

The Wire...from AirPlus

February 2011: Expense On the Go

AIRPLUS. WHAT TRAVEL PAYMENT IS ALL ABOUT.



Mobile expense reporting is gaining traction in nearly 50 percent of companies. The managed travel industry as a whole sees benefits and drawbacks.

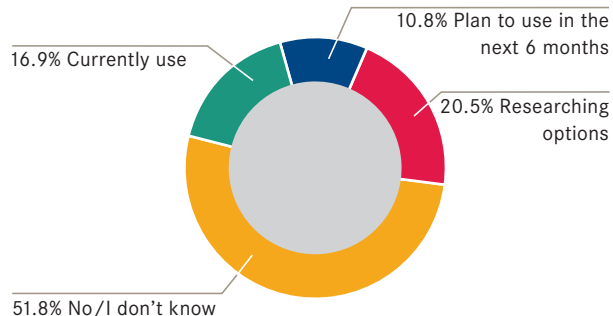
Mobile travel management tools continue to create a lot of buzz in the industry, whether in the form of itinerary managers, flight delay/cancellation notification, mobile hotel check-in or other newsworthy technologies. These service-oriented applications are great for travelers, but they do not necessarily support enterprise travel management, with data, compliance assurance or other benefit for the travel program. To that end, the managed program would likely need configurable travel shopping, booking and expense reporting tools on a mobile platform.

While suppliers have taken steps toward configurable travel shopping and booking, few technologies have reached a level of critical functionality that would make them essential in the corporate travel environment. Expense reporting tools may be approaching that point, according to a recent survey of travel buyers (69 percent) and suppliers (31 percent) conducted by AirPlus International.

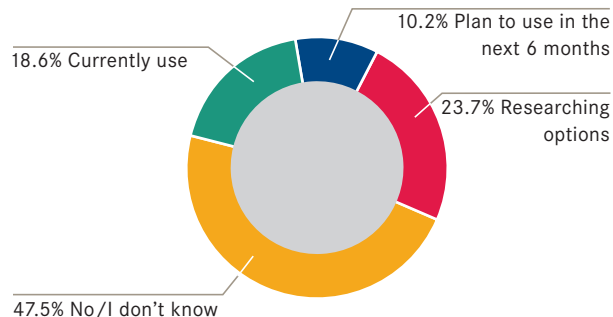
Among the survey's buyer respondents, about 17 percent are currently using a mobile application for expense reporting. That said, nearly 11 percent plan to implement such a tool in the next six months, and almost 21 percent of buyers indicated their company

Does your company currently use, or plan to use, a mobile application for expense reporting?

BUYERS



TOTAL RESPONDENTS



was researching the options. While still not a majority, to have 48 percent of buyer respondents using or considering a mobile expense reporting solution is a strong showing for a technology that was introduced to the managed travel space only two years ago. Among buyers, the benefits of mobile expense tools seem fairly promising. More than 56 percent indicated

What are the benefits of mobile expense reporting to travelers and travel programs?

Buyers	
Access to reporting tools for travelers	48.8%
Access to reporting tools for expense approvers	48.8%
Reduces the need for paper receipts (digital photos can be attached to report)	45%
Faster turn-around of expense reports to accounts payable/finance	56.3%
I don't know	23.8%
Total Respondents	
Access to reporting tools for travelers	53.9%
Access to reporting tools for expense approvers	63.9%
Reduces the need for paper receipts (digital photos can be attached to report)	48.7%
Faster turn-around of expense reports to accounts payable/finance	62.6%
I don't know	19.1%

that mobile tools would speed the time it took to turn expense reports over to accounts payable or finance. That increase in speed was likely to be a result of increased access to the tools from the traveler's mobile device, a benefit noted by nearly 49 percent of buyers. The same percentage agreed that approvers benefited from mobile expense management tools, reducing the log jam of expense reports waiting to be passed along to finance. An even 45 percent thought that receipt issues were better solved with a mobile expense reporting tool.

But buyers also expressed reservations about mobile expense management, particularly concerning the ability to configure policy within the mobile tools that would give them the same tight control they have come to expect from a desktop version. A full 38 percent expected less functionality in a mobile version. Another concern for more than 26 percent of buyers surveyed was the vigilance of expense approvers to review documentation of spend from their mobile devices.

Interestingly, when supplier responses are included in the results, the percentage of companies considering mobile expense tools does tip into the majority, and the supplier set is clearly more bullish on the benefits of mobile expense tools than buyers.

To get to the total percentages reflected in the "benefits" chart above, 65.7 percent of suppliers believed that mobile tools increased access to expense reporting for both travelers and travel approvers. More

What are the challenges of mobile expense reporting to travelers and the travel program?

Buyers	
Policy configurations within the tool not as robust as the full desktop version	38%
Approval routing not as robust as full desktop version	21.5%
Travelers seem less vigilant about accuracy when reporting via mobile app	20.3%
Approvers seem less vigilant about reviewing documents via mobile app	26.6%
Receipts are more of a problem	25.3%
Travelers/approvers do not pick messages/notifications in a timely manner	19.0%
I don't know	43%
Total Respondents	
Policy configurations within the tool not as robust as the full desktop version	40.7%
Approval routing not as robust as full desktop version	21.2%
Travelers seem less vigilant about accuracy when reporting via mobile app	23.9%
Approvers seem less vigilant about reviewing documents via mobile app	27.4%
Receipts are more of a problem	23.9%
Travelers/approvers do not pick messages/notifications in a timely manner	20.4%
I don't know	38.1%

than 57 percent indicated that these tools would reduce the need for receipts and a whopping 77 percent believed that mobile tools would speed expense reports to accounts payable for finance. In each of these categories, suppliers optimism for mobile expense management, outpaced buyers by 15 to 20 percentage points.

When it came to potential drawbacks of mobile expense management, however, buyers and suppliers participating in the survey very much saw eye to eye.

Survey Methodology: For this issue of *The Wire*, AirPlus surveyed 149 travel professionals January 18 to February 9.

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