
RETURN TO THE ROAD COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

Communication guidelines for the Business Travel and Meetings Industry in the pandemic era

Developed for the industry by industry buyer, supplier, and consulting volunteers

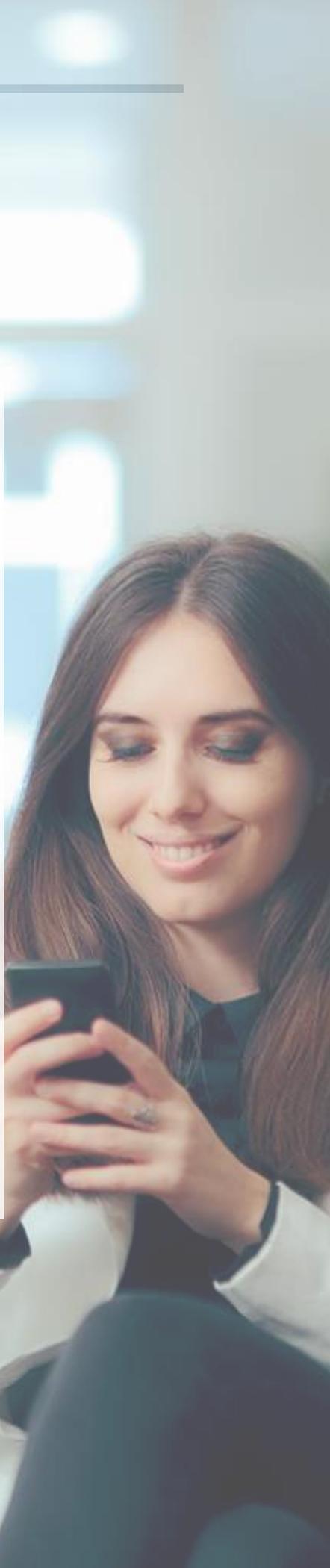


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Introduction

This Communications Guide is supplemental to the S.O.S Standards of Safety in Business Travel Guide, produced by the Travel and Meeting Standards taskforce (TAMS).

TAMS is an independent, collaborative, grassroots industry initiative designed to lay the groundwork for safe travel in a post-pandemic world. Over 181 industry professionals joined forces over eight weeks to identify standards and protocols that will help to keep travelers safe and healthy in eight key areas:

- Air
- Lodging
- Ground Transportation
- Rail
- Meetings & Events
- TMC/OBT/GDS
- Data Management
- Traveler Education

The purpose of this guide is to help you build a communication strategy to engage and educate your travelers.

Building an internal communications plan in the workplace is something companies have practiced for decades. In today's environment, sustaining a communications plan is more important than ever, especially in relation to travel.

It's about educating employees and making them feel safe. It's about supporting them with essential information, signposting them to resources and giving them confidence in their decision making. By providing clear guidance and communicating effectively to the right audience, through the right channel, at the right time, you can help employees get back on the road safely and with more confidence.

Employees want to be informed. They want to make the best decisions. In times of uncertainty and change they want guidance to help them make those decisions. Focusing your communication efforts on building a strategy that addresses the key information employees need at the time they need it will help build confidence and trust and drive compliance to support your ever-important duty of care.

We know employees will all be at different stages; some are excited to start traveling again and can't wait for their first trip, others are more hesitant and still concerned about health risks. Add to that those who may have underlying health conditions that they don't necessarily want to disclose and managing a safe return to travel becomes even more challenging. Communication is one of the best tools in your toolkit to support employees. With a well-defined strategy you can ensure all employees, no matter what their current mindset or level of comfort, feel engaged, supported and able to make the best decision, for themselves and the business.

How to use this guide

We have created this corporate travel guide to help you build your communications plan from the ground up. This guide concentrates on key areas that are important to your employees and are the foundations of your travel program.

Use this guide to help you move your program beyond the traditional approach and put your employees and travelers at the heart of your program. You can use it section by section or, as we recommend, use it to build a complete, holistic communications plan, addressing all the needs of your travelers. With this approach, using this guide, you can build a communication and engagement strategy that helps you create an environment of trust, transparency and traveler confidence.

