



# 10 BUSINESS TRAVEL TRENDS FOR 2020

---

Presented by

**Skift**

+

**TripActions**<sup>®</sup>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It's been another fast-paced year for the business travel sector. Technology continues to reshape how business travelers plan and book their trips, and employee habits and expectations related to business travel continue to evolve. Meanwhile, new industry competitors are bringing fresh ideas and options to corporate travel buyers, impacting everything from distribution, to how products are marketed and sold, to expense management and contract negotiation.

For the decision makers that oversee corporate travel policy and spending decisions—including CFOs, Procurement, Operations HR and Travel Management leaders—it can be difficult to keep track of it all. How much will changing employee behavior impact the success of their programs? What tools should they utilize to balance the needs of travelers and the demands of the company balance sheet? And which industry-level trends will have a meaningful impact on their business?

It is with these questions in mind that Skift and TripActions are releasing “10 Business Travel Trends for 2020,” offering a macro-level look at the employee preferences, best-in-class business travel tools, and company-wide strategies the sector's decision makers will need to watch out for in 2020. The included trends were selected from a range of sources, including recent industry news, interviews with key industry experts and executives, and data drawn from a primary research study conducted by Skift in the summer of 2019.

Among the key themes that surfaced from the reporting are trends related to the importance of travel to achieving business objectives and growth, more user-friendly corporate travel tools, employee preferences related to sharing economy services and “bleisure” travel, the evolution of business travel expense management, and the growing imperative to address sustainability within business travel programs, among others.

What does 2020 hold for the business travel sector? While there may be no crystal ball to definitively predict the future, Skift and TripActions hope that this report will provide guidance to industry leaders as they set their corporate travel agendas for 2020 and the years beyond.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Letter</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
1. The Power of Being There in Person	<b>8</b>
2. Designing Great User Experiences to Boost Adoption	<b>14</b>
3. Travelers Demand an End-to-End Experience	<b>18</b>
4. Winning the Price, Loyalty, and Experience Trifecta	<b>24</b>
5. Platforms Simplify the Ancillary Purchase Process	<b>27</b>
6. Expanding the Sharing Economy	<b>31</b>
7. Bleisure Travel is the New Black	<b>34</b>
8. Rethinking Corporate Travel Expenses	<b>37</b>
9. Business Travel Culture Drives Company Success	<b>40</b>
10. Taking Care of Business, the Traveler, and the Planet	<b>43</b>

## EXECUTIVE LETTER

Travel, Finance, Operations and HR Leaders,

As a CFO, I've always had my eye on travel as one of my largest budget line items. The challenge had been the forced choice of legacy corporate travel platforms: You either optimized for employee experience or controlling costs—typically succeeding at neither and compounded with poor visibility and little opportunity for analytics.

We've seen nearly every other part of the business—even those with much smaller budget impact—reap the benefits of technology and innovation. Sales drove efficiency at scale with Salesforce, finance and HR via Workday, procurement through Coupa, product development using Atlassian, and marketing with Marketo.

But when it comes to travel, we've been forced to compromise. Legacy tools deliver a frustrating booking experience with limited inventory and inconsistent support while nickel and diming clients to death. B2B online booking tools deliver clunky UIs and little to no traveler support that combined require company-wide mandates to drive adoption. And consumer sites fail to provide the visibility, reporting and analytics we need.

The good news is that travel managers and finance leaders no longer have to sacrifice.

We can move to a model that's purpose built for today, delivering unrivaled inventory choice, powerful personalization and 24/7 global travel agents to delight travelers. One that's data-driven to provide complete visibility, accuracy, and predictability of spend while enabling fulfillment of duty of care. And that finally gives us the tools to adjust the dials to optimize for a great traveler experience and cost savings.

I hope you enjoy this look into the 10 business travel trends for 2020. We look forward to helping you seize these trends in your business to deliver a best-in-class corporate travel program in 2020.

Thomas Tuchscherer  
Chief Financial Officer, TripActions





93% traveler  
satisfaction

Up to 34%  
savings on  
lodging alone

## A great traveler experience and cost control in a single corporate travel platform? **Yes.**

Organizations have been forced to choose between employee experience and cost savings. Optimizing for one—as best you could with legacy tools available—meant sacrificing the other.

TripActions is the modern TMC for the 21st century, empowering CFOs, travel managers and operations leaders to deliver the best experience in business travel while controlling costs.

Get a demo today at [www.tripactions.com](http://www.tripactions.com)

**TripActions**<sup>®</sup>

TripActions is trusted by 3,000+ global enterprises, including:

RE/MAX

lyft

okta

box

twilio

wayfair

Crate&Barrel

SaraLee

FROZEN BAKERY

# INTRODUCTION



2019 was a year of innovation and dynamic change in the business travel sector. Technology continues to reshape how business travelers plan and book their trips, and employee habits and expectations related to business travel continue to evolve. Meanwhile, new industry competitors are bringing fresh ideas and options to corporate travel buyers, impacting everything from distribution to how products are marketed and sold, to expense management and contract negotiation.

But of all the changes impacting the business travel sector perhaps none is more important, or as all-encompassing, than the sector's growing focus on putting business traveler needs first. "Organizations are realizing that if they put their travelers first and deliver a corporate travel program users love with the right inventory, ease of use, personalization, and support from global travel agents when and where you need them, they'll willingly use the platform," said TripActions co-founder and CTO Ilan Twig. "That then translates into higher adoption, delivering everything the organization needs from their corporate travel program, including visibility and control over travel spend, the data and insights to optimize the program, and the ability to fulfill their duty of care."



No matter the technological innovation or policy issue, the corporate travel sector is coming to realize that business traveler satisfaction and cooperation is critical to the successful management of corporate travel programs. And these travelers increasingly expect the tools they use to book and manage their trips, even at large enterprises, to rise to the occasion. “For the new generation of employees coming in, they’re used to great consumer products and experiences,” said Twig. “Enterprise used to be a proxy for bad products that can do tasks at scale. That’s not the case anymore. Enterprise products have to be every bit as user friendly, convenient, and deliver instant gratification as consumer apps. After all, these same business users are consumers in their personal lives.”

But knowing that this is true raises an important question for travel managers and decision-makers that oversee corporate travel: What business travel trends will have the biggest impact on their employees’ overall satisfaction in 2020?

In order to understand the trends with the biggest influence on the employee user experience, Skift partnered with TripActions on this 2020 business travel trend roundup, interviewing a cross-section of industry leaders to understand how the sector will evolve in the year ahead. The insights from these interviews were then combined with data gathered in a 2019 primary research study conducted with Skift and TripActions for [The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report, along with analysis of a selection of relevant industry news stories to help better understand each trend.

The ten trends for 2020, identified below, focus on a variety of themes. These include how organizations can better support their business travelers from all different angles, whether that comes in the form of easier-to-use company tools to boost policy adoption, new technology innovations, more travel choices, better inventory, more proactive support while on the road, or adapting to new traveler trends like the sharing economy or bleisure.

The 2020 business travel trends to watch, understand, and incorporate into corporate travel policy are:

1. The Power of Being There in Person
2. Designing Great User Experiences to Boost Adoption
3. Travelers Demand an End-to-End Experience
4. Winning the Price, Loyalty, and Experience Trifecta
5. Platforms Simplify the Ancillary Purchase Process
6. Expanding the Sharing Economy
7. Bleisure Travel is the New Black
8. Rethinking Corporate Travel Expenses
9. Business Travel Culture Drives Company Success
10. Taking Care of Business, the Traveler, and the Planet

# 1. THE POWER OF BEING THERE IN PERSON



Video and digital collaboration tools have transformed the modern workplace. Today, employees can easily collaborate with co-workers around the world, offering a huge boost to productivity and what would seem to be growing opportunities to reduce travel costs. But in spite of the increasing potential of these digital collaboration tools to transform modern business, the importance of face-to-face meetings remains strong and critical to business success. In fact, a collection of organizations across the business travel sector are recognizing the benefits of traveling for real-life meetings.

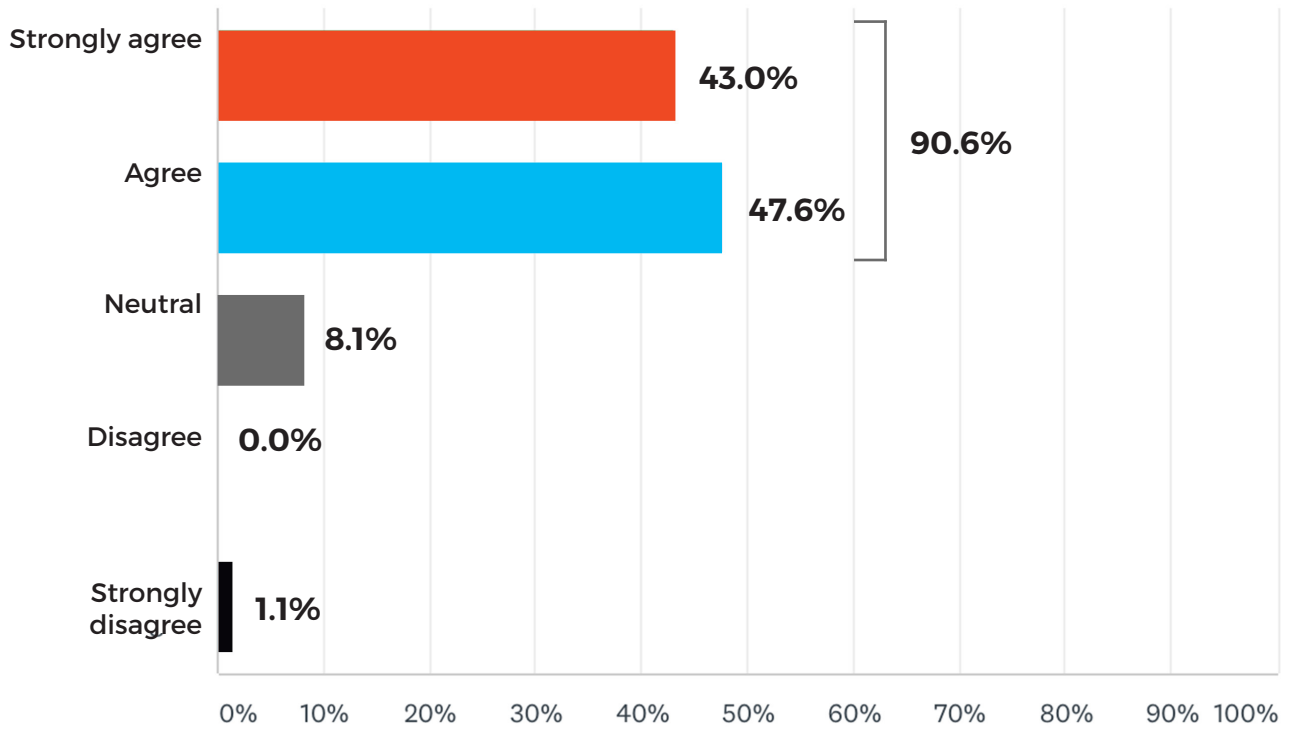
Perhaps the strongest signal of the continued importance of business travel and face time comes from the results of a survey completed as part of [The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report. As noted in the findings, more than 90 percent of travel managers and business travelers view work travel as “important for driving company growth.”



