



The importance of an interim Travel Policy

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With unprecedented times comes the need for flexibility, especially with something as important as travel policy.

While the common solution may be changing your travel policy all together, a more practical approach is to implement an interim travel policy – a policy created when a situation changes significantly for a brief period, with the expectation that things are likely to return to normal.

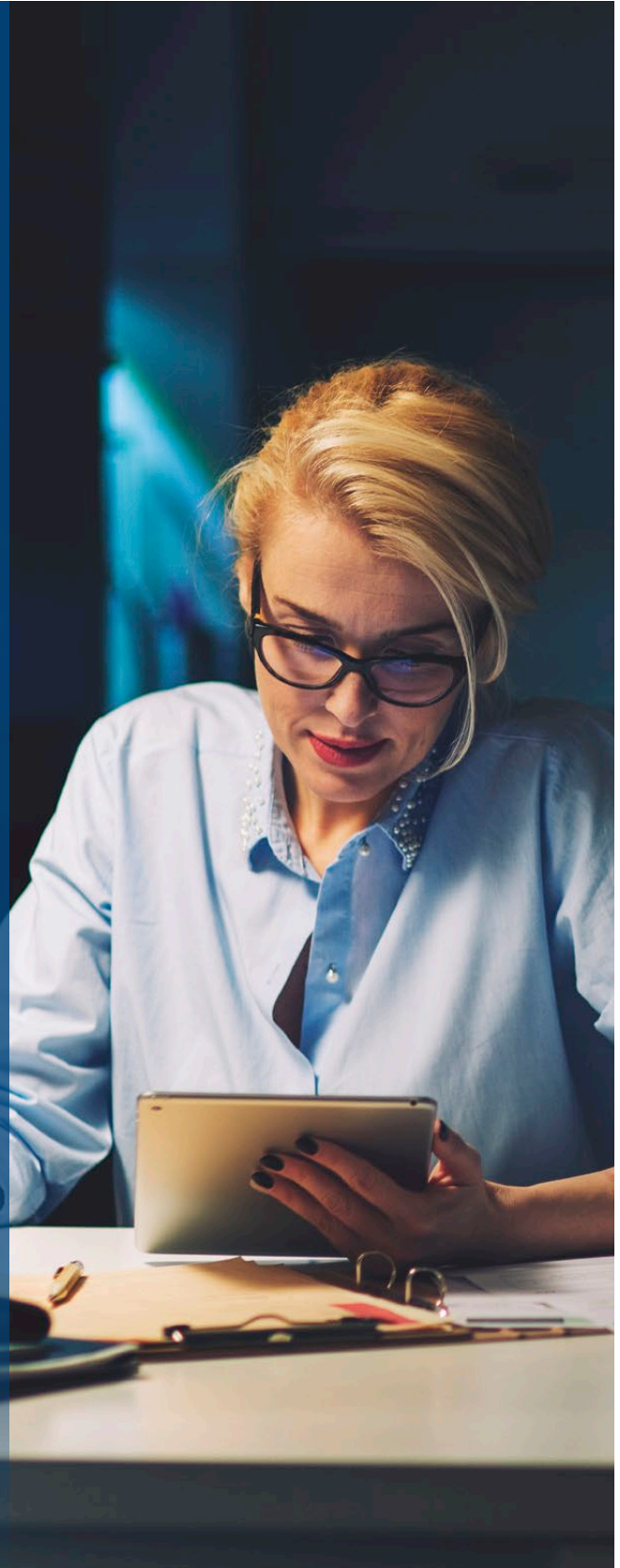
Why create an interim travel policy?

