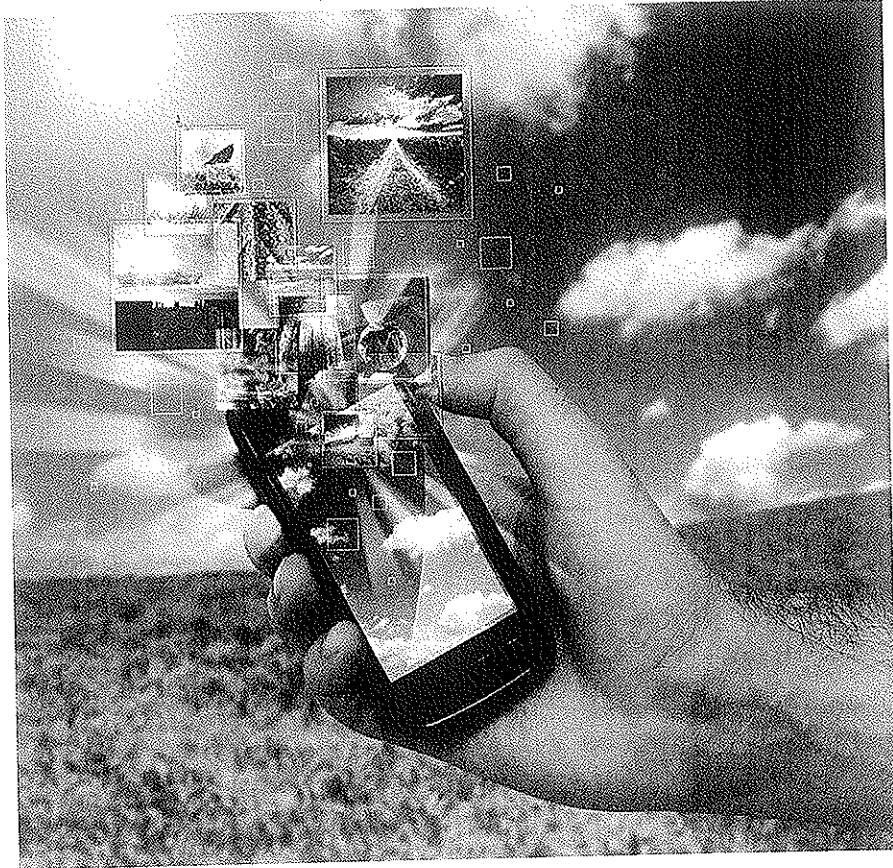


TMCs get technical



Watch this space! This is how most of the travel companies responded to Business Traveller when asked about their latest technological developments. It's a good indication that they all focus time, energy and other resources on constantly evolving their products to make corporate travel quicker, easier and more affordable for their clients. "We believe that technology is playing a key role in empowering corporate organisations to better manage their travel. Specifically, technology is driving greater transparency and control within the industry," says Paul Shaw of Travellinck. According to him, in the past the process was cumbersome and organisations had little power to understand and evaluate their travel options, and the reconciliation of travel spend has been poor. He adds: "Travel data is typically owned by a third party using disparate systems resulting in reporting that is delayed and inadequate to proactively manage the travel process. Greater transparency and control provides for enhanced ability to proactively understand and manage corporate travel behaviour and expenditure." According to Pano Stamatiadis, Head of Products and Solutions at Wings Corporate

Travel, technology is key in corporate travel, especially in the current trends towards mobile applications, where people carry their information wherever they are. He says ease and speed of access to items such as itineraries and relevant travel information such as weather and travel information related to a specific destination, enhances a customer experience. "Reporting is also key, and consolidation of comprehensive reporting assists with managing a customer's travel.