**Agree or Disagree:**

**“Business travel is important for driving company growth.”**

**Corporate travel managers**

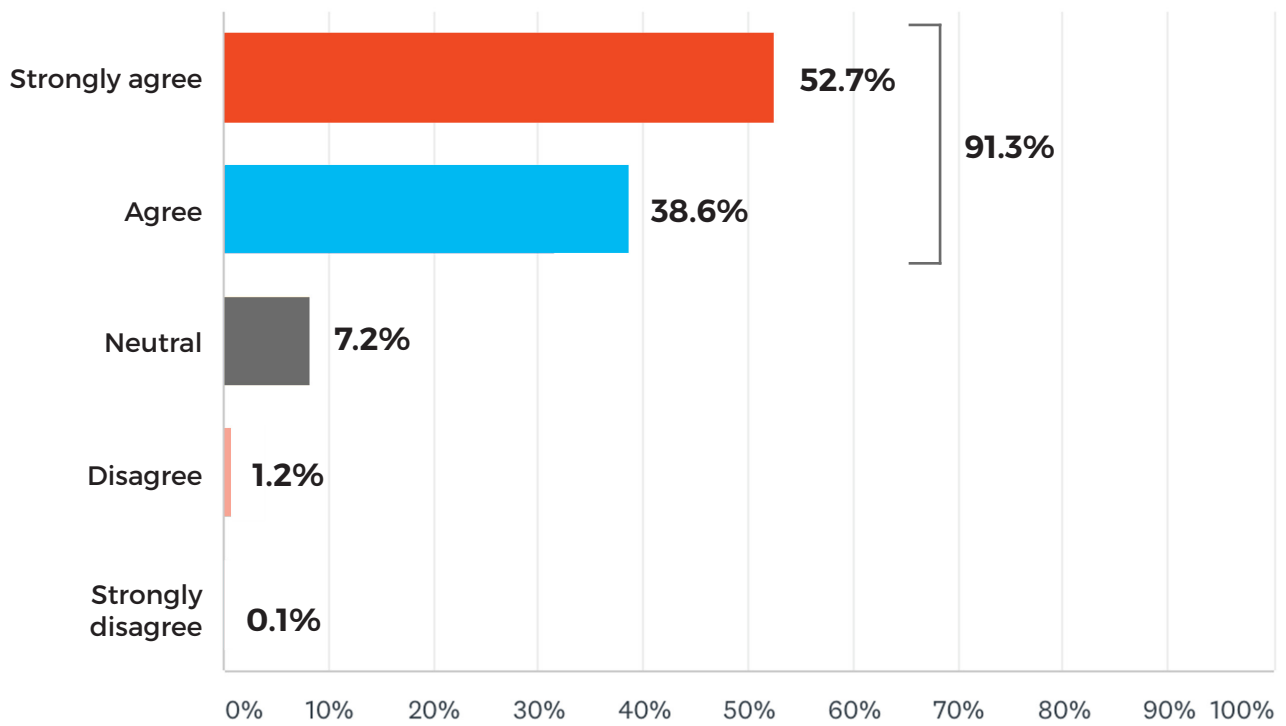


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

**Agree or Disagree:**

**“Business travel is important for driving my company’s growth.”**

**Business travelers**



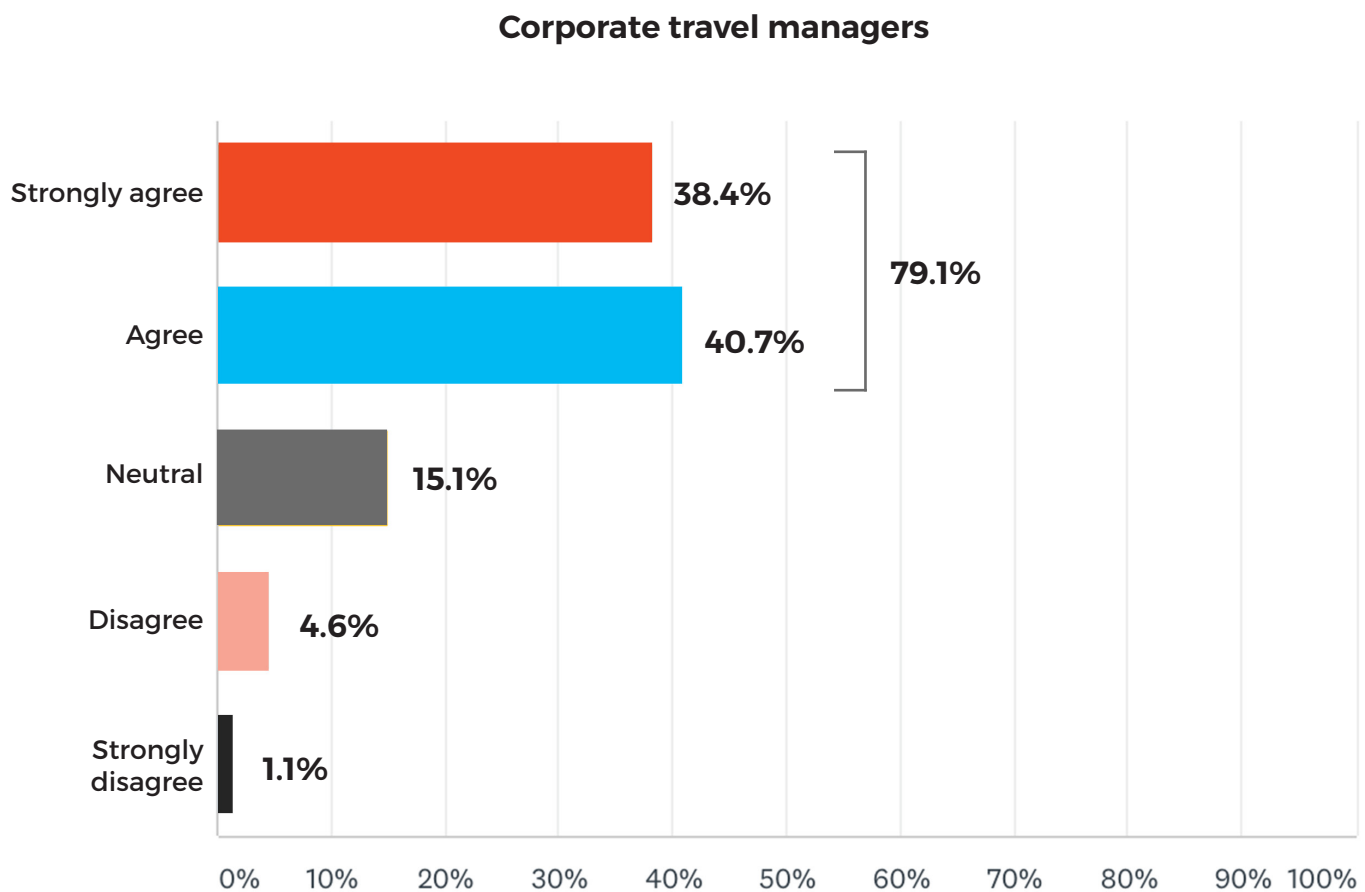
Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey



Survey respondents also felt that their trips were more effective than trying to conduct business virtually. Nearly 80 percent of travel managers and business travelers either agreed or strongly agreed that “meeting in person was more effective than meeting virtually.”

### Agree or Disagree:

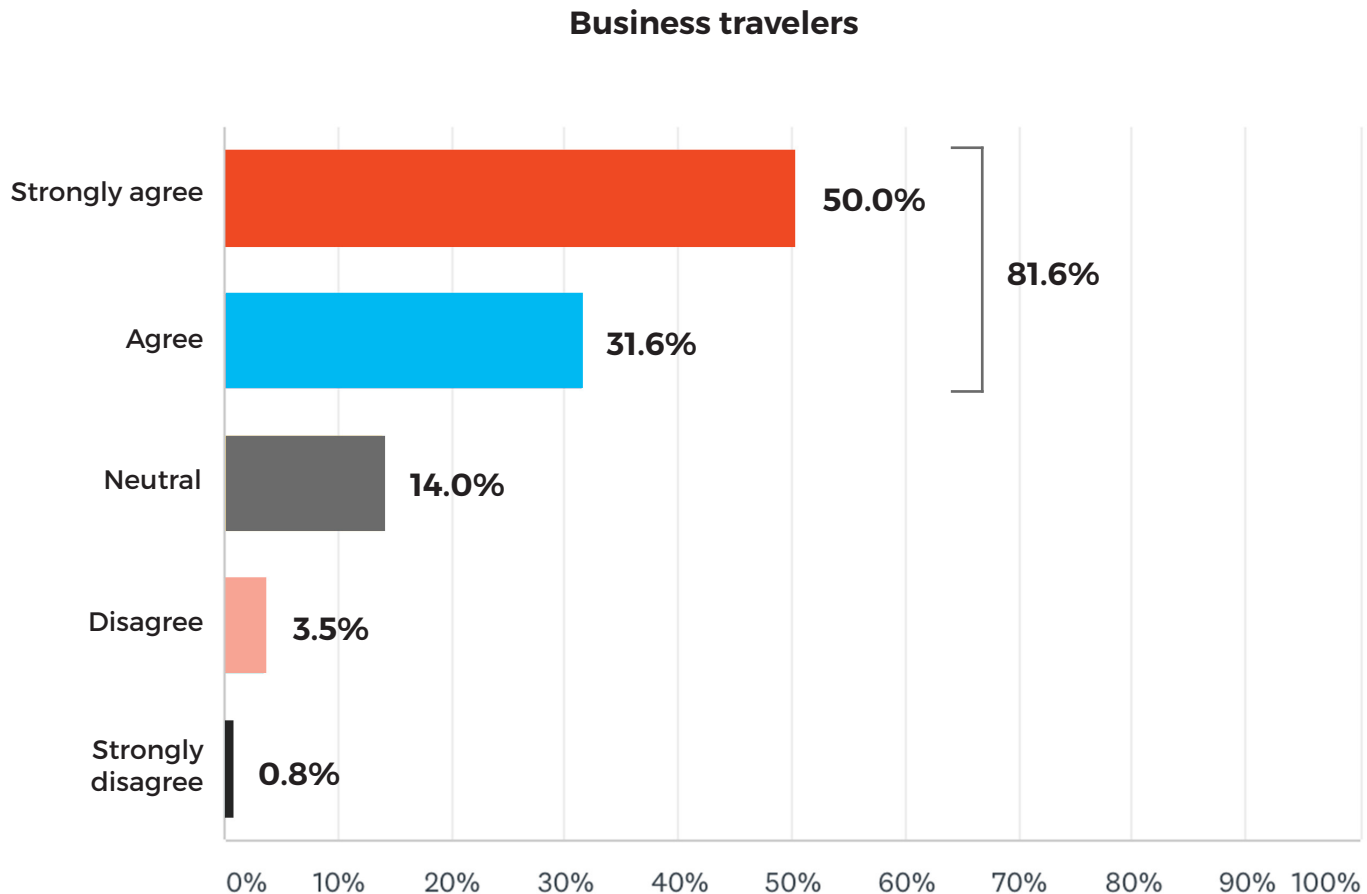
**“When it comes to getting things done, meeting in person is more effective than meeting virtually.”**



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

## Agree or Disagree:

**“When it comes to getting things done, meeting in person is more effective than meeting virtually.”**



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Skift's survey respondents are not alone in their support for more face time with fellow employees, prospects, and customers. Executive interviews with participants from across the travel industry back up this assessment. The most obvious reason is because business travel is often a factor in building relationships, closing sales, and negotiating new contracts.

“For my job it's pretty critical,” said Mike Ramirez, director of enterprise sales for software firm Looker. “Selling into the enterprise space...you're doing a couple pretty massive deals a year, which really requires face time.”