Engaged employees are generally happier, have higher levels of satisfaction and have greater confidence in the travel program, leading to increased compliance and cost savings.

Through a targeted traveler engagement and education campaign, one company, working with a travel industry consultancy, increased traveler satisfaction from 64% to 84% and reduced dissatisfaction from 13% to just 4%. This had a positive knock on effect on program compliance and tool adoption.

What you'll learn

Throughout this guide we will provide hints, tips and practical steps you can take to build your communication plan. But remember, building the plan is just the first step, next you need to implement it, or work with a partner who can support you and your team by managing the creation of the plan and/or delivery.

Key takeaways from this guide:

- Defining the steps to build your plan
- Education on key areas of focus
- Taking your plan from theory to action
- Measuring impact and refining

Building and implementing effective communication and employee engagement campaigns is an art. The development of content and visual design elements are essential in creating a successful multichannel engagement campaign. If you choose to work with a partner, you need to find one with proven marketing and traveler/employee engagement expertise. A good, strategic partner can work with you to build the plan as well as manage tactical implementation to drive results.

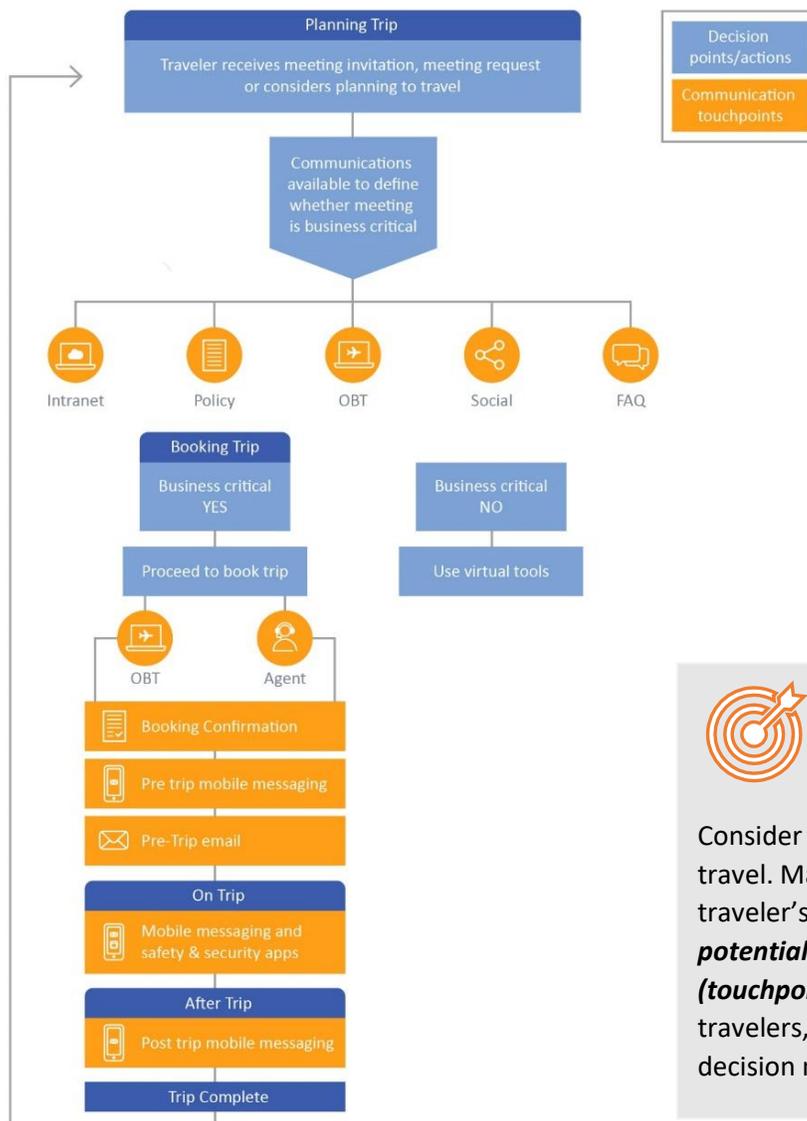
The impact of a well-executed campaign can have far reaching impact across multiple areas of your program, as illustrated by these examples from Finastra.