"Technology has changed the way we think and the way we do things"

This also assists in creating an overall picture of a company's travel to management. This can assist with cost savings and trend analyses such as missed opportunities and adherences to policies. Policy management through technology is also something that adds significant value," he adds. Nomvula Mithombeni, MD of Duma Travel, seconds this saying technology plays a particularly important role in the automation of processes, thereby ensuring adherence to internal controls. She says: "Many

It is becoming increasingly important for travel companies to stay up to date with the latest technological developments in order to provide the best services for their clients. **Chana Viljoen** discovers the importance of technology and how the corporate travel industry is embracing it.

corporates worry about compliance to their travel policy and want to cut costs to improve their bottom line. Their cost-cutting strategies can best be implemented through effective and efficient technology."

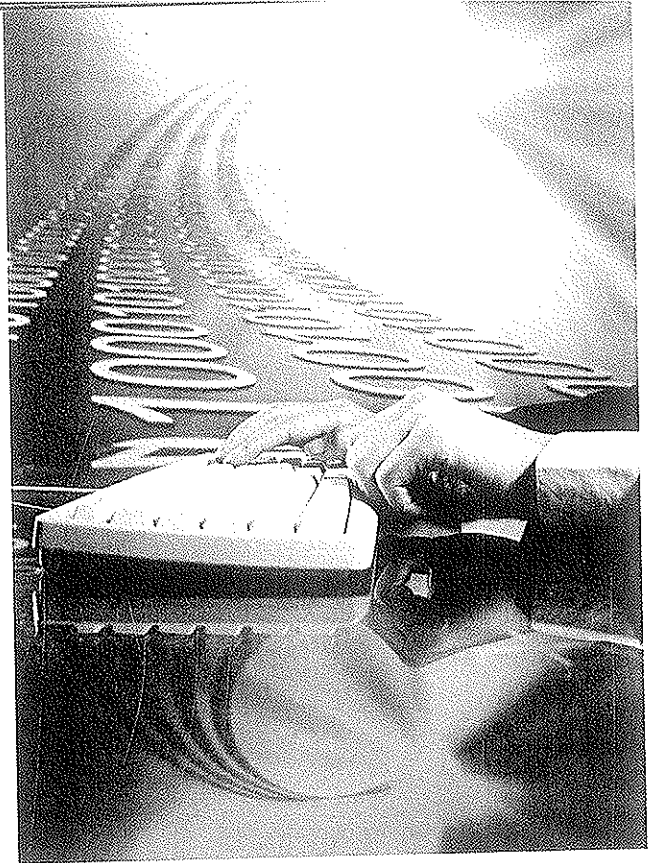
Changing the way things are done

Debbie Duncan, Senior Manager Global Business Development, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, says due to technology, a lot more information is provided and analysed, and this is done faster and more accurately. She adds: "Ever-increasing transactions numbers are processed, often with zero human intervention. More information is exchanged more rapidly over increasing communication mediums (including social networks)."

Travel With Flair's Marc de Jager says technology has revolutionised how it operates. "The time it takes to make and complete a booking is so much faster than 10 years ago. We are now able to complete many more bookings in a shorter period of time, allowing us to focus on the ever-increasing volume of travel as well as provide a superior service to our clients."

"Technology has changed the way we think and the way we do things," says Stamatiadis. He says using technology to drive down costs and increase efficiencies has never been so necessary. "Using our technology to pass this mindset onto our customers through decreasing turnaround times and increasing efficiency through finding the best options for our customers has changed the way many of our customers like to do business," he says.

Furthermore, Jim Weighell, Corporate Manager, Sure Travel says: "Technology is changing the way we view our service proposition. Increased automation of the simpler trip enables consultants and account managers to expend less time on transaction activity and to focus more on the important advisory, analytical and management activities."



**think
mobile**
think travelport mobile
booking solution™

Travelport mobile booking solution™ brings a wide choice of car, hotel and airfares, including low cost carriers directly to your phone. Offering access to global GDS content on the run. With secure payment gateways, bookings are instantly processed 24/7.

To become a mobile solution provider, contact:
☎ 0861 TPINFO / ☎ 0861 874 636
zainfo@travelport.com

think mobile, think travelport

Travelport 

www.travelport.com

What lies ahead?