For others, the biggest advantage of in person meetings is that they allow participants to build rapport with colleagues and customers that wouldn't otherwise be possible over the phone or using a video conference.

“It’s the moments outside of the meeting that makes business happen,” said Daniel Finkel, VP of booking experience and supplier strategy at TripActions. “It’s the happy hour, the lunches and the dinners that move business forward. And that cannot be achieved through phone calls.”

As if all this evidence wasn’t enough, there’s now proof that encouraging real-world interactions also has an outsize impact on the overall health of the U.S. economy. According to [calculations used in a 2016 report](#) by the US Travel Association and Oxford Economics, “every dollar spent on face-to-face meetings and events generates an additional \$1.60 for the U.S. economy.”





## 2. DESIGNING GREAT USER EXPERIENCES TO BOOST ADOPTION



Today's business travel sector is increasingly focused on the topic of "consumerization," a trend among business travelers who are demanding more consumer-friendly user experiences. The shift reflects a desire for corporate booking and trip management platforms to provide the same level of ease, convenience, and instant gratification offered by other consumer tools for online shopping, requesting a taxi, or planning leisure trips.

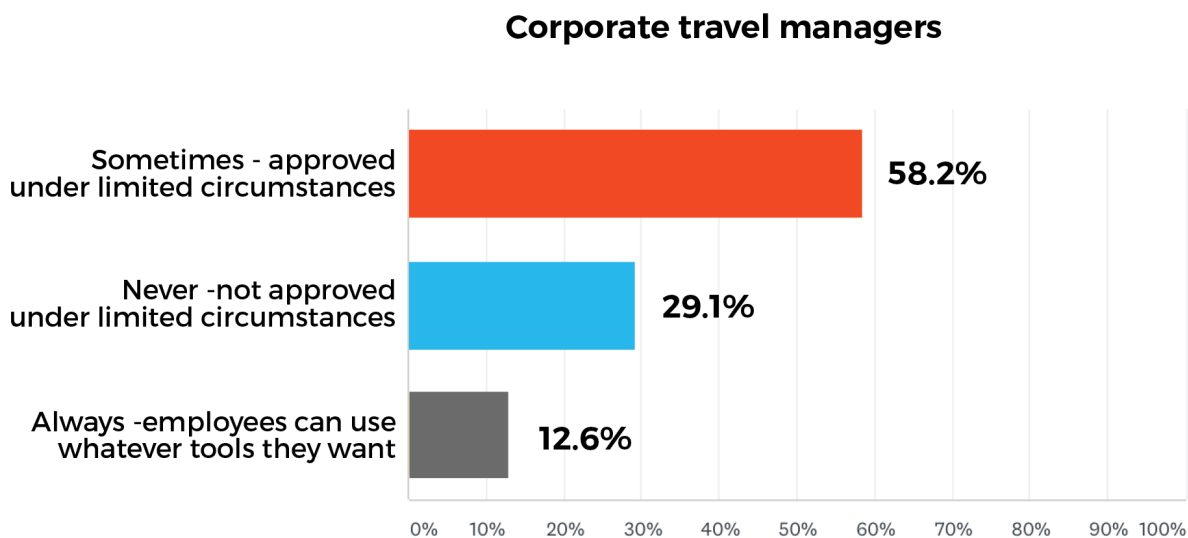
In 2020, this demand for simpler business travel policies and user experiences will have a substantial impact on travel managers and business travel decision makers, who will look for opportunities to provide employees with more user-friendly corporate travel tools as a way to encourage increased adoption and compliance with company travel policies—rather than having to mandate them.

"If you have a booking tool or an experience that people don't want to use, then that negates the whole purpose of having a managed travel program in the first place," said TripActions' Finkel. "You're going to have leakage: people booking offsite, or you're going to have people who, like me, have that one airline or hotel chain that they always go to. You have to ensure your corporate travel platform serves the needs of all your users."

There's no question that the push for easier-to-use tools among business travelers has had an impact on their compliance with company travel policies. According to a 2018 investigation by the [Global Business Travel Association \(GBTA\)](#), an average of 37 percent of hotel bookings, and 15 percent of airline bookings are made outside of company policy. A separate study from the analyst firm IDC, [cited by Phocuswire](#), suggests the out of policy rate may be even higher, representing between 40 and 50 percent of all hotel bookings.

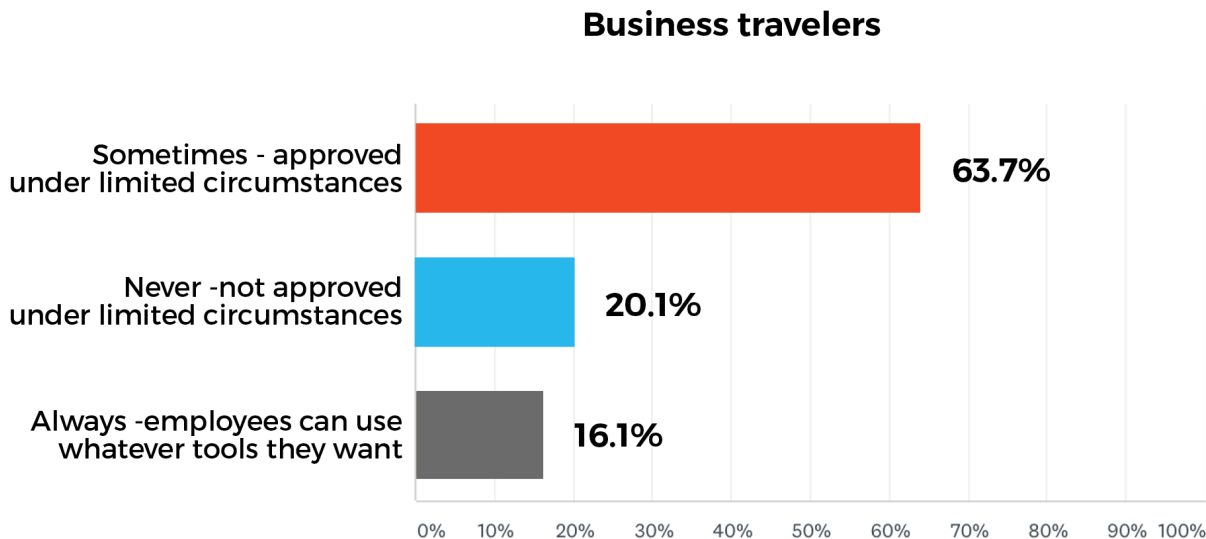
Adding to the challenge is general confusion among employees and managers about which types of purchases are allowed within their company policy. Consider the data presented in [Skift's The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report, which found that nearly 60 percent of travel managers and business travelers reported that their organizations "sometimes" allowed travelers to use "non approved tools" to plan and book their trips, highlighting a persistent uncertainty about what is or is not permitted.

### Which of the following best describes your company's policy regarding employees' use of "non-approved" tools (apps, websites, travel agencies) to book corporate trips?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

## Which of the following best describes your company's policy regarding your use of "non-approved" tools (apps, websites, travel agencies) outside company policy that might be used to book work trips?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

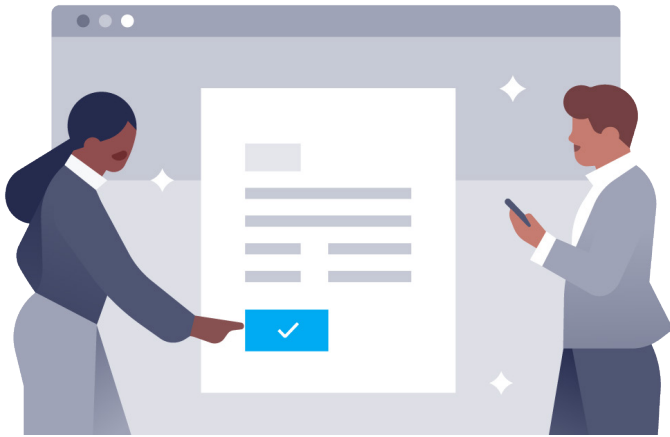
In such an environment, the convenience, ease of use, and instant gratification of a given business travel platform often makes the difference between compliance and going rogue.

"If travelers like our product, travelers are going to use our product," said Anique Drumright, VP of product at TripActions. "When they use our product, it allows travel managers and companies to manage and optimize their corporate travel spend. It allows them to get insights, it allows them to create savings, and it allows them to perform duty of care. If people aren't using your corporate travel solution, what's the purpose of it? We believe that user experience is critical because it drives adoption."

A number of recent innovations in the corporate travel space suggest that significant progress is being made to improve the user experience. One example is the use of advanced technology solutions like machine learning, which can help deliver more personalized booking experiences to individual travelers based on their profile and past booking behavior, as well as assist with proactive support when there's an unexpected change of plans like a weather delay.



Another is happening in the realm of airline distribution, where initiatives like IATA's New Distribution Capability (NDC) and [ATPCO's Next Generation Storefront](#) implemented by TripActions, will provide travelers with more options and more opportunities to book inventory that was historically only available on traditional consumer sites or direct through airlines. Both of these innovations are reviewed in more detail in the ancillary trend described later in this report.



**On the question of whether or not respondents felt their company's business travel solution was easy to use, 73% of business travelers using TripActions either agreed or strongly agreed. This was in comparison to just 49% of business travelers using other corporate travel platforms, a massive 24 percentage point gap.**

But no matter the innovation, there are growing signs that business travel platforms like TripActions are satisfying travelers demand for more convenient, easier-to-use solutions that deliver instant gratification like consumer apps. In fact, in [The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report, on the question of whether or not respondents felt their "company's business travel solution was easy to use," 73 percent of business travelers using TripActions either agreed or strongly agreed. This was in comparison to just 49 percent of business travelers using other corporate travel platforms, a massive 24 percentage point gap.

And that traveler satisfaction is leading to higher adoption which helps organizations improve their travel spend visibility and control, optimize their travel programs to drive savings, and fulfil their duty of care commitments.

