

The Wire...from AirPlus

March 2010: Green Travel Policies

AIRPLUS. WHAT TRAVEL PAYMENT IS ALL ABOUT.



Companies cite insufficient info and cost as significant barriers to implementation of green travel initiatives.

Industry buzz around green travel initiatives has quieted over the past year as companies focused on reducing travel in the face of a weak economy. As the economy begins to recover and companies put their travelers back on the road, those with genuine corporate social responsibility programs will need to refocus their green travel efforts.

A recent survey conducted by AirPlus International revealed that while almost 30 percent of responding companies are measuring the greenhouse gas

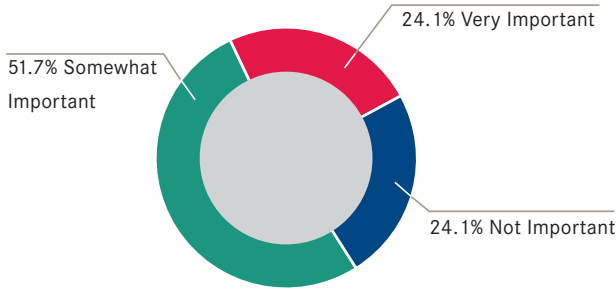
emissions produced by their travel activities, only about half as many companies—17 percent—have taken the next step to create and implement policies around managing the carbon footprint of managed travel. In the next 12 months, however, another 17 percent of survey respondents said they would be implementing such policies.

Those numbers suggest a catch-up phase for eco-friendly corporate travel efforts that may have been derailed by a faltering economy. The green travel movement was hitting the mainstream in 2007 just as the economy began its decline into the recession of 2008 and 2009 when travel managers seem to have dropped everything in order to turn their attention to cutting budgets, increasing demand management, applying travel alternatives and responding to pressures to increase value with suppliers.

How has your company/organization implemented the following practices related to carbon management and travel?

	Implemented	Implement within 12 months	No Plans	Need More Info
Have implemented carbon management policies for managed travel	16.9%	16.9%	36.6%	29.6%
Measure greenhouse gas emissions from travel activities	29.6%	14.1%	31.0%	25.4%
Consider environmental initiatives as part of supplier RFP process	29.6%	23.9%	26.8%	19.7%
Have implemented green meetings policies/guidelines	32.9%	18.6%	28.6%	20.0%
Offer clients an opportunity to offset their travel emissions	21.7%	5.8%	44.9%	27.5%
Purchase of carbon offsets for travel emissions	17.4%	4.3%	52.2%	26.1%

Indicate the level of importance you would place on carbon management for corporate travel.



When asked about barriers to implementing such policies, more than 34 percent of respondents to the survey cited additional costs, such as booking eco-friendly hotels, purchasing carbon offsets and, presumably, the cost of measuring their emissions as barriers to implementing green corporate travel policies. The most significant barrier, cited by 62 percent of respondents, was a lack of information about how to achieve measureable results from green efforts.

Meetings were the exception to this rule, with more than 50 percent of responding companies having implemented—or planning to implement within the year—eco-friendly practices around meetings. There are several likely reasons for this: As sustainability issues were embraced by consumers, companies holding consumer-focused meetings and conventions began to view large, energy-intensive programs as a competitive liability. The Convention Industry Council formed its Green Meetings Task Force and a year later introduced a white paper about sustainable meetings practices. Since then, green meetings information and education has permeated the meetings industry.

The transient travel arena has been less aggressive in documenting cost-savings case studies and sustainable travel benchmarks, making it more difficult for travel management stakeholders to focus on green travel initiatives with a rationale beyond that of “doing the right thing.” The lack of a compelling business strategy may be the reason more than 50 percent of AirPlus survey respondents pegged eco-friendly corporate travel initiatives as only “somewhat important” and nearly a quarter said they were “not very important.” *

Interestingly, while many survey respondents may have turned attention away from their internal eco-efforts, they have still been keeping an eye on their suppliers’ efforts. Within the year, more than 53 percent of survey respondents will consider green criteria in their RFP

How easy or difficult is it for your company/ organization to implement carbon management practices around travel?

Very difficult	9.9%
Somewhat difficult	25.4%
Neutral/Unsure	50.7%
Somewhat easy	11.3%
Very easy	2.8%

What do you believe are the most significant causes of this difficulty?

Insufficient info about carbon management and quantification for travel	62.7%
High cost of implementing carbon management practices for travel	34.3%
Difficulty finding travel suppliers that support our efforts	20.9%
Other	17.9%

processes. However, given the attitudes revealed in the survey, these criteria may not go far beyond the “nice-to-have” category, when it comes time to sign contracts.

Survey Methodology: For this issue of The Wire, AirPlus International in cooperation with ProMedia.travel surveyed 71 travel management professionals in North American and Europe from March 9-March 19, 2010.

*In Europe, where industry carbon emissions are regulated by cap-and-trade laws, attitudes toward green travel are additionally influenced and implementation of green policies and practices should be higher. Respondents to the March 2010 survey were predominantly North American.

Additional Resources

Top 10 Challenges to Greening Corporate Travel

<http://www.greentravelsummit.com/Default.aspx?news=7d9fcf21-e64f-4a8e-9a01-f6f3e7b27e0f&ln=3>

Green? Prove It.

http://meetingsnet.com/checklistshowto/green_meetings/0701-developing-meeting-standards/

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