General Education

Employee engagement is more than just communication. It's not about sending an email or posting something on the intranet and hoping the message is received and understood. Employee engagement starts with putting the employee, or traveler, at the heart of your program and building a strategy to achieve your goals and address their needs.

It's about creating communications that are impactful, relevant and easy to digest. Lengthy documents, wordy and static announcements just don't cut it. Your communications need to cut through the noise, grab the attention of the intended audience and make your message simple and easy to understand. As individuals and consumers, we all have a very limited attention span. We carry this in to the work environment too. The use of visuals, imagery, short form text, graphics and video help you and your message stand out. You need to think like a marketer, or work with a trusted partner who is experienced in marketing and employee engagement, to ensure your communications deliver the results you need.



Consider your traveler journey as they plan travel. Map all key decision points in your traveler's experience and identify all **potential communications opportunities (touchpoints)** for you to engage with your travelers, help educate and guide their decision making.

Defining the steps to build your plan

Goals

First, you need to clearly define your goals. Try to limit your number of goals to an achievable number, ideally no more than three. Any more and it becomes unachievable and unmanageable, as your focus and attention are split across too many priorities. Keep it simple. Often when you write down a long list of goals you will find many of the themes overlap. Consolidate similar themes into fewer overarching and powerful goals.

Make each goal SMART: specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic (not overly ambitious!) and time bound. Adopting this method of goal setting ensures you have absolute clarity on what you are aiming to achieve through the engagement campaign, you can track it, it's a stretch but not out of reach and you have a deadline.

Focus on goals where you know your communications can have a tangible impact. For instance, *"Reduce my 2021 hotel program to -30% of 2019 levels and diversifying rates to include +50% dynamic rates"* is a great goal, but your communication plan can't deliver against this. A communication/engagement goal aligned to this sourcing/spend management goal could be *"Educate travelers on the changes to the hotel program through an integrated communications campaign that increases compliance, resulting in X% increase in bookings within program, through approved channels, by the end of 2021."*

Make sure the goals you set can be impacted through your communication efforts, otherwise you will fall short when you set about measuring results.

Channel review

Spend time thoroughly reviewing all available communication channels. Consider every touchpoint in your travelers' experience and every potential interaction they could have with travel and travel content. Think about every opportunity you have to communicate with them. Consider the following questions when undertaking your review:

- How do you and others in the organization reach employees today?
- How do you access those communication tools?
- Do you have ownership of a channel, such as a social community, or do all communications pass through an internal communications team?
- What is the policy on group email?
- What technology is available?

Understanding available channels, how to use them and what the corporate communication policy is are essential in building an effective campaign.

Audience identification

You need to know who you want to talk to. Just thinking about ‘travelers’ or ‘employees’ is far too broad. As noted above, at the very least you will have groups of people with varying levels of confidence and comfort when it comes to considering resuming travel.

Consider your different divisions, business units or groups and how their travel patterns and needs differ. Think about your traditional road warriors, executives and senior leadership, arrangers and occasional travelers. What are their differing needs?

It is also important to consider traveler sentiment. How do different audiences feel about returning to travel? Consider conducting a survey or pulse poll to establish sentiment and attitudes.

EPAM Systems, a software engineering company, surveyed travelers on returning to travel. The graphs below show the results of travelers’ attitudes towards returning to travel.



Aligning channels and messages to audiences

Once you've identified your channels and how to use/access them, along with defining all your different audiences, consider which channel you should use for each group. It's rare in communication to find a 'one size fits all' approach. This seldom works and is not a recommended strategy. Blanket and mass communication has had its day. Today we expect much more targeted and personalized communications in both our personal and business lives. The most impactful campaigns are multi-channel, using different ways to reach individuals with reinforcing messages. Think of it as you would a consumer promotion for a product. Businesses use marketing agencies to support their customer targeting. They will build a fully integrated campaign that utilizes TV, radio, print and digital targeting. Your engagement campaign should do the same with your available channels.