### 3. TRAVELERS DEMAND AN END-TO-END EXPERIENCE

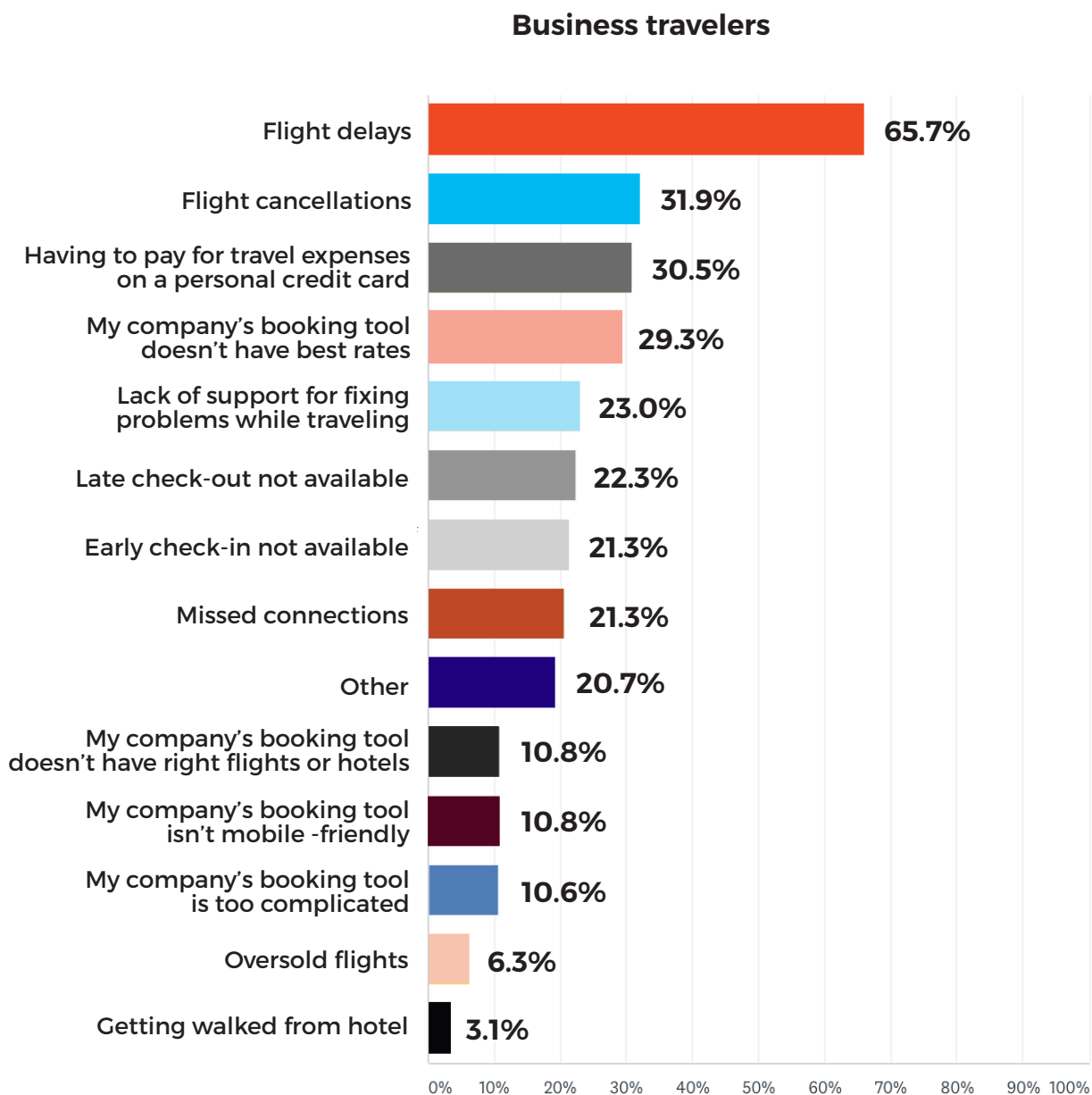


If there's one constant in the business travel experience facing today's employees, it's that something will always go wrong. Whether it's an unexpected weather delay for a flight, or a last-minute change with an out-of-town meeting, business travelers need to be ready to adapt their plans at any moment. But that can be difficult to do on top of other responsibilities.

Unfortunately, the tools many travelers are provided to book and manage their trips aren't making the job any easier. Due to the piecemeal nature of the current business travel ecosystem, many parts of the business travel experience (planning, booking, traveling, expensing) are still disconnected from one another, leading to unforeseen pain points for employees, along with gaps in information for company leaders. In 2020, the travel platforms that are able to stitch these disparate parts of the trip into an interconnected experience will gain favor with key sector stakeholders, while also gaining an advantage over their competitors.

The wide variety of pain points mentioned by travelers in a 2019 Skift survey, conducted for the [The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report, is symbolic of the unique challenges related to business travel. Sixty-five percent of respondents mentioned flight delays while traveling as their number one problem, while another 30 percent mentioned issues related to trip expenses, a function that typically happens after the trip is complete. Meanwhile, another 29 percent of respondents mentioned problems with company booking tools that don't have the best rates, a function that typically happens before the trip.

## What are the most common problems you face when traveling for work?





Given the diverse set of problems outlined on this list, it's becoming increasingly important for travelers and their managers to utilize business travel platforms and tools that help them more easily manage the entire travel experience, not just one portion of it. For travel managers, the benefit of an end-to-end platform is that they have visibility into the travelers' entire trip, allowing them to proactively offer support, keep travelers safe, keep better track of expenses, and optimize the overall travel program and policies. And for business travelers, it dramatically simplifies the process of making trip changes when plans shift.

"The reality is that travel is stressful and tough, and there are lots of little decision points and problem solving that's entailed," said TripActions' Drumright. "By providing an end-to-end experience, you're providing a corporate traveler with the support and organization that they need all within a single platform. So they're not having to make all of those decisions alone throughout the travel process, or in disparate systems."

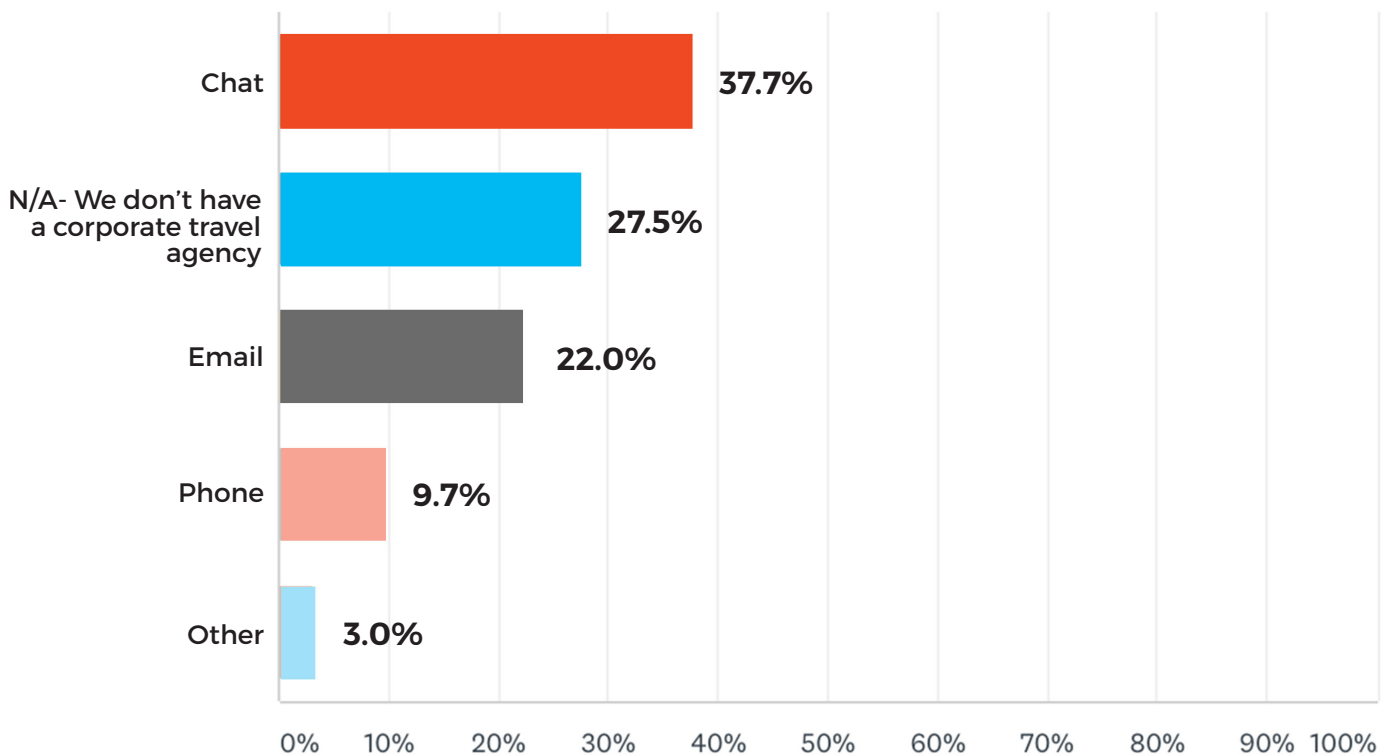
Drumright continued, noting how end-to-end travel platforms can help minimize unnecessary distractions. "It's a support mechanism so that when you arrive for your meeting, you're able to focus on that meeting rather than focusing on, 'Oh, I need to call the airline to make that change. Or, 'Did this travel agent email me back? I sent an email two hours ago.' All of that wasted time, frustration and worry is over."



This is even more true when the experiences are delivered in a “multi-modal” fashion, referring to when business travelers can use multiple methods to access information or connect with a global travel agent—whether that’s by phone, email or chat. In fact, in Skift’s survey for [The State of Business Travel 2020](#), more than 37 percent of traveler managers and 28 percent of business travelers noted their preferred channel of communication with travel agents was by chat. Yet very few of the existing corporate travel platforms even offer it.

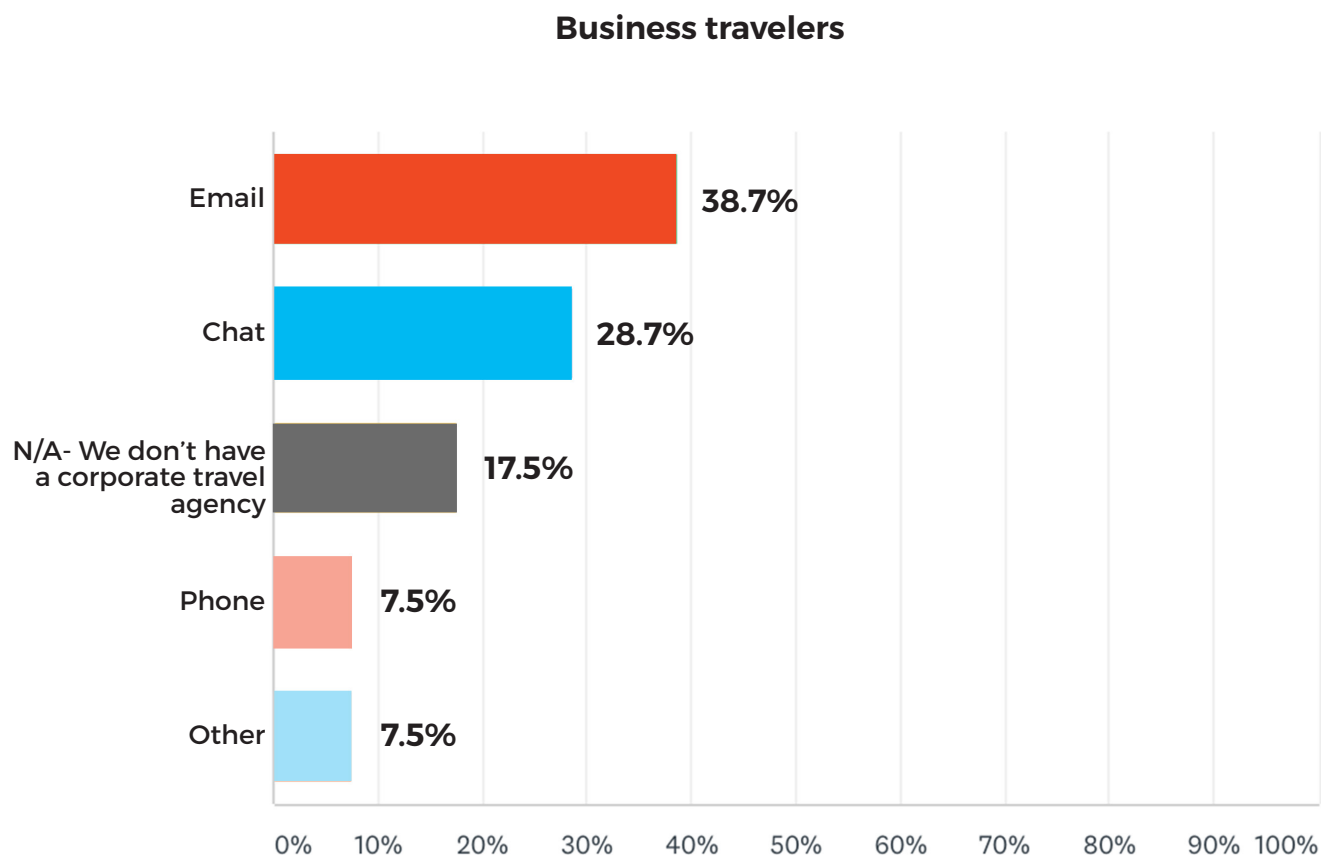
### **If your organization uses a corporate travel agency to book trips, what is your preferred method of interacting with them?**

#### **Corporate travel managers**



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

## If your organization uses a corporate travel agency to book trips, what is your preferred method of interacting with them?



