

The Wire...from AirPlus

April 2009: Will Green Initiatives/CSR Survive a Down Economy?



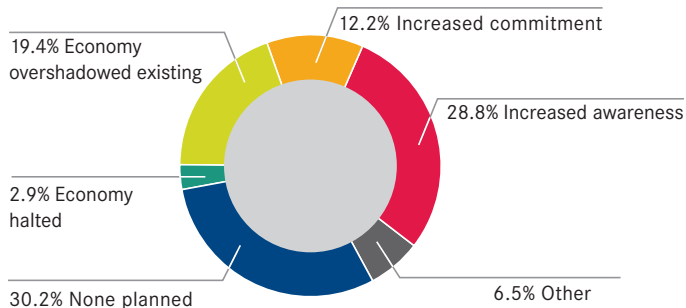
AIRPLUS. WHAT TRAVEL PAYMENT IS ALL ABOUT.

Environment-savvy business travel and corporate social responsibility falter in the short term; long-term outlook may show promise.

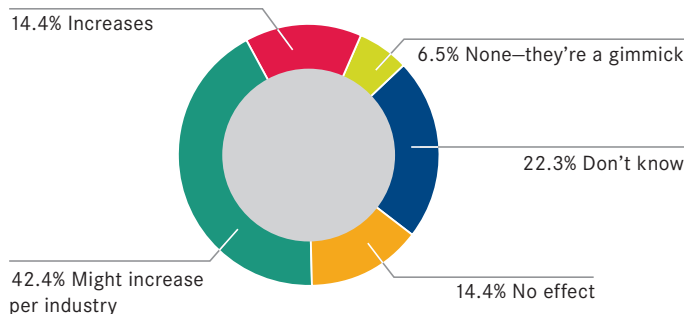
As the global economy continues to struggle in 2009, many corporations are paying shorter shrift to eco-conscious travel and corporate social responsibility efforts, according to a recent online survey of travel management professionals conducted by AirPlus International. Awareness of travel alternatives and efficient travel options, however, are on the rise—a fact that could promise future progress for such initiatives.

While only 3 percent of responding companies indicated that the economy had stopped a planned green/CSR initiative, more than 19 percent of respondents said that existing initiatives had been overshadowed by the faltering economy and pressures to cut costs. This trend likely indicates that corporations still perceive green travel options as more expensive than traditional travel. On a more promising note, however, nearly 30 percent of respondents said they continue to raise awareness of more efficient travel options and how use of these options can reduce costs for their corporations.

How has the faltering economy impacted your company's approach to corporate social responsibility/green initiatives in relation to travel?



How does corporate commitment to CSR/green efforts affect brand perception and/or company culture?



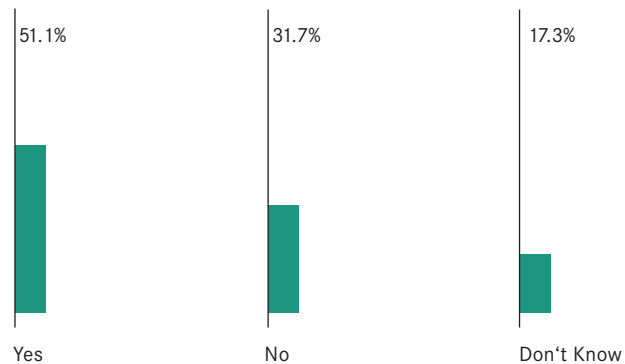
Interestingly, the AirPlus survey, which primarily focused on green travel/CSR efforts in the United States, also revealed that more than 30 percent of corporations had no green or CSR efforts in place and had no plans to implement such efforts. (For an interesting contrast of U.S. versus European companies when it comes to green initiatives and CSR, visit the link to the ACTE survey in the “Additional Resource” section.) More than 12 percent of companies seem to be spinning their use of travel alternatives and demand management initiatives with a message of environmental awareness.

Despite the downward trend in green travel/CSR efforts in the immediate future, other indicators show that environmental and social responsibility may play a pivotal role as corporations continue to court loyalty both in the marketplace and from their employees. Nearly 57 percent of respondents said they believed that sound green/CSR policies could increase brand loyalty and/or employee good will—in other words, promoting such policies could help corporations grow their businesses.

The AirPlus survey also gauged attitudes about how political changes in the United States may affect corporate awareness of environmental and social responsibility. In particular, how the Obama administration’s push for green-collar jobs and decreased dependence on oil will affect corporations overall. More than 50 percent of survey respondents said that the new administration would help raise awareness of these issues within corporations, while nearly 32 percent believed that government focus would have no effect on corporate attitudes.

What is clear, however, is a small but strong contingent of corporations have continued their green travel and CSR initiatives despite the faltering economy. The trajectory of these pioneering companies may determine how corporations on the whole ultimately respond to the question of environmental responsibility and CSR efforts. If they can tie these efforts to their bottom line—either with cost savings or increased business and consumer loyalty—they will pave the way for other companies to emulate their successes in good times and bad.

Do you think a new political focus on green jobs and decreased dependence on oil will have any effect on corporate CSR/green efforts?



Survey Methodology—For this issue of *The Wire...from AirPlus*, and in cooperation with ProMedia.travel, 139 travel management professionals in North American and Europe were surveyed from February 9-20, 2009.

Additional Resource

Green Business Travel at Risk in the Recession

http://www.acte.org/resources/press_release.php?id=401

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