"With travel being the second-largest controllable expense of any large organisation, we can expect continuous innovation in the area of technology for the corporate travel market," says Shaw. Gerhard Esterhuysen of Tourvest Travel Services says that as technology evolves it will filter into all aspects of travel.

Mhombeni says technology is becoming more and more important because companies want to track their budgets against committed costs and actual travel expenses. She continues that they want to track employees in times of disaster, unused tickets, compliance to travel policy and, through integrated management reports, evaluate overall performance against their travel strategy.

De Jager says there are so many amazing possibilities with all the new technological advances. "Mobile phones are becoming smarter android-type platforms, laptops much smaller due to nano-technology, and connectivity much faster and virtually available everywhere."

Stamatiadis says: "With the current explosion of mobile tables such as the iPad and Blackberry's Playbook, I see more and more people accessing services this way. Social networking and creating a total customer experience through technology and digital media will be the way of the future."

According to Weighell, as technology develops, so it will deliver improved efficiencies for travel companies and their customers. "Travel remains a complex business, and complex systems are necessary to improve automation. Development of these complex systems takes time," he adds.

Neil McWilliams of mymarket.com says that as corporates realise the numerous benefits of pairing a commodity like travel with a holistic online system like mymarket, there is a greater move towards technology and the benefits associated.

The challenges

Shaw says a key challenge facing technological development is change management. He explains: "While the technology provides the tools to drive efficiency, it is people who really unlock its potential." He adds that generating significant buy-in is a critical component of

with technology and if there is anything that they believe we should have a look at, we will investigate it," he adds.

Wings Corporate Travel stays ahead through research, consultation, analysing trends and listening to what its customers want and need, says Stamatidis. "We also look at the latest technology out there and see how we can integrate with it and how it can both benefit us as a company and our customers globally."

Weghell says Sure Corporate constantly monitors developments, trends and best practice information derived from communication with its international affiliates, global travel news and ongoing technology provider liaison. "We request enhancements to existing technology where we see a need for this and we work collaboratively with our providers to ensure that we have access to leading products," he adds.

McWilliams says some of the measures keeping mymarket.com ahead include hiring the 'best of breed' staff from both the IT and travel sector, constant learning and ongoing development from a system, as well as an employee perspective and the company's passion. "mymarket.com staff are passionate about both the IT and travel industries. This emanates into our daily work from a client phone call to new system development," he says.

Technology is constantly evolving with new or improved products being developed on a regular basis. Travel companies need to make sure their staff is always up to date on the latest movements so that they can continue to be innovative.

Travlink, says Shaw, constantly challenges its people to innovate. He adds: "We are lucky in that the entrepreneurial nature of the business attracts some of the brightest and most energetic people in the business." Withombeni says Duma Travel conducts ongoing research to ensure the company keeps up to date with the latest local and international developments. "The broader your exposure to diverse cultures, industries and ideas, the more you can stay that one step ahead," says Duncan. She explains that Carlson Wagonlit Travel is in the very fortunate position to not only have vast global exposure to trends and technologies but also leverage off some very strong local strategies and visions within the BIDvest group.

Tourvest Travel Services, says Esterhuysen, stays ahead by leading the market place via innovation and proactive development. According to de Jager, Travel With Fair is constantly sourcing, researching and talking to industry players to make sure it is always up to date with the technology that is out there and new technology in creation. "We also encourage our staff to keep up to date

rolling out new technology which often comes with anxiety and resistance. "Where this is effectively managed, organisations can really leverage the synergistic relationship between people and technology."

Withombeni says the many technological platforms currently in existence, especially self-booking tools, can be confusing to clients and that the providers selling them often promise clients the world without sharing the full picture with them. "Any new technology on offer needs to be backed up by knowledgeable human beings and it needs buy-in from within the organisation for it to succeed," she adds.