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Another solution that's helping solve for the end-to-end traveler problem is machine learning technology. This innovation, when appropriately paired with human support, can intelligently and proactively tell when a traveler might need assistance, say because of an expected missed connection, and automatically rebook them on the next available flight. The best traveler experiences bring this intelligence together with actual live travel agents, who know the industry and have tips and tricks to quickly and efficiently take care of travelers, no matter where their itineraries take them.

A great example of this strategy in action is TripActions' TravelXen product, an internal, home-grown technology that the company developed to better serve travelers. TravelXen puts all the information that their global travel agents need—in context—to be able to best support and take care of the traveler as fast as possible.



“When a [TripActions] agent gets into TravelXen, they immediately get into the mindset of the traveler,” said TripActions’ Drumright. “They can view what the traveler’s viewing on their screen, and they have all the relevant information about who the traveler is, the trip they’re on, their preferences, and more. Do they prefer the aisle or the window seat? Are they a director? Are they an executive?”

“We’ve built a ton of automated tooling that sits within TravelXen that enables an agent to not have to spend 15 minutes in the GDS [global distribution system] looking for the right results to change a flight, but rather empowers them to automatically change flights or cancel flights right within TripActions TravelXen,” said Drumright.

Whether the solution is man- or machine-powered, or a combination of both, TripActions’ Finkel reiterates the value of having it all come together in one place, for business travelers and managers alike. “For business travelers, it’s great to have a single point of contact for your entire itinerary. One change can cause a ripple effect that can eat up an hour or more of time making changes. If the flight moves out a day, the hotel, rental car, and maybe a train all need to be changed.

“For the travel manager, the end-to-end platform gives them visibility into their traveler’s booking habits at scale, empowering them with the data and insights to manage and optimize their travel program,” added Finkel.





## 4. WINNING THE PRICE, LOYALTY, AND EXPERIENCE TRIFECTA



According to business travel sector experts, there are three distinct types of business travelers: those who book based on price, those who book based on loyalty affiliations, and those who book based on the experience. Whereas in the past, each of these different mindsets had to be catered to separately, in 2020, new business travel solutions will make it easier to satisfy the needs of all three constituencies.

The concept for the price-, loyalty-, and experience-led framework comes from the work of [Festive Road](#), a business travel consultancy that developed the concept based on interviews with thousands of stakeholders in the business travel sector. “We spoke to about 10,000 different travelers from lots of different industries,” said Caroline Strachan, managing partner at Festive Road. “Every time we did any form of traveler engagement we used a similar set of questions, trying to get to how people identified and what their motivators were while traveling, and that’s how we came up with these three.”

In a nutshell, Festive Road's framework suggests that travelers book business trips based on three mindsets: finding the lowest cost (price-led), factors like trip schedule or having specific amenities available (experience-led), or based on the loyalty points they'll receive (loyalty-led). These mindsets have important implications for travel managers who must think about how their travel policies and tools match up. Otherwise, they risk having a greater share of travelers book outside of company policy.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the disconnect is the sector's focus on cost-cutting (price-led) above all else. "Travel policies tend to be price led," said Strachan. "But the travelers tend to be loyalty- or experience-led, which is quite fascinating from a travel management perspective."



How will travel managers satisfy the needs of loyalty- and experience-led travelers while still meeting their goals for managing costs? The solution will rely on providing more dynamic, customized options to travelers, coupled with a shift in attitudes from travel managers toward more user-friendly policy options.

"In order to build a tool that people want to use, it has to be personalized and tailored to what their individual behaviors are," said TripActions' Finkel. "That's something that we craft really well, and I think it's going to set us up for success as we continue to serve all types of travelers at enterprises of every size, industry, and geography."

The process starts by using travel platforms that surface all of the relevant inventory—flights, lodging, rail, and rental cars—to give the business traveler choice, all within the context of their company policy. Then that inventory must be presented to the traveler in a way that optimizes for their preferences and past booking behavior. Beyond simply knowing that a traveler has a particular loyalty affiliation, today's top business travel platforms recognize the trends over time associated with that individual's travel, ensuring they also get the experience they prefer.

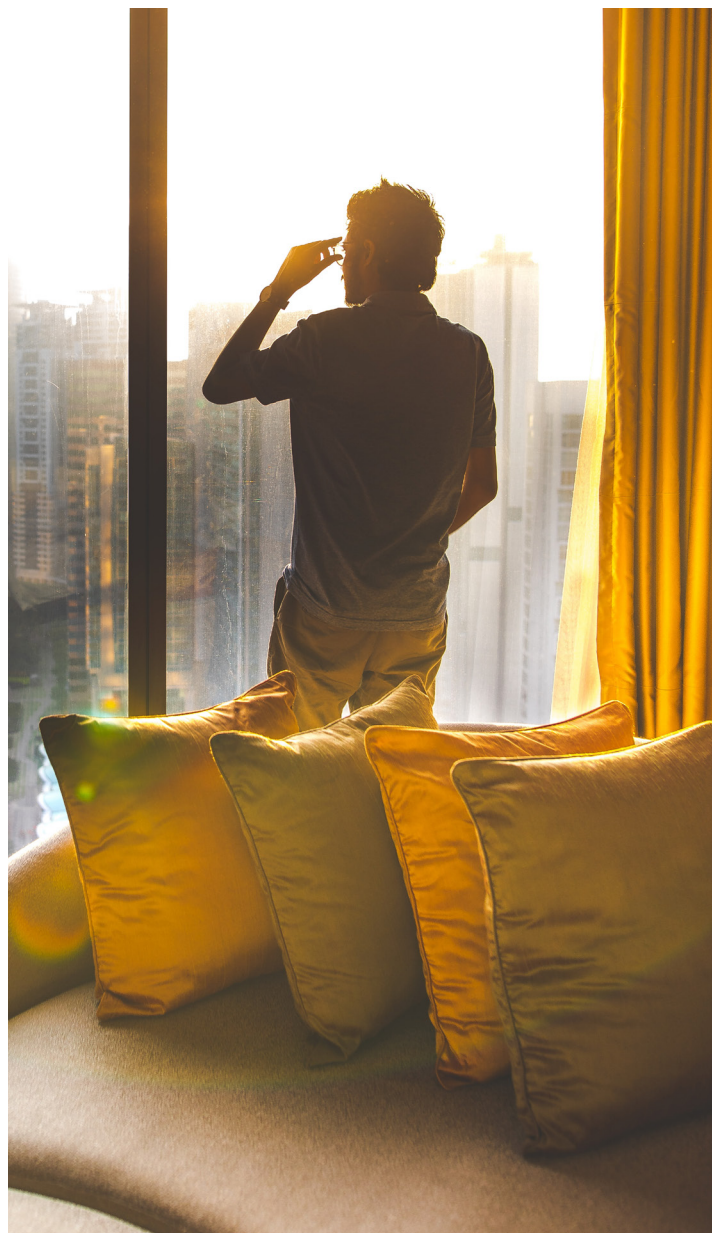


“We have to shift from this schedule- or price-led shopping experience,” said Festive Road’s Strachan, referring to the current format that most booking tools display trip options. “Our current [business travel booking] tools give 200 responses. Why is that helpful to me? [Instead] there would be an attribute where I could say my number one priority is safety. My second is on-time performance, my third is comfort, my fourth is user rating.”

Another example might be if a traveler consistently wants to stay at a specific boutique hotel with fewer than 50 rooms that has an on-site restaurant, gym, and pool. The ideal corporate travel platform should recognize that when their preferred hotel is sold out in a given location, it would still show them other similar boutique hotels to book from, and do so within the context of the company’s travel policy.

What’s more, that policy should be dynamic for that market and those dates that the traveler has selected. Rather than set a corporate policy of \$300 per night in New York City year round—which in summer might be near impossible to find a room but in the dead of winter affords the traveler a very luxurious stay—the policy should factor in the demand in that city for the selected dates, and adjust dynamically to drive the right behavior by encouraging even the most fervent loyal or experience-led travelers to be mindful of price. After all, and without further guidance, most travelers are likely to book the nicest available room that’s within policy.

In this way, modern corporate travel platforms and programs will blend to further appeal to price-, loyalty-, and experience-led travelers—and travel managers—in 2020.



## 5. PLATFORMS SIMPLIFY THE ANCILLARY PURCHASE PROCESS



Ancillary products, referring to the “add ons” that suppliers offer for purchase to compliment the main trip purchase, deliver more choice and convenience to travelers while serving as a new source of revenue for industry suppliers. But far too often, these ancillaries have caused confusion and led to a potentially bad experience for travelers and travel managers alike, with unexpected company costs and unnecessary friction in the travel experience.

In 2020, thanks to better integration with corporate travel distribution and booking processes along with continued enhancements in UI/UX, it will get much easier for travel managers to clearly communicate what’s in policy and for travelers to purchase these popular add-ons, offering them more suitable options to personalize their trips to better serve their needs.

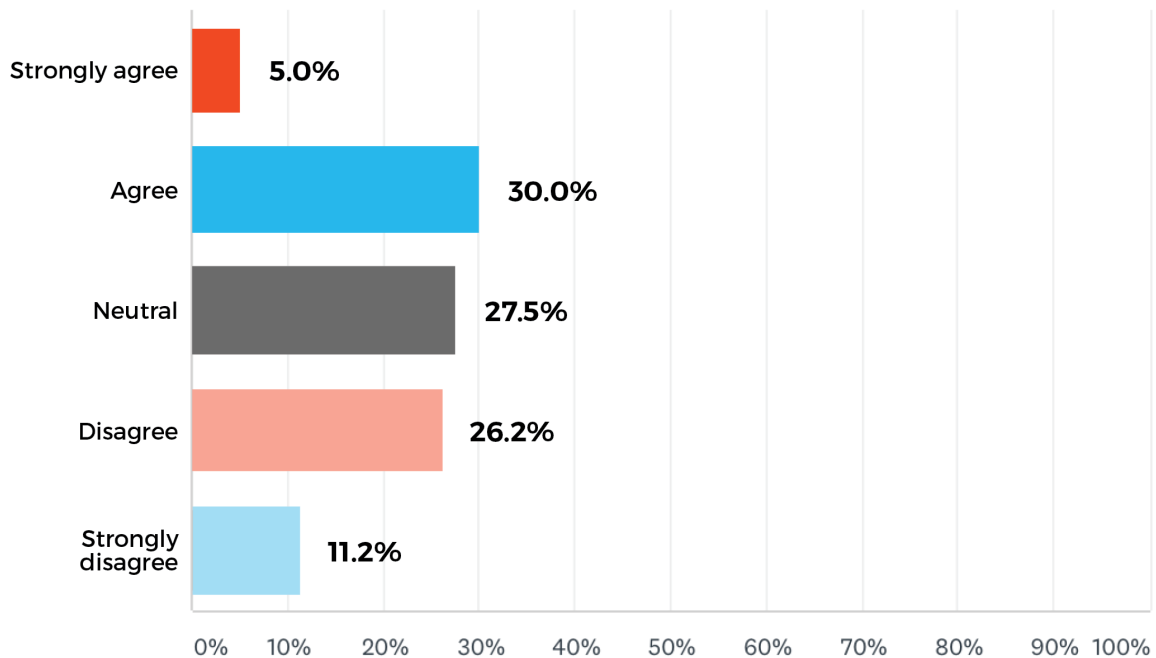
In recent years, ancillaries have become a bigger part of the business travel purchase process. Consider the example of the airline industry, where a [2019 report from IdeaWorks](#) found that such ancillary purchases accounted for more than \$109 billion in industry revenue. But even as travel companies move to monetize all manner of flight products, including seat upgrades, checked baggage, in-flight Wi-Fi, a la carte food, lounge access, and more, it’s gotten harder for business travelers to navigate when and why these purchases are allowed in their company policies.