Consider the effectiveness of each channel for your different audiences and your messages. Each message or content piece should be created specifically for the intended audience. Would you send the same message to a road warrior as you would an occasional traveler? Does the message need to be tailored to the travel arranger or the executives? To get the most leverage out of your communications and education pieces, define who's receiving it, what they need to know and how/where they will access and digest the information.

Stakeholder engagement

For many travel managers it is also critical to give confidence to senior stakeholders within the business. This could be through board reports, exec committee presentations or strategic leader status updates. As part of your communication campaign you should also address senior stakeholder engagement. What do senior leaders need to know about your strategy? How do they want to be involved or informed? Be sure to create high level strategic overviews and status reports on your campaign and clearly demonstrate results/impact. If you are working with a partner agency to manage your communication strategy, they should also develop strategic communication elements, such as presentations and insights, using the same approach of impactful visual elements to tell your story.

Also consider your external stakeholders and how you engage with them. Your suppliers are regularly updating their latest safety standards and operating procedures as things continue to evolve and change. Be sure to advise your suppliers how best they can communicate their latest information to you, to enable you to share this with your travelers as part of your engagement strategy.

Build a process to enable suppliers to provide relevant and timely content to you quickly and easily, in a traveler-friendly format, which you can share on your social or intranet channels. Be sure to align on targets and messaging so there are no mixed messages from your communications versus supplier communication. You are the gatekeeper to your travelers and should manage the flow of information so as not to overwhelm or confuse travelers with too much or contradictory information. As things are changing so quickly, consider building a resource hub on your intranet to host relevant supplier information which can be easily updated without you having to rework any of your communications.

Next steps

Once you have worked through the above steps, you can then start to focus on the specific areas of education for the core components of your program. As with all parts of the program, travelers will have many questions once they begin to start planning to return to travel. Address as many of these as possible through your communications, using the appropriate channels to do so. Consider how you can use email, social posts, intranet, digital screens and your OBT to share engaging content, such as infographics and FAQs to ensure the message reaches the intended audience.

Air Education

EPAM’s travelers are considering all aspects of air travel. The top two areas of consideration are; boarding procedures and social distancing. Take this into account when planning your communications and align with your travelers’ priority areas.



Key areas of focus for your air education communications include:

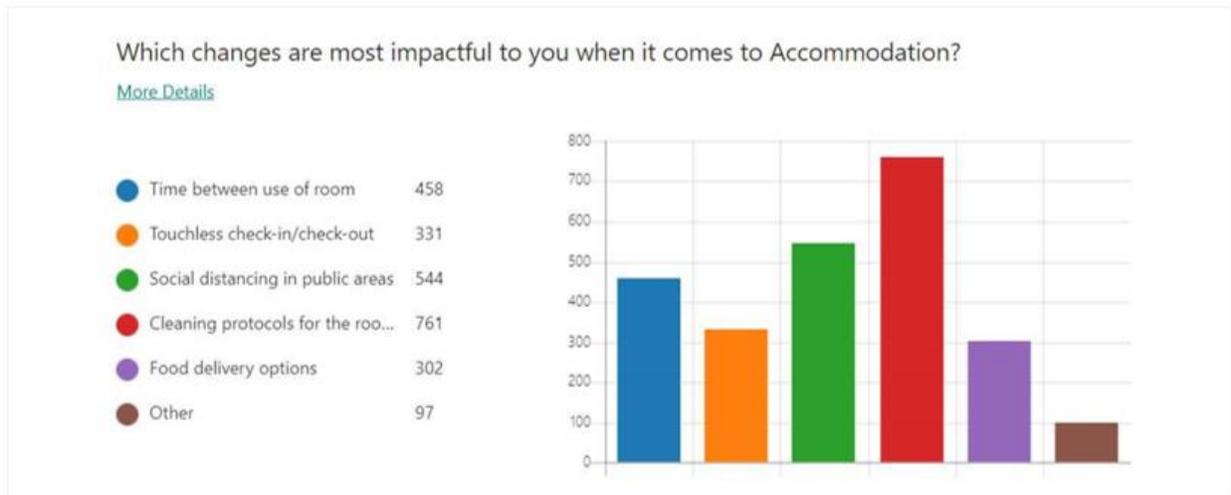
| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|--|---|
| Guidance on policies on the utilization of unused tickets | How to request refunds, changes and cancellations and how to apply an unused ticket credit to a booking. |
| Up to date information on any required health questionnaires, temperature checks or mandated quarantines | Latest travel advisories and guidance on where temperature checks are required. Insight on how the temperature check process works and what travelers need to do if they show a high temperature reading. |
| Latest information on lounge access and services | Lounges currently closed. When lounges reopen there will be limited catering options and reduced seating and close management of the number of people able to access at any one time. |
| Advice on what the PPE requirements are for travel, for both the airport and airline | Wearing facemask throughout the journey, including travel to the airport, transit through the airport and on the plane. If wearing a disposable facemask, it is likely this will need to be changed multiple times, especially if traveling for more than three hours. Remember not to touch your facemask, other than to put it on and take it off. Continue to wash hands and follow airline guidance. |



| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|---|---|
| Information on social distancing measures in place at the airport and onboard | Guidance on staying at least 1.5m (6 feet) apart, more in some instances. Reminders of maintaining this distance throughout the airport, including check in (do it online whenever possible), security and boarding. Guidance on the latest information on airlines regarding keeping the middle seat empty. |
| Recommendations on how to prepare for the inflight experience, including whether any inflight meals/service will be available | Provide a travel kit or guidance on what to include in a travel kit, including face masks, sanitizer, tissues, disinfectant wipes. Latest information on each airline’s inflight dining options/restrictions. |
| Insight on supplier safety and cleanliness standards | Latest information from airlines on cleaning and sanitizing measures in place onboard. |
| What to do if the flight cancels or immediate travel restrictions are put in place when at the airport | Guidance on contacting the agency both during and out of hours. Clear information on where to find this contact information provided upfront, so travelers know what to do in the situation. |

Hotel Education

Based on the EPAM survey, travelers are most concerned with cleaning protocols and social distancing in hotels. Consider this when planning your communications and align with your travelers' priority areas.



Key areas of focus for your hotel education communications include:

| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Booking within program | How to book, what channels to use and what type of rate to book. Recommend booking rooms on lower levels, which can be accessed by stairs or with limited time in elevators. Travelers should book all hotels vetted by the Travel Department to ensure they meet the cleaning standards required by your company. |
| Making changes to bookings | Guidance on making a change or cancelling a booking. When to contact an agent vs. when to cancel through an OBT. |
| Checking the hotel is operational | Before departure, travelers should check with the travel agency to ensure the hotel is operational. |
| Getting to the hotel | Clear guidance on the use of public transport, taxi or ride sharing services. What is the policy and what safety measures do travelers need to take? Are there options in place for prearranged transfers? Instruct on transportation allowances for hotel shuttle service based on risk assessment. |