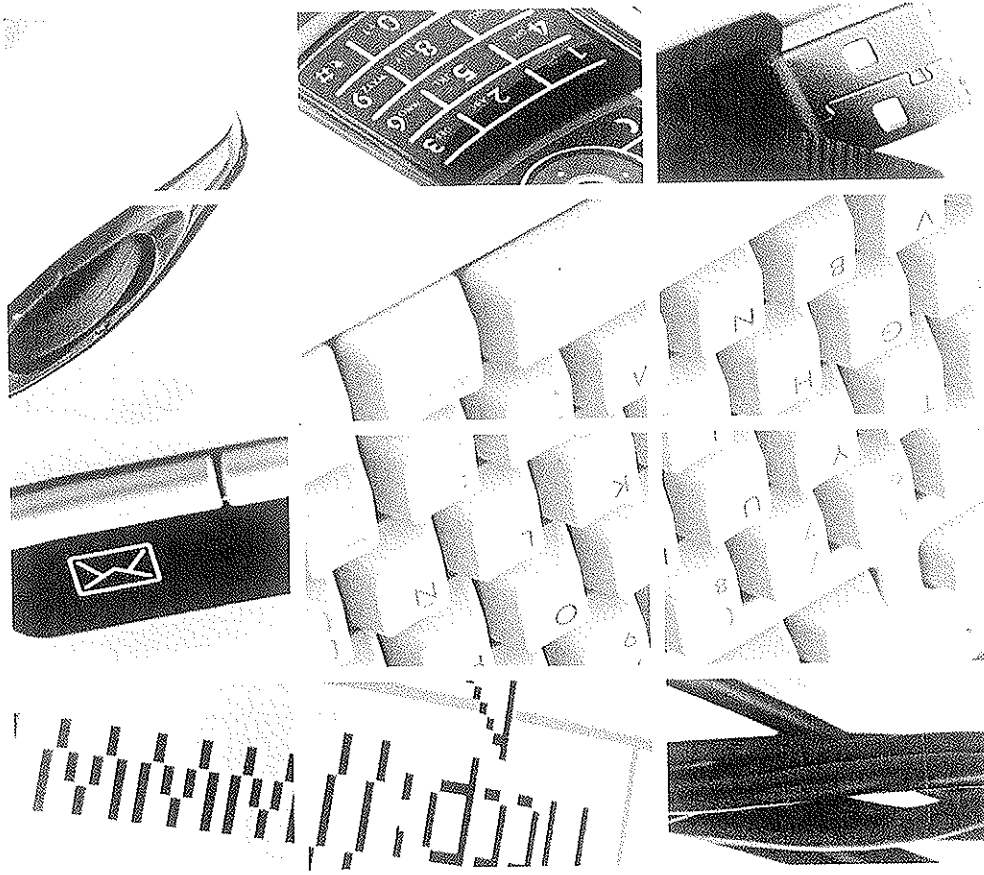
According to Duncan, traditionally South Africa was on the back foot in two areas, connectivity and credibility. But she adds: "I am happy to say, however, that both are rapidly becoming a thing of the past."

"The biggest challenge in South Africa is we have seen a vast improvement on mobile network speed and reliability, there are still times when the systems go down and any down time can seriously affect the service we provide to our travellers."

For Stamatidis, the biggest challenge is bandwidth and bandwidth cost. He says: "As most of our data services lies in South Africa and technology relies on being easy and fast for our customers to access globally, we need to ensure that our bandwidth accommodates for this. This comes at a cost."

Matching expectation and managing the ability of people to adapt to the methods of managing and purchasing travel is a challenge, says Weghell. He adds: "Automation of travel programmes is more about management of travel policy than it is about the transactions. Automation allows greatly increased adherence to travel policies through its reporting and purchase transparency." According to him, the introduction of automation in any industry raises anxiety in terms of a fear of 'being replaced' on the part of consultants, and a perception of added responsibility on the part of customer travel bookers.

