

DRIVING NDC INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

AN OPEN LETTER FROM BCD TRAVEL

Positive innovation in an interconnected ecosystem requires partnership and collaboration. The corporate travel customer experience depends on multiple parties - including but not limited to airlines, travel management companies, online booking and other service and technology providers - working together to optimize delivery.

Corporate customers care about what they buy, where they shop and how those choices support their programs. Forcing solutions that aren't completely ready into the market puts customers at risk and harms the ecosystem.

Successful distribution innovation requires better content (that customers want), better displays (so customers can access it) and robust integration (so customers can fulfill strategic savings and risk management objectives).

This is what our clients are saying:

They want to avoid disruption and costs that aren't compensated by additional value.

Mark Stansbury, Manager, Global Travel, Events & Logistics Services for Lockheed Martin Corporation, notes that as the travel industry continues its rebound from the pandemic, service recovery is still a priority for both suppliers and customers: "Unilaterally driven changes will drive further disruption as other partners in the ecosystem seek to compensate for poorly planned changes. The changes will entail additional costs to the end user - with no known substantive value to compensate."

They want support for their savings, safety and satisfaction strategies.

Another client, a program leader in the telecommunications industry, voices concerns that resonate across our customer base: "Managed travel programs depend on the seamless provision of data and services across the entire shopping, booking, pre-, on- and post-travel process - from transparent fare comparisons and authorization to price assurance and payment. When ecosystem partners don't work together to facilitate this provision, the program suffers. When a strategy is implemented with zero transparency, we can't effectively provide guidance to our travelers on what to expect - which undermines our program and compromises traveler trust. There is no point in pushing technologies that currently offer less functionality, a worse user experience and weaker program support than existing technology."

They want choices that empower, not limit.

One of the most important choices travel program leaders can make is their online booking tool: Yet for the foreseeable future, some online booking tool providers will only offer NDC solutions via third-party aggregators. Compared to current workflows, booking through these aggregators comes at a higher cost and typically results in servicing gaps, lost agent productivity and data limitations. Innovation shouldn't require customers to compromise their program's effectiveness.

At BCD, we've been working diligently to help prepare our clients' programs for this shift. While we're confident in our readiness, the reality is that no one can offer a seamless customer solution by April 1. We call on our clients to discuss the implications of airlines' distribution strategy for their programs directly with their airline representatives. And, leaning into our industry's commitment to client-focused evolution, we call on our ecosystem partners to continue collaborating to deliver innovation that maximizes value and minimizes needless disruption.

NDC is on a promising trajectory, and we're optimistic that the near-term future may finally see the kind of corporate-travel-relevant benefits that airlines have long propounded. As the landscape continues to evolve, we stand with our ecosystem partners in our commitment to delivering a superior experience to our clients in their channel of choice.

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