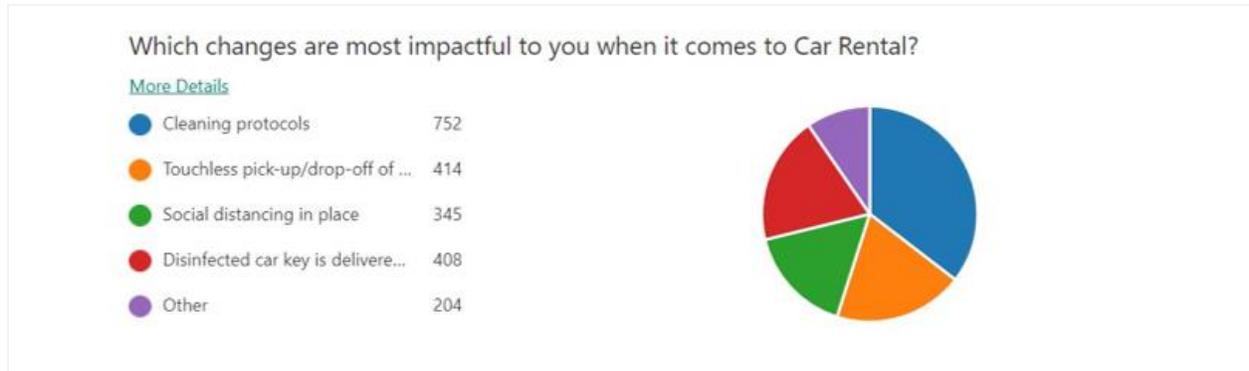
| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|--|--|
| Cleanliness and safety measures | <p>Latest information on safety and cleanliness certifications in hotels and guidance on how to book a certified property.</p> <p>Make available to your travelers any published cleaning standards at the properties booked prior to travel. At a minimum, this should be obtained from all preferred properties.</p> <p>Tips on limiting contact with high touch areas/items/surfaces and providing disinfectant wipes so these areas can be wiped down.</p> <p>Cover the remote control with PPE covering or hotel provided shower cap.</p> |
| Contactless check in | <p>Information on which apps to download and step by step process on how to manage contactless check in.</p> <p>Travelers should check-in/out through technology where available to avoid human interaction.</p> <p>If contactless check in is not an option, avoid checking in at key times of the day and socially distance yourself.</p> |
| Use of elevators | <p>Elevators – wear masks in elevators and request lower floors to minimize exposure.</p> |
| In room amenities | <p>Up to date information on what amenities are available in the room.</p> <p>Travelers should inquire about the amenities no longer being offered prior to check-in.</p> <p>Avoid using decorative cushions or bedding.</p> <p>Avoid using glassware.</p> <p>Keep personal items, such as toiletries in luggage.</p> |
| Breakfast/dining | <p>Details regarding available dining options at the hotel and recommended choices, such as room service vs. restaurant.</p> <p>Do not allow hotel staff in your room if delivering room service trays.</p> |
| PPE/social distancing measures | <p>Guidance on hotel’s policy on masks, whether staff are wearing PPE and what travelers are expected to do in public areas.</p> <p>Practice social distancing in all areas of the hotel and your destination.</p> |
| Leisure facilities/gym and communal areas, such as business centers, lobby area and bars | <p>Guide travelers to where they need to go to find the latest information on what facilities are open and accessible and guidance in using the facilities safely or avoiding them.</p> |
| What to do if the traveler feels the hotel safety and cleanliness standard are not good enough and they want to change their hotel | <p>Guidance on how to request a change via the agency and at what point to do this.</p> <p>Grounds for requesting a change if they feel unsafe and that standards are not adequate.</p> |
| What to do if a hotel is oversold upon check in | <p>If hotel is oversold upon check-in, travelers should only rebook through the preferred travel agency to ensure they are being reserved at another property that meets the company’s safety requirements.</p> |



| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|---|--|
| What to do if traveler becomes ill while at the hotel | Guidance on how to report feeling unwell and what to do in this situation. Information on what support and assistance will be provided if traveler needs to quarantine or is taken to hospital. |

Ground Transportation Education

When considering ground transportation, the EPAM survey found that cleaning protocols and touchless pick up and drop off were of greatest importance to travelers. Consider your travelers' priority areas when communicating information in relation to ground transport.



Key areas of focus for your ground transportation education communications include:

| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|---|---|
| How to book a car | Guidance on which vendors and channels to use to make bookings. |
| How to check cleanliness measures | Information on measures your preferred partners are taking to ensure safety and cleanliness of all vehicles. |
| Renting for extended periods | Advice on when it is appropriate to extend a rental to keep the same vehicle if a second trip is planned soon after the first. |
| How to collect and return a car safely | Step by step guide on supplier touchless hand over and drop off process. |
| PPE requirements | Guidance on what PPE is required during pick up and drop off and when driving the vehicle. |
| Can multiple colleagues share the vehicle | Guidance on policy changes regarding more than one traveler using the vehicle. Do all travelers have to rent their own car, or can two colleagues travel together if one sits in the back? |
| Any special guidance in relation to refueling | Guidance on use of pay at pump facilities or wearing a mask if going into a kiosk to pay after refueling. Guidance to only top up when required, limiting the amount of times the car is refueled during a rental. Any change to policy on returning the car fully refueled. |