Additional challenges pointed out by McWilliams include the misconception of costs and that technological systems can be complicated to run. He says: "Corporates and executives have a major misconception that systems like mymarket.com are expensive and difficult to maintain." He adds that a high degree of IT skills is required to run any system and that mymarket.com has a fully local support centre to deal with all client queries, from a travel and technology perspective.



Who's doing what?

Travelindia:

What are some of the most innovative technological products/services you currently offer?

Our clients are able to book and manage their entire travel itinerary from a single platform through a mobile application. This makes it possible for them to travel with ease and confidence. We also have a mobile application that allows them to book and manage their travel itinerary from a mobile phone.

Are there any new products or services in the pipeline?

We are currently working on a new mobile application that will allow our clients to book and manage their travel itinerary from a mobile phone.

mymarket.com:

What are some of the most innovative technological products/services you currently offer?

Fully automated approval. Approvers/decision makers have the ability to gauge declined savings (cheapest alternative not picked) and ultimately make a decision whether a purchase order can be created. This approval decision is made via SMS, email and MOBI approval (the ability to approve from a WAP enabled phone), which ensures approval anywhere in the world, at any time. Full, consolidated realtime reporting. Full reporting from an online and traditional perspective. An understanding of reporting allows organisations to drive and secure more cost-effective decision making. Through reporting savings can be quantified and justified. Multi-carrier - the ability to fly return on two different vendors, i.e. Mango and SAA. Our clients have full transparency of all flights ensuring the cheapest options with increased flexibility.

The ability to approve travel requisitions from anywhere in the world via SMS, email and mobi approval.

Fully automated holistic online travel process from booking to reconciliation: an electronic PO, sending it for electronic approval, issuing electronic tickets and vouchers, receiving electronic invoices from suppliers and uploading into ERP.

Mymarket.com prides itself on the ability to innovate new product offerings. Driving our innovative nature is the need to satisfy our diverse range of corporate customers needs, together with the rapidly evolving South African travel and E-procurement markets. We feel mymarket.com is perfectly aligned to exploit these market conditions based on our experience of having rolled out the solution to a large variety of corporate customers.

Duma Travel:

What are some of the most innovative technological products/services you currently offer?

Duma Travel agrees that technology has an important role to play, particularly nowadays when everyone is going green and we all want to create a paperless environment. An automated system from request-approval-fulfilment-payment and reconciliation is essential. Duma Travel continually invests in cutting-edge technology for greater efficiencies. For corporates who want to do it themselves, Self-Booking Tools are the way to go provided the SBT is researched and implemented in partnership with a very competent Travel Management Company.

Are there any new products or services in the pipeline?

- Holistic e-Travel Policy Management Solution
- Various World-class Self-Booking Tool options which are aligned to various client requirements
- Low-cost airline search engine with an international capability
- Paperless Back Office Systems
- Integrated front-mid and back office system
- Automated SMS service
- Interactive & online management reports
- E-Tracker

Carlson Wagonlit:

What is your approach to technology?

Carlson Wagonlit's approach to technology is to ensure that our technology is user-friendly and enhances our clients' travel experience. We are currently working on a new mobile application that will allow our clients to book and manage their travel itinerary from a mobile phone.

What are some of the most innovative technological products/services you currently offer?

Carlson Wagonlit's approach to technology is to ensure that our technology is user-friendly and enhances our clients' travel experience. We are currently working on a new mobile application that will allow our clients to book and manage their travel itinerary from a mobile phone.

Travel With Flair:

Our approach to technology is: keep it simple, make sure it user-friendly and it has to enhance our clients' travel experience.

On our website www.twf.travel, we have an online voucher retrieval system. We have had this technology for the last three years and it has been vital to our clients as they do not need to

travel with any documents anymore and they can retrieve their vouchers, should they need to, from anywhere. This also helps cut down on the carbon footprint.

We have quite a few new products in the pipeline that will be rolled out shortly that will greatly improve our clients' travel experience as well as enhance the back office processes. It is very exciting and we will keep you up to date on this on our Facebook page.