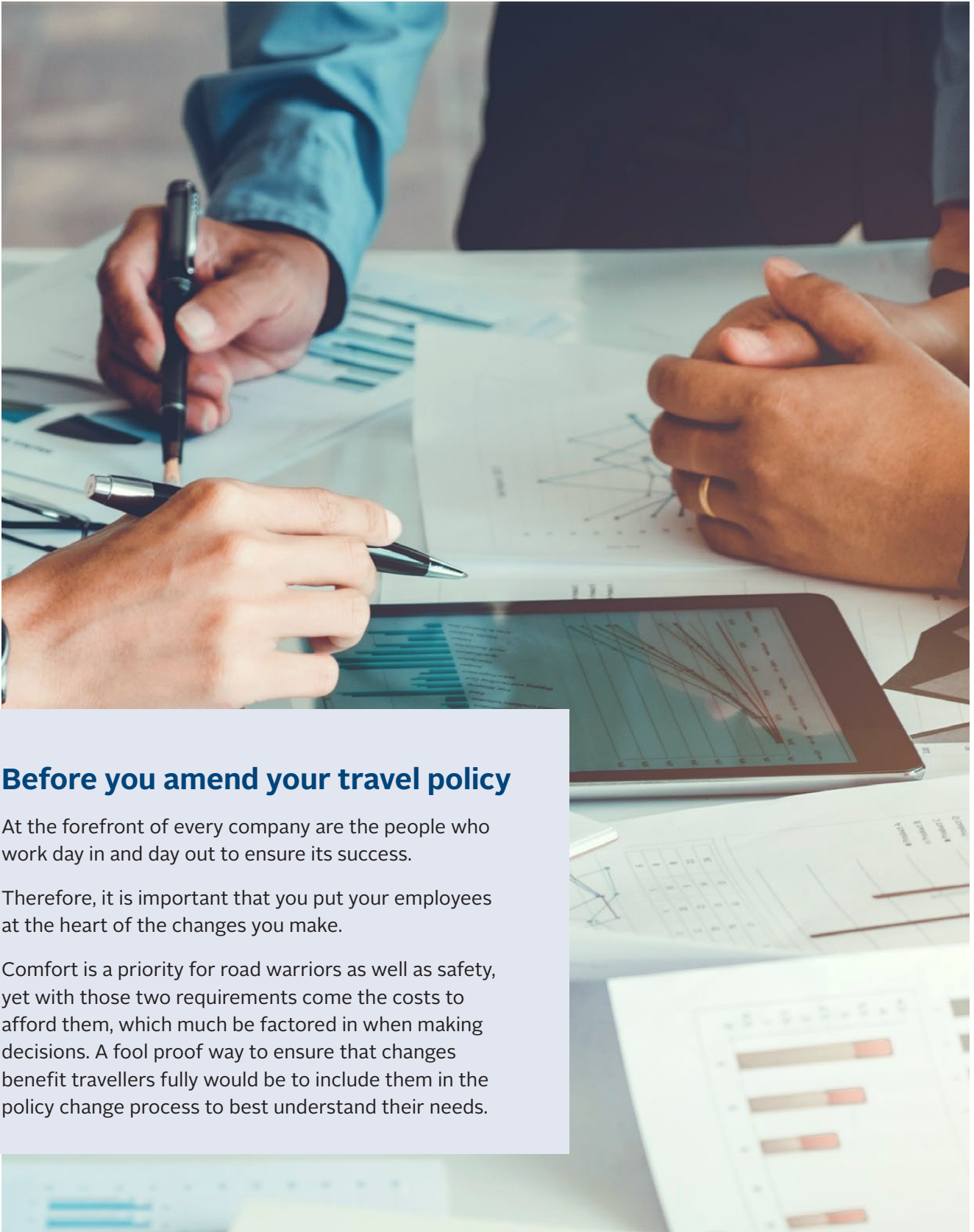
With unexpected circumstances, come several reasons to create an interim travel policy.

Financial concerns: Cash flow can easily be affected in volatile times, due to a global downturn economy, reduction in demand in your industry or financial constraints on your company – factors that deem it necessary to revisit spending habits when it comes to all aspects of business, including your travel programme.

Travel risks: Headline grabbing events such as natural disasters, security threats or disease outbreaks like the one we're seeing at the moment, all things that can put travellers at high risk.

Changes in your travel requirements: Frequency of travelling might change, whether it's more or less often and the length of trips can be affected as well, meaning there may be more comfortable or cost-effective options to look at when it comes to transport and accommodation.





Before you amend your travel policy

At the forefront of every company are the people who work day in and day out to ensure its success.

Therefore, it is important that you put your employees at the heart of the changes you make.

Comfort is a priority for road warriors as well as safety, yet with those two requirements come the costs to afford them, which much be factored in when making decisions. A fool proof way to ensure that changes benefit travellers fully would be to include them in the policy change process to best understand their needs.



Changes to be made in your interim policy

A travel policy can be a very detailed document, so there's many things to consider when creating an interim policy.

Ensure responsibility is documented

What is everyone's role in the travel programme? Regardless if these have changed or not, it is important that everyone knows their role within the travel programme. It is imperative that the travel policy has an owner this person may not decide what changes are made, they should be responsible for documenting, communicating and enforcing changes. Another important role is having someone in place to make business continuity decisions should an incident occur such as travellers becoming stuck overseas.

Approval process

An approval process may be deemed necessary if there are security or financial concerns to address. This role would suit the CFO or HR manager of a company and can be adjusted based on the needs of a company. If it's safe to travel and your staff travel frequently then a simplified approval process might be the most efficient. However, in a situation such as the current COVID-19 pandemic where only essential travel should take place, it's important to have an approval process in place to encourage responsible travel.

