

Univ'AirPlus 2009, 4th Annual Conference took place August 25, 2009 in Paris

Organized at the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris, Univ'AirPlus gathered 250 registrants. Very few French travel managers and purchase managers missed the call in spite of the sunshine or late holidays.

"We want to find answers to problems that occur throughout the year," explained John Baird-Smith, AirPlus France Country Manager, at the opening. "Our concern is to help travel managers in their daily life." Three themes have been mainly identified: cost cutting, security and sustainable development.

After less than one year of existence, the AFTM (Association Française des Travel Managers) took this opportunity to introduce its first white paper *Profession Travel Manager* (sponsored by AirPlus). Then, several AirPlus partners made presentations of their new products & services: Laurent Sautré zoomed in on the new BNP Paribas Corporate Card, Ralph Robail provided details on the development of Notilus (Dimo Gestion Expense management tool), Ziad Minkara introduced its global hotel service CDS Booking, Patrick Sardais mentioned the new Avis Flex service for medium duration (1 to 11 months) car leasing, François Dodane recalled why choosing Thalys keeps travelers comfortable and their travel managers happy with the costs, Traveldoo introduced its security functionalities.

Travel Managers and the Crisis

No more than 9% of flights were cancelled in France because of the crisis noted Willy Schnyder, AirPlus World Marketing Director, based on a study conducted with ACTE ("[Empowered Employees. How Travel Managers are Adapting and Thriving in the Global Recession.](http://www.airpluscommunity.com/downloads)") to assess the impact of the crisis on travel policies. And 62% of Travel Manager believes that the crisis makes it possible to have their ideas heard and that people are more sensitive to their recommendations.

Before the recession, 36% of Travel Managers admit in this survey that they had many obligations and few rights in their business, and 52% felt they are lacking in attention from their management. This opportunity was confirmed at Univ'AirPlus, where 46% of TM questioned by an interactive questionnaire, emphasized that travelers were more sensitive to the travel policy's application during a time of crisis.

Furthermore, Christian Gall, AirPlus International Markets Executive Director obtained general approval when he emphasized that the crisis was becoming an opportunity, because it has allowed to show the savings achieved through reports, and thus the relevance of the TM's work.

Sustainable Concern

Only 13% of French businesses questioned by AirPlus and ACTE have conducted their carbon compensation. Environmental issues were however raised at the convention with the input of Effi21 (www.ffi21.fr), sustainable development specialist, on the obligation to consider environmental aspects in the choice of business. Effi 21 is working in particular for Sélectour Bleu Voyages. They stressed that legal obligations are being increased and will be quickly sanctioned by taxes. As of 2011, businesses with more than 500 employees must therefore be aligned with listed businesses and provide an annual report of sustainable development and produce a carbon assessment of their activities. Sélectour Bleu Voyages, through the voice of Vincent Zaldivar, showed how their

own experience allowed them to influence or offer their clients solutions to reduce environmental effects.

All-encompassing Security

Another issue for travel managers is the safety of their travelers - a subject raised by Gilles Sviga, a member of Orange France Telecom Security Management Team. This service was established at the end of 2004 and took preliminary actions in emergencies for security, health or natural disaster risks in one of the 220 countries where the group is working. This testimonial was completed by Travelgoo. Olivier Mindren emphasized how raising the awareness of a business traveler at risk (any risk, from an attack to the flu) is necessary for prevention.

What more can we remember from this Univ'AirPlus? That 47% of European travelers at all levels are stressed by travel. François Dodanne from Thalys showed an example. He used a Risk Factor Study published this year to emphasize that travel managers, by selecting modes of transportation, should question the convenience (frequency, speed, etc.), additional services (electric plugs, WiFi, etc.) and real advantages for travelers so as to improve their efficiency during travel (lounge at the station, catering on site, etc.).

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