Consider the survey results published in [Skift's The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report, which uncovered a relative lack of flexibility in policy expectations related to ancillaries. More than 64 percent of corporate travel managers and more than 63 percent business travelers were either neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the notion that their companies "offered a flexible policy that allowed employees to expense trip add-ons."

### Agree or Disagree:

**"Our company has a flexible policy that allows employees to expense trip 'add-ons' like seat upgrades, room upgrades, Wi-Fi, and room service."**

#### Corporate travel managers

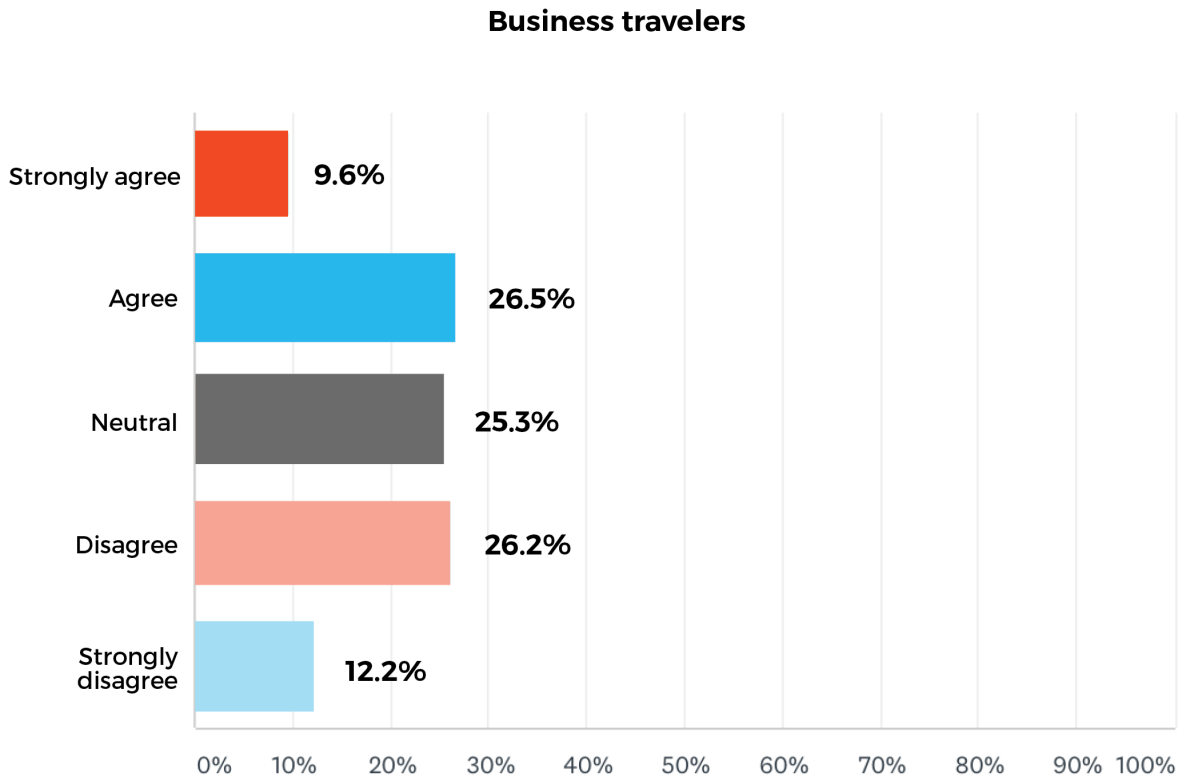


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey



### Agree or Disagree:

**“My company has a flexible policy that allows me to expense trip ‘add-ons’ like seat upgrades, room upgrades, Wi-Fi, and room service.”**



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

In order to minimize confusion, and to provide travelers with more choices at the time of booking, business travel platforms like TripActions are working closely with travel industry partners like the airlines to make sure these ancillaries are better integrated into the purchase process in a more transparent and seamless fashion.

The most notable examples of this integration is the company's [direct connection initiative with United Airlines](#), [Lufthansa Airline Group](#), and [Southwest Airlines](#), all of which allow it to more easily incorporate add-ons into the TripActions platform.

“As we build more and more of these, we’re able to create that same experience across a multitude of carriers, which does allow for a very transparent shopping experience,” said TripActions’ Finkel.

TripActions is further innovating on how content, including ancillaries, is presented to the user in its platform via its [“Next Generation Storefront”](#) (also known as NGS). NGS delivers a slick, consumer-esque experience for users so that they can easily find, understand, and select the travel options that work best for them—all within their corporate policy. For example, that includes details on the aircraft, its on-time stats, the seat, its legroom, recline pitch, and even photos to show exactly what the traveler is getting. TripActions’ innovative approach to how it presents inventory and associated content to users offers travel managers and employees even more choice and transparency when booking ancillaries through the TripActions platform.



“NGS really is all about creating a framework to allow for comparisons of fares, content, cabins [of service], and ancillaries,” said Finkel in earlier 2019 interview. “It’s trying to create a framework that allows for a much more simplified shopping experience. And I think it’s going to do a lot to help people first understand what’s included in certain fares and certain brand fares, and [second] to be able to do those comparisons.”

As other TripActions executives also note, the push for greater integration of ancillaries into business travel platforms will also give travel managers greater insight into employee spending, helping them to make smarter decisions about policy and spending moving forward.

“On the data side, it is helpful to have all of your ancillary purchases sit within a single data pool with the rest of your travel spend,” said TripActions’ Drumright. “Finance teams are able to look at that spend holistically rather than saying ‘70 percent of my travel spend is here, another 10 percent is there, another 15 percent is here.’ You’re able to see it all in a single view.”

## 6. EXPANDING THE SHARING ECONOMY



The sharing economy has quickly gained wide acceptance with consumers. And many of the world's biggest sharing economy companies are moving rapidly to expand their offerings in the business travel sector. But for corporate travelers, there are still barriers. In 2020, challenges related to sharing economy distribution and end-to-end integration into the business travel journey will need to be improved in order for the services to continue to grow in popularity beyond leisure travelers.

In 2019, there's been significant industry-wide momentum around business traveler use of sharing economy products and services. Consider that Lyft and Uber are among the most expensed brands used by travelers according to a [recent report published by Business Travel News](#). And on the distribution side, we're seeing growing interest in providing more business-travel ready sharing economy offerings. Apartment-sharing giant Airbnb continues to [diversify its options and services](#) designed for business travelers. Another example comes from Marriott, which launched its own [home rental service](#) earlier this year.

Alongside this industry shift, there's been a corresponding acceptance of the practice among company travel managers and policymakers.



“We just accept that people are going to use them, because they’re already using them for personal travel,” said Jennie Robertson, travel manager for InVision, a digital product design platform.

Still, the sharing economy in its current iteration doesn’t always work in many situations, limiting its use. For example, some travelers continue to gravitate toward hotels due to their interest in accruing loyalty points.

“The majority of our travel warriors enjoy their hotel reward points,” said Jeanne Corsick, executive assistant for Bloomreach. “So, we know they’re likely to use the hotel options that are offered through TripActions that include these.”



Other travelers have even reported issues with maintenance in their rental properties, probably the last thing any traveler wants to deal with while trying to work on the road. “Last winter someone’s hot water [in their apartment] wasn’t working. This happened during a cold snap—the coldest week of the year,” said Lenore Dunlop, travel manager and executive assistant for the e-commerce company Rakuten Kobo. “Stuff like that you can’t really control.”

These concerns match up with survey data in [Skift’s The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report. Respondents from both the travel manager and business traveler audience overwhelmingly indicated they preferred to stay in a hotel over an apartment-style accommodation. Eighty percent of travel managers and 90 percent of business travelers said their first choice for accommodations was a hotel. Only 12 percent of travel managers and five percent of travelers said a DIY apartment rental was their preferred accommodation choice.

### Corporate travel managers

Which of the following lodging options do you prefer employees use for work trips?

Hotel	80.5%
Serviced Apartment / Corporate Housing	8.2%
DIY Apartment Rental	12.3%
Hostel	4.3%

### Business travelers

Which of the following lodging options do you prefer employees use for work trips?

Hotel	91.5%
Serviced Apartment / Corporate Housing	4.5%
DIY Apartment Rental	5.6%
Hostel	0.3%

Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

Aside from issues related to employee preference, the sharing economy will need deeper integration into the corporate travel ecosystem and more business traveler and manager-friendly features in order to see more widespread acceptance.

For example, travelers who book sharing economy services using less sophisticated business travel platforms can often get confused about which types of accommodations are self-serve and which are traditional hotels, resulting in a bad traveler experience.

“When a condo or house shows up in an online booking tool, it can look very similar to a hotel listing,” said InVision’s Robertson. “I’ve had travelers inadvertently book into a condo thinking it’s a hotel, but then arrive to find there’s no front desk. They can end up having a much different experience than what they were expecting.”

On top of that, business travel platforms will be looking to add new user experience features that help to further integrate sharing economy services into the business travel journey. For example, industry leader TripActions already pre-populates addresses of accommodations into its ridesharing app integration to remove friction from the experience so travelers no longer have to copy an address, then open a ridesharing app and paste in the address. It’s all seamless. Travel managers and travelers can expect additional value adds like better integration of sharing economy invoices into expense management solutions.

## 7. BLEISURE TRAVEL IS THE NEW BLACK



In 2020, more employees will combine work trips with personal trips, creating both opportunities and challenges for companies and travel managers. In fact, the growth of these bleisure trips is raising a number of questions for travel managers. What policies should they set regarding non-work travel purchases? And could these non-work travel purchases be covered by the organization in some instances, for instance when they are offset by lower travel costs elsewhere (for example, lower airfare with a Saturday night stay) or as a company perk?

