praise and recognition from our peers. Many companies already hold occasional award ceremonies and events to recognise outstanding achievements. Awards for reaching sales targets or customer satisfaction goals are quite standard, but why not give special recognition to travellers too?

Propose to include at least one travel-related award at your company's next award ceremony. For example, acknowledge the traveller who covered the most miles, or the traveller with the strongest policy compliance record. This is a low-cost initiative that can raise the prestige of your travellers within the company and give them the red-carpet treatment they deserve.

Scaling Up: Larger-scale Traveller Engagement Initiatives

If your company's structure and budget allow for it, try launching a higher-profile initiative to boost engagement and make your travellers feel truly valued.

Globetrotter's gala: Most employees love a company party, and travellers are no exception. Try planning a special, invitation-only event just for your company's travellers to get together and celebrate as a team. Set the tone with an adventurous travel theme. Ask employees to dress to impress and bring photos or share presentations about their interesting recent travel experiences.

An event like this may involve significant planning and costs, but the budget and complexity can always be scaled to meet your company's specific needs. The most important thing is that travellers have a chance to interact with their teammates in a fun, social setting.

Bringing travel into the network: Make sure your travellers never feel left out. Keep them in the loop with targeted, informative communications, pre-trip, en route and post-trip. Try working with your IT team to integrate messaging services into your travel management software systems. Be sure to contact travellers using the most effective channel. You may want to poll travellers first to see if they prefer messaging by e-mail, text message or social media when travelling. Send them relevant details related to their travel arrangements or destination, as well as health and safety contact information.

Strategic education: Offer regular training events and provide plenty of clear communications to keep all travellers on the same page when it comes to travel policy and other travel-related topics like health, safety and cultural awareness. Training sessions are not just an opportunity for learning. Many employees also experience them as a chance to interact with colleagues with whom they may not normally work.

Be sure to make room for socialising and networking during training sessions. Try including fun group activities that encourage employees to work together to solve problems or answer questions. Ideally, train employees in small groups (10 to 20 employees at a time). Always start with a quick introduction round or use name tags, so everyone is on a first name basis. Be sure to include a short break whenever possible. Investing more time and effort in training may come at a higher cost but it also increases engagement and boosts employee commitment.

Being flexible: Lastly, allow your travellers as much freedom as possible to make their own travel choices. It will inevitably be necessary to set some boundaries (such as air fare class limits and preferred suppliers for each route and destination) but be strategic about how you communicate limitations with travellers. Give travellers the feeling that all the options have certain advantages, and all have been carefully chosen with the travellers' best interests at heart.

At the same time, be flexible enough to allow travellers exceptions in certain cases. For example, travellers who have put in so many kilometres in a year may become eligible for special upgrades or other extra expenses. Formulate clear guidelines that focus not just on saving the company money, but also making travellers feel valued.

A Worthwhile Investment: Engagement Makes a Difference

Considering the huge impact engagement has on employee performance, retention and commitment, companies should see it as a worthwhile investment. It's not just about making the workplace funner or more social. Engagement actually drives forward a company's business goals too. As you can see, there are many ways for companies to invest in a more engaging relationship with their employees. Whichever methods work best for your travellers, all are a great investment in your company's future success.



About Booking.com Business

As the world leader in online accommodation with over 1 million properties worldwide, Booking.com is bringing years of experience to the world of business travel with Booking.com for Business. We make booking and travel management easy, offering smooth integrations into your existing solutions plus access to our customer service - available 24/7 and in 43 languages. With no service costs or implementation fees, and even special company rates, Booking.com for Business is designed to meet the specific needs of corporate travel.



Complete oversight

Get total transparency over bookings and duty of care. Add to this destination budgets, exclusive rates, reporting, and smooth integrations into your existing solutions.



Cost-effective

A cost-saving solution for complete control of your accommodation bookings, free to use and with no service or set-up fees.



Customised

Ease of use meets traveller experience. Organise your travel team across 1.4 million available properties on Booking.com, and enjoy free 24/7 customer support wherever your do business.

Check Out The Business Travel Blog Your go to guide for Business Travel

Explore The Business Travel Blog to discover new hints, tips and insight about the world of business travel. Topics range from business travel trend, cost saving ideas, work effectiveness hacks and more.