How is the travel agency, World Travel, doing?

Vanderbilt Travel reached out to faculty and staff to survey traveler satisfaction with our travel agency, World Travel. The survey was designed in partnership with Vanderbilt faculty to gather feedback on how the new travel agency is performing and to identify potential areas for improvement, if necessary. The results have been shared with World Travel.

A total of 396 Vanderbilt faculty and staff booked travel directly with a World Travel agent between September 1 and November 30, 2016 and were invited to participate in the survey. Of these, 31 individuals responded to the survey (7.8 percent response rate – previous survey had 9.8 percent response rate).

Results of the first survey and action steps are summarized below:

The booking experience

81% of respondents termed the booking experience as “very” or “somewhat” positive. Of the 16% of respondents who found the booking experience problematic (the remainder recorded their experience as “neutral.”) concerns noted were:

- International travel itineraries not found in Concur search engines
- Resisted booking on non-major airline
- Lack of Vanderbilt dedicated agents
- Incorrect ticketing error

Action steps:

- The travel team strongly recommends that all complex international travel (e.g. more than two legs), be booked by calling a World Travel agent directly at 877-271-9258, who can check for best trip routing, schedules and airline fares as well as provide options, ensure travelers have proper travel documentation for visa/transit needs, and confirm that itinerary meets requirements for federally sponsored research projects, e.g. Fly America Act or Open Skies Agreement.
  
  Many international itineraries found on consolidator booking sites such as Expedia, Orbitz etc... can be found in the Concur online booking tool as well as the Global Distribution System used by World Travel. Booking travel online through outside sites do have drawbacks due to hidden costs, taxes and airport fees that sometimes aren’t made clear in initial searches. The travel team will stress the importance of researching best itineraries and fares to meet travelers’ needs with World Travel.

- World Travel agents have been diligent about ensuring international flights for Vanderbilt travelers are Fly America compliant if foreign travel is being funded by a federal grant. The travel team will ask World Travel to continue to inquire about funding source while booking foreign travel for Vanderbilt travelers and accommodating traveler request for non-US airlines if they are not flying on federal funds.

- Vanderbilt has four dedicated World Travel agents assigned to assist travelers for travel booking needs. When a traveler calls the dedicated number, 877-271-9258, they will reach one of the travel agents assigned to Vanderbilt. If all agents are on a call with other travelers, the call immediately rolls to an operator, who gives them the option to hold, leave their name or be routed to an available agent not on our dedicated team.

Contact information for Vanderbilt's dedicated agent team can be found on the Concur Travel Tab under the
“Company Notes” section. This information contains email and office hours for each agent. The travel team will feature the World Travel agents in the February Travel and Expense newsletter containing contact information about the four member World Travel agent team.

- In October, a traveler’s Vanderbilt issued One Card was double charged $90.00 for a shuttle service expense, once by the vendor and once by World Travel. The travel and payment cards team worked with World Travel to get the incorrect charge credited back to the traveler’s One Card. The travel team reviewed the issue with World Travel and asked our account manager to reach out to us in a timely manner to help troubleshoot billing issues in order to provide better customer service.

**Flight cost and length of time to book**

80% of respondents felt the flight cost and length of time it took to book their flight were reasonable, while 13% had concerns (7% were “neutral”).

**World Travel agents**

Of those respondents working with an agent, 87% found their experience positive. Of the 10 percent who were not satisfied with their interaction the concerns noted were:

- Concerns about search engine
- Ticket prices low, high fees and taxes & travel agent couldn’t offer explanation
- Waste of time, would rather be helped by personal travel agent

**Action steps:**

- Vanderbilt travel team has provided survey feedback to World Travel to ensure agents are:
  - Carefully checking requested flights needed by Vanderbilt travelers, in addition to providing other cost efficient options while noting travelers’ personal preference to departure times, price, and connections.
  - Familiar with ticket pricing, taxes and fees for various airlines. That being said, this is always a challenge due to fees and mandatory taxes varying from airline to airline, itinerary to itinerary and ticket to ticket, sometimes considerably. Determining how much and why a traveler pays a difference on a given trip can be difficult. The price of a ticket covers surcharges paid to the FAA, arrival/departure taxes, security fees, and commercial airport facility charges and so on.
  - Replying to email and phone calls promptly. The Vanderbilt travel team is evaluating the World Travel call metrics for the past month and will discuss having extra coverage during our peak booking seasons of January through March; currently one of our dedicated agents is focusing on various university group travel. World Travel will evaluate the call metrics and adjust agent schedules as needed to provide proper coverage during this time.

Also, the Vanderbilt travel team is available when needed to advocate, troubleshoot and resolve World Travel customer service issues on behalf of our travelers. World Travel responds quickly and has most issues resolved within the day, if not 24 hour time period. We encourage Vanderbilt travelers to reach out to travel@vanderbilt.edu at any time.
Overall experience with World Travel

74% of respondents labeled their overall experience with World Travel as “very” or “somewhat” positive; of the 16% experiencing problems (ten percent were neutral), concerns identified were:

- Concur search engine
- Fare difference

Goal:

Increase the overall experience for Vanderbilt travelers so that 80% have a “very” or “somewhat” positive interaction with World Travel Service, Inc.

Action steps:

- In addition to having access to all airline itineraries available on airline industry sites, World Travel agents have access to all itineraries/flight inventories available on Southwest.com. If a Vanderbilt traveler or travel assistant can find a flight domestic online, our dedicated travel agents also have access to the same flight in the Global Distribution System. If you can’t find a flight via Concur or with a World Travel agent, please take a screenshot and send it via email to travel@vanderbilt.edu and we will provide any assistance needed to locate the itinerary needed.

Vanderbilt travel team will resume monthly airfare price comparison sessions. In these sessions, the Travel and Payment Cards team holds airfare pricing tests where we “secret shop” to ensure travelers are receiving the lowest fares possible. We compare airfare costs between the Concur online booking tool, online booking sites such as Orbitz, Expedia, Kayak, major airline websites and our dedicated travel agency, World Travel Service Inc. Tests are conducted at the same time for the same itineraries, ensuring a true apples-to-apples comparison.

If you have a specific domestic or international flight you would like to see included in an upcoming airfare testing session, and also if you would like to join us at an upcoming session, please contact us at travel@vanderbilt.edu. Please review the archive of our past airfare pricing tests by clicking here.

These survey results will be published in the February 2017 Travel and Expense e-newsletter. The next survey will canvas all bookings made between December 1, 2016 and February 28, 2017, to provide an additional snapshot of the travel agency performance.