Cabin class

An easy way to cut costs in unprecedented times, would be to restrict travellers to lower cabin classes when making short-haul journeys. Conversely, if you have the same travellers travelling multiple long-distance journeys, it's worth considering allowing them access to premium cabins to reduce traveller fatigue and look after their wellbeing.

Hotel stays

Of the utmost importance is ensuring a hotel meets a certain level of comfort for travellers and of course has the highest level of safety and cleanliness, two factors that are more important than ever right now. However, if you are in a time period where costs are of concern, you may wish to look at reducing your maximum allowed nightly hotel rate and differ from the norm your travellers are used to. Additionally, if individuals are travelling for longer periods of time, you may want to mandate long stay accommodations such as apartment style hotels and reduce expenses allocated per day.

Destination restrictions

To facilitate the safeguarding of travellers, keep up-to-date with travel restrictions through your local government. Due to concerns in some parts of the world, changes may need to be made and restrictions followed. FCM's Secure platform is outfitted with a live WorldAware tracker to help you stay on top of regional concerns whilst offering a security system for travellers.

Mandated duty of care

Regardless of where you're travelling and especially if there are high risk destinations involved, it may be worth mandating the use of tools that ensure traveller safety when abroad – this can be as simple as collecting emergency contact details. Our travel app Sam is a great tool when it comes to duty of care, complemented by our secure platform. Sam provides destination information including emergency service contact details, updates travellers on security concerns and allows them to check in using their live locations so you can be sure they're aware of security threats and are able to access support.



Recommendations specific to COVID-19

- Stay up-to-date with advice from your local government on where it is safe to travel.
- Practice responsible travel, evaluate what your company sees as essential travel and where a trip might fall into the non-essential travel – factor in the threat to your business of not travelling.
- When making cost cutting decision ensure it is not at the cost of traveller safety or security.
- Implement effective duty of care policies – while traveller safety should always be a concern, it is more important now than ever.
- Consider appropriate changes to approval processes – two tiers of approval may be beneficial to cut costs and ensure safety, however, three may prove to increase friction and stifle a company's ability to act effectively.

There's no one size fits all example when it comes to creating an interim travel policy, something that works for one company could prove disastrous for another. This is where a travel management company (TMC) can add value. At FCM, our team of travel experts have experience when it comes to travel policy and creating one that adheres to the company at hand – we also have the workforce and tools to complement this policy in the form of Travel Managers, reporting capabilities and a vast toolkit of duty of care capabilities. So if an interim travel policy is something you're not aware of or feel comfortable creating on your own, we're here to help.

Travel policy template

We've created a template to use when starting to think about an interim travel policy. This should be used as a guide for your TMC to understand your policy, working together to expand upon it to ensure all your needs are met.

Item	Description	Policy
Travel programme manager	The individual within your company in charge of managing the travel programme.	
Mandated travel provider	To minimise the risks associated with using multiple booking platforms and for effective duty of care coverage.	
Travel risk manager	This should be an individual capable of making decisions around bringing travellers home and managing incidents that happen overseas.	
Emergency contact details	Who should employees contact if there is a problem overseas? This could be their TMCs emergency assist line or a travel risk consultancy should you employ one.	
Insurance provider	Policy number & emergency telephone number	
Duty of care	Is there an app employees must download or a specific policy they must follow to ensure traveller safety?	
Travel Restrictions	Are there certain countries or regions your employees can't travel to, or should they follow the advice of the FCO or your travel risk consultancy?	
Travel programme approver	This person approves staff travel. If needed, this would be a set individual within the company who approves all travel or a job role related to the traveller (i.e. their manager, or head of department) or both.	
Mandated airline	Is there a mandated airline or alliance that travellers must use where possible?	
Permitted cabin class	Which class of travel are staff permitted to travel in?	
Cabin class exceptions	Are there any exceptions to these rules i.e. Business class is allowed if over 6 hours?	
Mandated hotels	Do you require your employees to stay in a certain hotel chain or of a certain standard (i.e. 4 stars)?	
Hotel cost limit	How much is allowed to be spent on hotels per night?	
Hotel cost exceptions	i.e. An increased cap for high cost cities such as London or New York	
Transfer policies	Are employees permitted to book their own transfers or should they be booked through your TMC	
Other policy notes	A travel policy is an expansive guide of all travel rule and everything should be considered. Further details should include things such as whether flights should be direct where possible? Or whether you should limit the number of travellers per flight.	