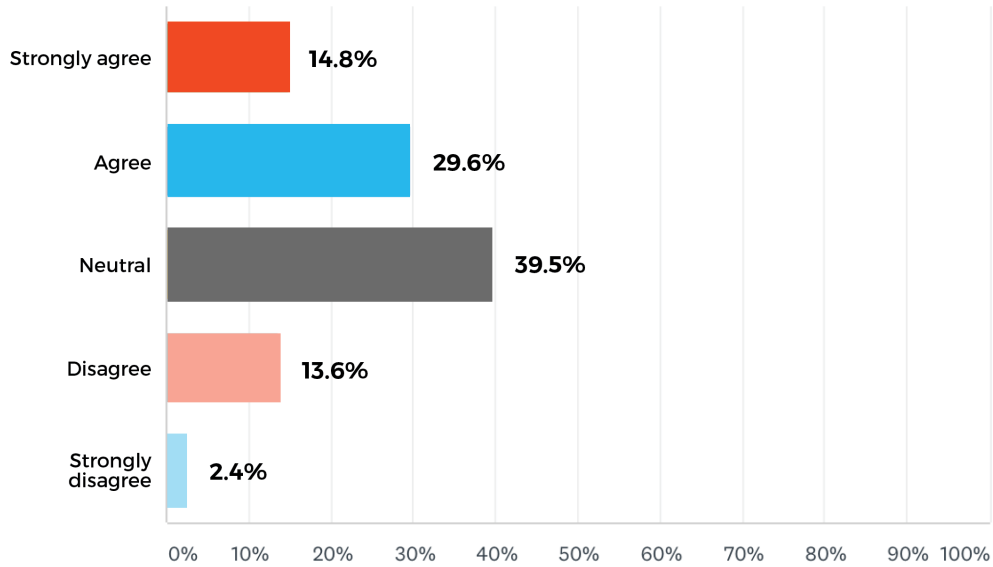
A relatively significant number of travel managers in the survey for [The State of Business Travel 2020](#) report said they had noticed the bleisure trend among employees, with 44 percent noting they strongly agreed or agreed that more employees were participating in bleisure activities. That said, there was a more than 10 percentage point gap between the travel managers and business travelers, suggesting that managers could be doing more to design business travel solutions that allow for employees to take advantage of bleisure travel while on work trips.



**Agree or Disagree:**

**“More of our employees are combining work trips with leisure trips in the past 12 months.”**

**Corporate travel managers**

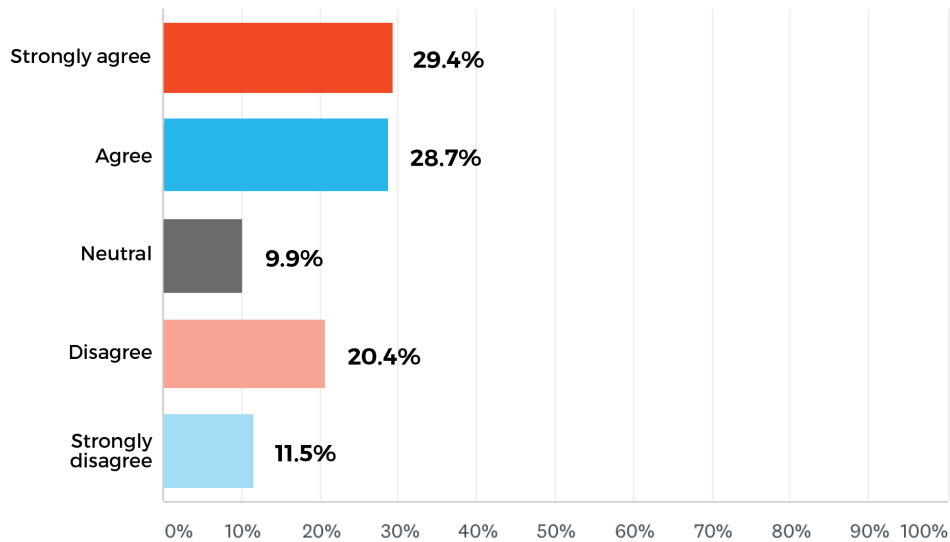


Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

**Agree or Disagree:**

**“I have combined a work trip with a leisure trip in the past 12 months.”**

**Business travelers**



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

The growing prevalence of these blended work and leisure trips is encouraging more travel managers to find creative policy solutions to simplify the process for travelers. One travel manager mentioned a situation where they had to redefine the company rental car policy to accommodate overseas workers who were visiting the US office for two-to-three-week periods and booking vehicles for extended periods of time.

“We found that our international travelers were planning their vacation in those two to three weeks and hanging on to their cars instead of turning it back in and getting something for their personal use,” said Bloomreach’s Corsick. “And we were seeing these high rental car costs coming in, and that was kind of alarming.”

After some revisions to their policy, Corsick believes the company has found the right middle ground. “We made some adjustments and started encouraging them to use Uber and Lyft to/from the airport and to the office. Then, if they wanted a rental car on the weekend, they could get that on their own. Or, for their last week here, they could [get a rental car] if that’s what they’re wanting to use for their vacation.”

Meanwhile, other travel managers note that they are increasingly encouraging employees to expense certain leisure related trip purchases not just because they help travelers. It’s also because they ultimately save the company money.”

“When you look at flights in the aggregate, those trips can actually save us money,” said InVision’s Robertson. “Especially internationally because they’re including a Saturday night stay on a trip that wouldn’t normally have one. Of course we look for outliers, but I think it usually balances out in the end.”



## 8. RETHINKING CORPORATE TRAVEL EXPENSES



Expense submission, reconciliation, and management tools are an often-ignored area of the overall business travel experience. However, many companies are recognizing hidden pain points connected with expenses while traveling, and, as a result, we're starting to see new innovations that will help streamline the process to create a better experience for travelers, travel managers, and finance leaders alike.

As some business travel executives note, financing travel and the associated expense submission and management are tasks that have historically been outsourced to their workers. "Companies have delegated this task to employees," said Thomas Tuchscherer, chief financial officer at TripActions. As he points out, this process has been acceptable for some employees who leverage their own credit cards to earn points and boost their own loyalty program status.

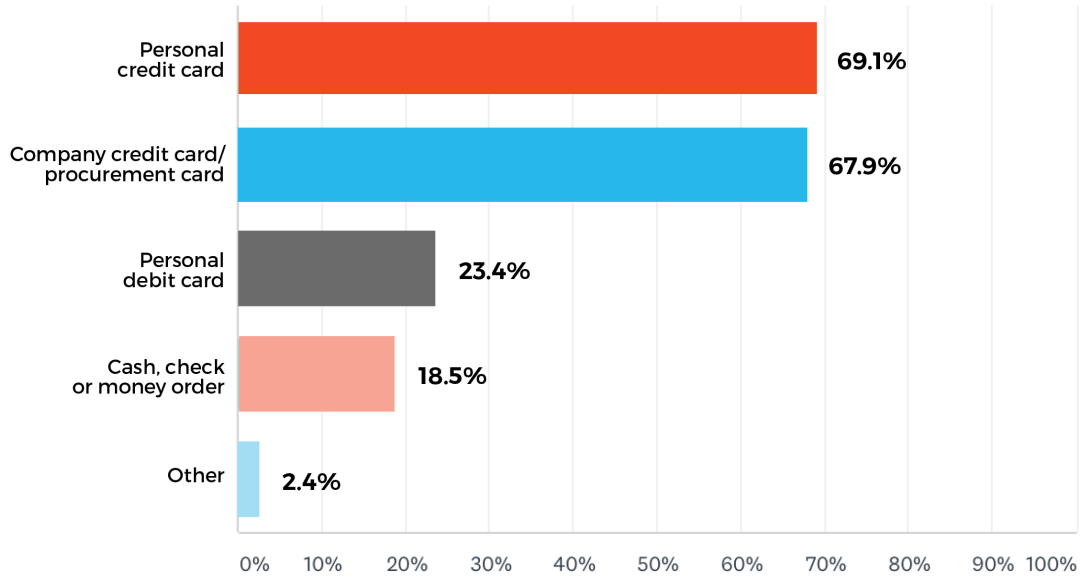
However, this isn't universally the case. A significant share of employees don't like waiting to be reimbursed for their expenses after the trip. "A lot of people hate expenses because they don't have the spare cash to carry the cost or don't have a large enough credit line to cover personal and work travel expenses," said Tuchscherer.

This hidden friction is confirmed by business travelers and travel managers alike. Many note that they currently use personal cards to fund business trips, often waiting until they return home to begin the reimbursement process. According to the survey results in Skift's State of Business Travel 2020 report, 76 percent of business travelers and 69 percent of corporate travel managers said they pay for their trip their expenses with a personal credit card.



**When employees travel for work, they pay for expenses with:**

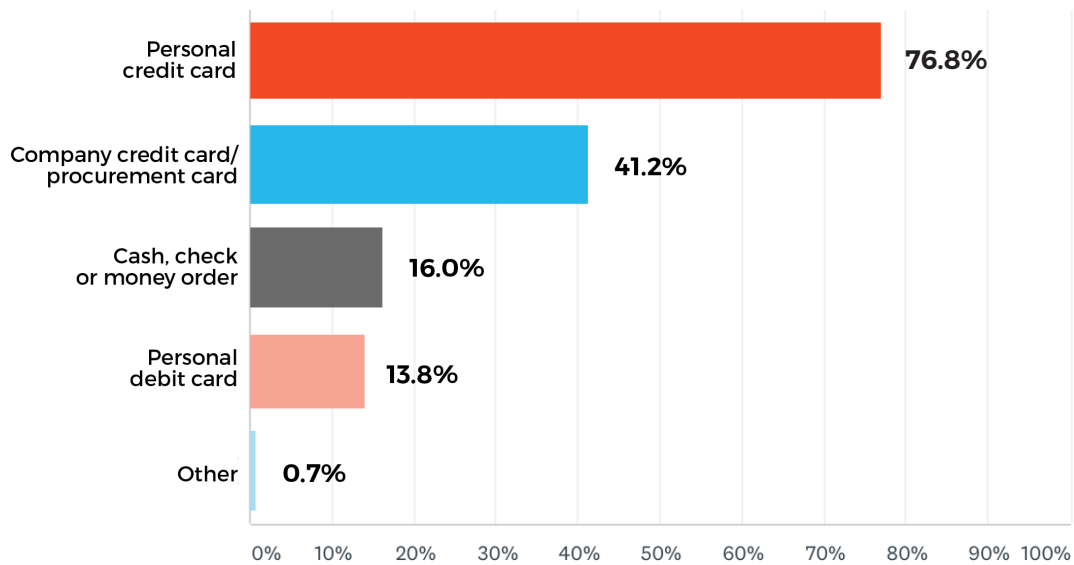
**Corporate travel managers**



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey

**When I travel for work, I pay for expenses with:**

**Business travelers**



Source: Skift + TripActions 2020 Business Travel Survey



However, in that same survey, more than 30 percent of both business travelers and those with travel program oversight noted having to use a personal credit card for travel expenses as a hassle, both ranking it the third-highest problem while traveling.

In order to solve this expense management challenge, travel managers and business travel platforms are finding innovative solutions to streamline how expenses are paid for and processed, including the use of virtual cards to cover pay-in-advance expenses. Perhaps the biggest shift comes in the framing of what travel expenses actually represent to the organization.

There's an opportunity to simplify and streamline the payments process as part of the end-to-end travel experience. This means not thinking about trip expenses as something that gets reimbursed after the fact, but instead something that happens seamlessly behind the scenes for travelers, allowing them to focus on what they need to accomplish while on their trip, rather than how they're paying for it. "In the spirit of organizations no longer having to compromise between a great traveler experience and saving money, making this shift will eliminate a lot of friction points for the traveler, travel manager, and finance teams, while boosting productivity across all three by eliminating all of the extra busy work associated with expenses," noted Tuchscherer.

## 9. BUSINESS TRAVEL CULTURE DRIVES COMPANY SUCCESS



The way that corporate travel managers and executives perceive the value of business travel is changing. What was once viewed by the vast majority of organizations and their finance teams and travel managers purely as a cost to be minimized will be seen as a strategic company asset that can help boost their organization's goals—both in terms of growth and fostering a positive culture.

