3 global data challenges corporates face, and how to overcome them

In a virtual world without borders, our data has become global too. Collecting data from different sources around the world is getting easier, giving companies a much better view of how employees travel, from traveller profiles to average cost, most popular destinations and out-of-policy booking trends.

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However, the sheer volume of data available has made it more of a challenge to accurately interpret the feedback in a way that it contributes meaningfully to a company's bottom line.

FCM general manager Nicole Adonis commented: "It is easy to become overwhelmed and distracted by the noise [and] the quantity of data available, rather than focusing on the quality of the data and its implications for the business' travel programme."

Adonis helps to identify three of the biggest global data challenges that impact a company travel programme with tips to overcome them:

1. Fragmented data

One of the most significant problems when dealing with global data is that the results can be extremely fragmented.

Companies with offices internationally are likely to make multiple bookings using a wide variety of systems. Some companies might book their travel arrangements through a Global Distribution System (GDS), while others are moving towards NDC-powered systems, back-office systems or even book via direct, online hotel platforms.

That can lead to confusion and fragmentation, explains Adonis.

For example, she says, if you are booking a hotel in one country through one system and your colleague in a different country books the same hotel through a different platform, the presentation of this information will differ, which can make it complicated to analyse and understand.

The way expense and cost information are presented matters when negotiating preferred deals with suppliers, because a hotel RFP, one example, can be tough to negotiate without knowing where the bulk of your spend goes.

Adonis says: "By building a centralised reference database to use internally and share [results] with partners and customers, FCM has overcome this hurdle.

Adonis explains: "We have the ability to take feeds from different data sources, including other TMCs and validate the accuracy, quality and validity of that data before it hits the reporting platform. It is this ability of our system to be flexible and integrate with any source that is attractive for customers who have an international footprint."

2. Real-time access to global data

Another challenge when dealing with global data is real-time accessibility.

There is no point having copious amounts of data if you can't check it continuously and whenever the need arises, maintains Adonis.

Ensuring a company has access to consistent and accurate data is, therefore, non-negotiable.

Having the right technology in place can ensure that data from multiple sources is received promptly. That enables companies to take control of their data to minimise issues of misreporting and amplify solutions and ways forward.

Adonis adds: "An intelligent data platform allows customers in different countries to continuously load data, daily, weekly, monthly, or even quicker. It means that if any part of the company's data is not accurate, not captured properly or is inconsistent in any way, it will be spotted, and errors can be dealt with in real-time, as quickly as possible."

Identifying and fixing issues in real-time means minimal impact on the business, says Adonis. "It is this visibility and transparency that will drive vast improvements in any business travel programme."

3. Data sovereignty

From the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and China's Cybersecurity Law (CSL), to Brazil's General Data Privacy Law (LGPD) and South Africa's Protection of Personal Information (POPI), there is virtually no end to the permutations of rules and data movement requirements with which companies must comply.

It has become crucial that data and analytics are provided to customers safely and securely in a way that corresponds with these different data laws. The sovereignty of the information is also crucial and it may need to be stored within a specific region or country, depending on the rules.

"Your company's entire collection of global travel programme data can be key to answering the questions you always want to ask, and those you didn't even know you needed to ask. It can become an invaluable asset that will help you to truly deliver on your business growth and saving goals," concludes Adonis.