

Expert Insights.

Corporate Social Responsibility; the crossroads of ethics and practicality.



We recommend providing staff with a clear direction on how CSR can become a day-to-day part of their travel activity.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept that encourages businesses to voluntarily operate with consideration to society.

It involves being responsible for the impacts of all business activities on stakeholders including employees, customers, local communities – and importantly, the environment.

Over recent years, CSR has extended way beyond the legislative realm, to ethical obligation. It's about ensuring the wellbeing of all your staff, doing what's right for the community and helping to improve quality of life for society at large. So where does CSR fit within the spectrum of travel management and where should businesses direct their energies?

CSR gaining higher priority

In the business travel sector, CSR is impacting attitudes and practices at three distinctive levels through the supply chain: companies who undertake business travel, travel management companies and industry suppliers.

More organisations are now aiming to modify their travel practices and supplier partnerships in an effort to be more CSR

focused. From heavy manufacturing companies to those in the service industry, the shift provides evidence of the growing role CSR now plays.

Companies are also giving higher priority to CSR in their RFPs to travel managers.

It is a trend that is beginning to shape the practices and standards not only of travel management companies, but of organisations within the supply chain including airlines, hotels and car rental companies.

Regardless of what shape or form these standards take in the future, it is clear that businesses with a genuine commitment to CSR will be those more likely to have happy employees who feel good about themselves and the company they work for.

What constitutes CSR?

CSR is not just about 'green travel'. It is about company initiatives that are good for its employees, good for those with whom it does business and good for the communities in which it operates. While reducing ecological impacts is important for a productive and sustainable future, it is only one aspect of a much wider and more complex CSR program.

To effectively make CSR a part of your travel policy, your strategic business and cultural decisions must ensure corporate travel:

- is safe and comfortable for all travellers
- is efficient in terms of its environmental impacts and ways to minimise these
- is facilitated by travel managers and suppliers who share your business's commitment to CSR
- is driven by a consistent policy and accountable in all respects, to help enforce and protect the above standards. CSR in travel is not achieved in isolation, but by a collective mindset and cluster of activities that are focused on benefits to all stakeholders.

Striking the balance

Corporate Traveller approaches CSR with the same common sense and pragmatism that applies to all aspects of our operation. Business requires face-to-face communication between different people and cultures. For many companies it is just an essential part of conducting business. The Corporate Traveller approach to CSR takes all stakeholders into consideration.

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Corporate Traveller's approach is about protecting the wellbeing of our people, customers, suppliers, other business partners and of course our natural environs. But importantly, it's about balancing environmental and commercial concerns with the needs of individual travellers.

What can you do?

How can you make CSR part of your business travel behaviour and what impact will this have on your stakeholders?

Start with your culture

- Your business needs to embrace CSR holistically and to absorb this into your travel behaviour.
- Educate your management and employees on the meaning, value and benefits of CSR to the way your company travels.
- Reward commitment to CSR, by acknowledging things such as compliance to your travel policy.

Set your objectives

What is the aim of your CSR commitment in business travel? In many cases it will include:

- protecting your travellers against health and safety risks as much as possible (e.g. zero risk tolerance)
- making travel comfortable for your people
- reducing environmental impacts how and where practical
- partnering with a travel management company and suppliers with the same attitudes to your own.

Assess your travel policy

Does your existing policy encourage

CSR and enable you to achieve your objectives? Key areas of focus in your policy should include:

- ensuring business travel is a positive and productive experience and balances travellers' needs with cost implications
- effective demand management - controlling travel patterns to minimise unnecessary travel and reduce costs, while still achieving business objectives
- assessing the reputation and CSR commitment of your travel suppliers
- ensuring you are risk-averse in your travel management (see below).

Prioritise your duty of care

To protect your travellers' health and safety you need to take a proactive approach to risk management that includes:

- having access to technology that enables you to immediately track your travellers' location in the world
- staying abreast of all major incidents around the world that may impact your travellers
- minimising counter-productive factors such as lengthy stopovers, inconvenient flight times and poorly-equipped hotels etc.
- keeping your travellers well informed about all aspects of business travel that may impact their journey
- using reliable and safe private transfers.

Support your community

Contributing to your community is an essential part of CSR. Corporate Traveller believes the most valuable

community support is provided at the local grass-roots level. This is where your activity delivers tangible benefits and your people can develop relationships with community stakeholders. We recommend:

- identifying initiatives or resources in your local community/ies that need support, whether they be environmental, educational, cultural or social etc.
- channelling your efforts/resources where they can genuinely add value and make a difference.

By introducing a blend of the above initiatives, your business can create a company-wide 'travel mindset' and culture that is genuinely CSR focused.

about corporate traveller.

Corporate Traveller is a leading travel management specialist for the SME market. We offer a unique combination of expert advice, local personal service and global negotiating strength to maximise your savings.

The Corporate Traveller team is the best in the business. Our travel experts are highly experienced and have exceptional product knowledge to deliver airfare and accommodation options that will have an immediate and positive impact on your bottom line. Our flexible business model is shaped to match the distinctive needs of SMEs, enabling us to better understand your travel requirements, offer tailored solutions and build long-term partnerships.