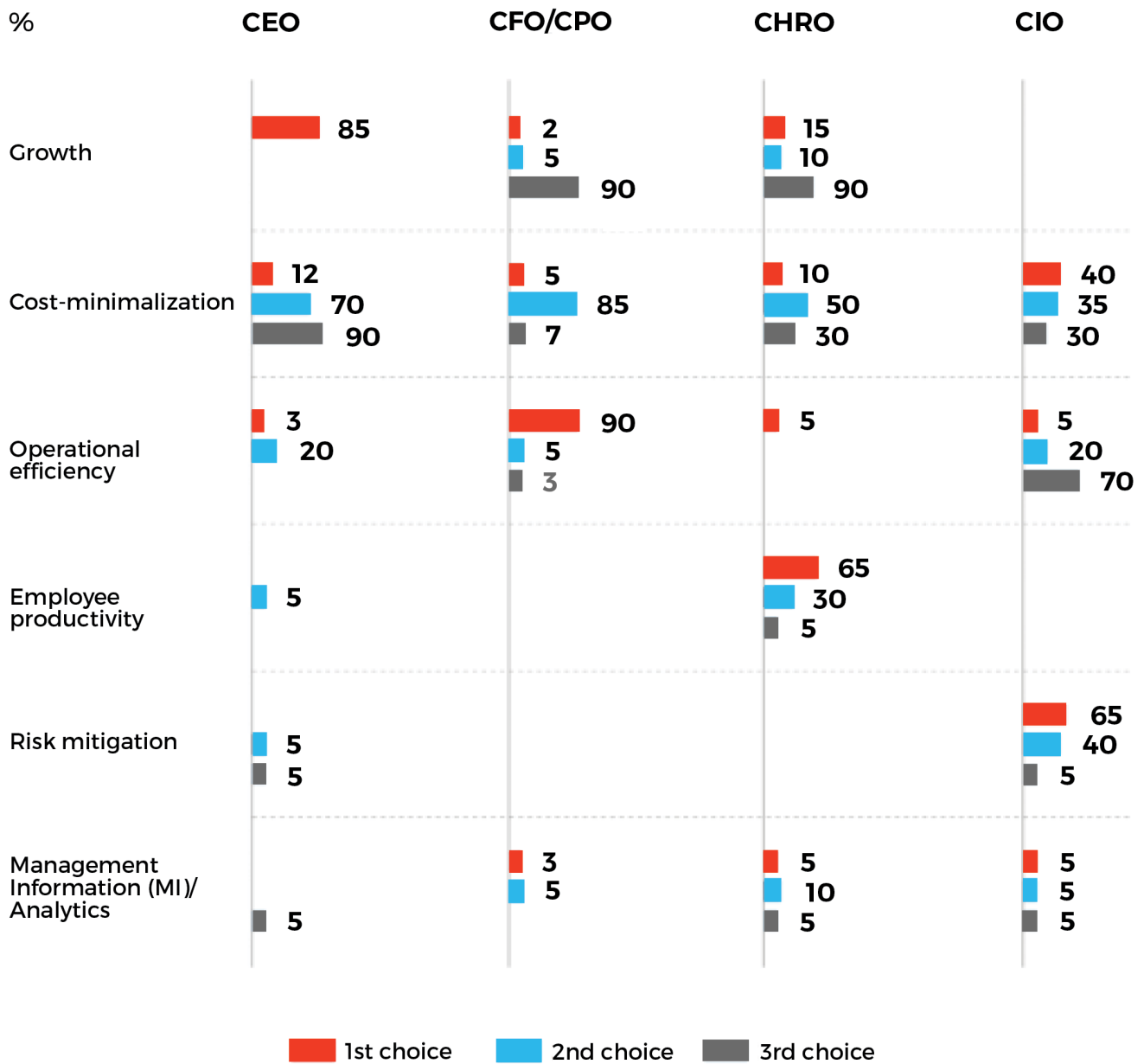
“Travel always used to be a line item—the biggest line item—in most teams' budgets, and it was something that they were always looking for ways to reduce,” said TripActions' Tuchscherer. “But the conversations are changing to how do we actually use travel as a strategic lever to drive our business forward and to accelerate company growth.”

This growing prioritization of business travel wasn't always the case, as executives at many organizations have long exhibited conflicting views on the purpose of their employees' business trips.

As recently as 2017, [a study cited by Skift](#) highlighted these conflicting views. In the chart below, we see how different C-level executives prioritize their organization's T&E (travel and expense) spending. Whereas 85 percent of CEOs ranked “growth” as their number one priority for T&E spending, only two percent of CFOs felt similarly. Meanwhile, 65 percent of CHROs (chief human resource officers) listed “employee productivity” as the most important objective of T&E spend, while just five percent of CEOs ranked the objective as their second choice.



### C-Suite Executive Priorities for Business Travel Spending



Source: "Managing Every Mile," Amadeus and London School of Economics

Going into 2020, those conflicting priorities are already starting to align. According to [a study of corporate travel decision makers](#) conducted by the Harvard Business Review, more than two-thirds (68 percent) agreed that they are “treating travel as a strategic investment that adds business value rather than a cost to be minimized.”

There’s lots of ways this strategic realignment is playing out in boardrooms around the globe. For many, this simply means building a stronger company-wide culture that values the role business travel plays in company success. For others, it means adapting existing travel policies to be less draconian, more user-friendly, and more flexible in terms of policy rules. And for other organizations, it also means using business travel as an incentive and recruitment tool, helping to reward employees for their contributions to the company’s success, particularly for the youngest generations of the workforce who increasingly see work travel as a perk.

“Companies are thinking about how they can use their travel programs not only to drive business forward as a primary goal, but also as a cultural or recruiting enabler as a benefit or perk,” said TripActions’ Finkel.

The TripActions Guest Invite feature is one example of how [organizations and HR teams are putting their best foot forward to entice new recruits](#). Rather than labor-intensive models of the past where information required to book travel was passed from candidate to recruiter who then booked travel, tech and culture-forward organizations are using features like the Guest Invite to empower candidates to book their own travel for interviews, letting them pick what works best for them while being guided by the tool to book within company policy. In this sense it helps them portray the image of the company they want in the marketplace and among top talent.





## 10. TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS, THE TRAVELER, AND THE PLANET



As noted earlier, business travel is increasingly seen as a force multiplier. However, there are growing concerns about the impacts of business travel on the traveler and the environment. This is creating an emerging trend around traveler health and wellness and the environmental-sustainability of business travel with more and more focus on taking care of business while also taking care of the traveler and the planet.

A September 2019 survey of more than 1,200 travelers by TripActions found that 80 percent of travelers are very or somewhat concerned about the impact of business travel on the environment, and 61 percent thought it was important for their employer to offset their business travel. Respondents in Europe ranked minimizing environmental impact as the single most important quality in a business travel booking service, even higher than lower prices and having a wide selection of travel options.

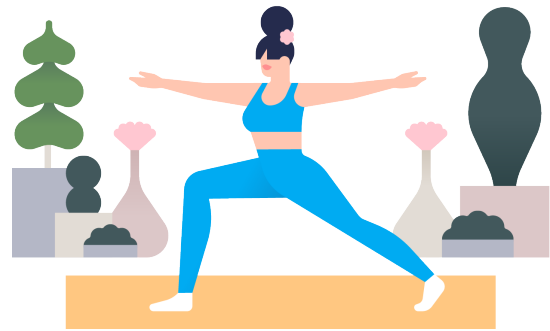
Global airlines have made strides in their plans to offset their carbon footprints. Earlier this year, [British Airways](#) announced that it would start to offset domestic flight emissions in 2020. Lufthansa announced a [new sustainability platform](#), dubbed “Compensaid,” which allows customers to purchase CO2 neutral aviation fuels to replace fossil fuels on their flights or support a reforestation project in Nicaragua. Qantas started its carbon offsetting program in 2007, and became the second airline worldwide to [declare its intention](#) to cut its net carbon emissions to zero by 2050. United Airlines made a [\\$40 million commitment](#) to decarbonizing air travel and the development of sustainable aviation fuels.



And Virgin Atlantic's Richard Branson noted: "Realistically, people are not going to stop flying—the most avid of marchers are going to fly. What's critical is that we enable them to fly as environmentally-friendly as possible."

While a handful of corporate travel management platforms give travel managers and even individual travelers the ability to see their organization's and individual carbon impact, few have empowered those who want to take action to actually do so. TripActions recently announced that its corporate travel management solution would [enable customers to opt in to monitor and offset their carbon footprint](#) from work travel.

"A global travel company by definition exists as part of the global community," commented TripActions Drumright at the company's travel + tech festival, [TRAVERSE 19](#). "And in an age of climate emergency, we realize travel is one of the major contributing factors to carbon emissions—and we want to help our customers reach carbon neutral operations."



Much like work travel itself, the momentum behind the environmental sustainability of business travel does not seem to be slowing as we enter into 2020. Nor is the growing focus on traveler health and wellness while on the road.

While entire segments of leisure travel are focused on health-related experiences, the business travel industry has mostly left wellness up to the individual traveler. But, increasingly CEOs, finance leaders, and travel managers recognize the importance of ensuring health and wellness of all employees—and in particular road warriors and high performers—beyond the important, traditional duty of care commitments.

Hotels like Four Seasons, Hyatt Hotels, Intercontinental Hotels Group, Marriott International, and others are offering health and wellness options for business travelers beyond onsite gyms and workout facilities. The ability to borrow workout gear, have yoga mats available in room, and tap into personal trainers during a stay are all helping road warriors maintain their routines while on the go.

The reality is that traveling employees who are able to eat healthy and exercise, and who feel well rested, nourished, and energized, are better positioned to achieve their business objectives on the road—whether that's establishing and strengthening relationships with prospects, customers or colleagues, closing a big deal, or inspiring top talent to join the team. As a result, the focus on traveler health and wellness will only continue to grow in the coming year and beyond.

## ABOUT TRIPACTIONS



TripActions is the corporate travel management company shaping the future of business travel.

Nothing can truly replicate the value of meeting face-to-face—which is why we're on a mission to power the in-person connections that move people, ideas and businesses forward.

Enterprises deserve a travel solution that takes the pain out of work trips so that their travelers can focus on being there, not getting there. With unrivaled inventory, powerful personalization, and 24/7 proactive travel agents, travelers prefer TripActions. As a result, organizations achieve 90%+ adoption and all of the spend visibility, control, data, and insights that come with it to be able to optimize their travel program, save money, and fulfill their duty of care.

Finance leaders and travel managers finally get a corporate travel platform that lets them optimize for a great traveler experience and cost savings—as noted by the more than 3,000 enterprises who trust TripActions to help them achieve unprecedented results: An average of 93% traveler satisfaction and up to 34% savings on lodging alone.

Learn more and view a demo at [www.tripactions.com](http://www.tripactions.com)

## LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

Skift is the largest intelligence platform in travel, providing Media, Insights & Marketing to key sectors of the industry.

Through daily news, research, podcasts, and Skift Global Forum conferences, Skift deciphers and defines the trends that matter to the marketers, strategists, and technologists shaping the industry.

SkiftX is Skift's in-house content marketing studio, working collaboratively with partners like Mastercard, Hyatt, Adobe, Lyft, Airbnb, and many more on custom projects to engage the world's largest audience of travel influencers and decision makers.

Visit [skiftx.com](http://skiftx.com) to learn more or email at [skiftx@skift.com](mailto:skiftx@skift.com)

Carolyn Kremins  
President, Skift  
[ck@skift.com](mailto:ck@skift.com)  
212-564-5830