Rail Education

Key areas of focus for your rail education communications include:

| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|--|---|
| How to purchase tickets | Most train operating company ticket desks will have open counters with protective screens. The use of cash is discouraged. Pay using contactless where possible. Recommendation to buy online or use ticket machines (washing hands after using ticket machines). Use e-tickets where possible. |
| Guidance on anticipated boarding process | In most cases, train attendants will scan tickets at the train entrance to validate seat reservation and regulate social distancing whilst boarding. Passengers should allow extra time for boarding due to social distancing protocols. |
| Up to date information on what services are available at the station and onboard, such as lounges, baggage service, food | Passengers will be likely responsible for managing their own baggage. Meal services are unlikely. Some operators may allow passengers to eat their own food onboard, but this will be limited as it means removing the mandated face mask. Most lounges are closed. When they reopen it will be gradual and catering will be limited. |
| Up to date information on any required health questionnaires, temperature checks or mandated quarantines | Train operators may apply temperature checks and health QR code (if Country applicable). Passengers should check for certification required to travel to various countries if rail journey is International. |
| Advice on what the PPE requirements are for travel | Facemasks are mandatory for all passengers and staff. It is recommended to wear face masks in stations and all areas where social distancing is not possible. |
| What are the social distancing requirements? | Seat reservations may be mandated to ensure social distancing. Capacity will be limited (this will impact availability of busy trains). Boarding and disembarkation may be managed using a one-way system to ensure social distancing. Passengers are required to stay within their seats and keep movement on board to a minimum. |



| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Cleaning | <p>Train operating companies will provide a deep and thorough cleaning and disinfection of trains on all surfaces on a regular basis.</p> <p>Passengers should check individual train operator protocols for cleaning frequency.</p> <p>Hand sanitizers and hand washing facilities will be provided where possible, however, passengers should ensure that they carry their own hand sanitizers and/or disinfectant wipes.</p> |

Agency and OBT Education

Key areas of focus for your agency and OBT education communications include:

| What travelers need to know | What you need to communicate |
|--|---|
| When to call an agent vs. book online | Clear guidance on what trips can be booked, amended or cancelled online and when to contact an agent. |
| How to make a change or cancellation | Guidance on which booking channel to use to change or cancel a booking and advice on when this is an appropriate option. |
| What to do if a booking needs to be changed when on the road | Guidance on how to make last minute changes when a trip has begun. |
| How to move to a different hotel | Advice on contacting an agent to support a move to an alternative hotel. Clear guidance on when moving to another hotel is an option. |

Meetings & Events Education

Key areas of focus for your meetings and events education communications include:

| What delegates need to know | What you need to communicate |
|---|--|
| What has changed in the policy/process for arranging meetings and attending | Policy update overview, clearly defining changes for meeting arrangers and delegates. |
| What are the safety measures for registering for an event | Guidance on any testing required prior to registration. Information on how to register and what to do if feeling unwell prior to the event start. Delegates may be required to provide additional information upon registration, including COVID-19 screening questions. |
| Testing delegates before entering the event | Temperature checks for all delegates and staff entering the venue. Some events may require staff and delegates to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test. |
| Number of delegates | Venues will adhere to the latest Country, State and Federal guidelines on gatherings and allowable numbers. |
| Cleanliness standards in venues | Guidance on venue specific measure in place. Details regarding hand washing and sanitization stations |
| PPE and social distancing | Guidance on venue and staff PPE standards and required PPE for delegates, such as masks worn when inside. Observe social distancing measures at all times. |
| Catering | Information on whether any catering will be provided and if not whether delegates can bring their own food and drink Where outside dining is an option it will be promoted |



| | |
|--|--|
| | Some venues/events may provide pre-packaged food for take-out consumption. Single use menus, cutlery, glasses will be used. |
|--|--|

Bringing your plan to life

Taking your plan from theory to action

As noted earlier, building the plan is just the first step. Now you need to implement it. You have done all the groundwork and laid the foundations, now you can start to build and distribute your integrated communications across your defined channels, with targeted messages for your key audiences.

You need to invest time and effort in building your communications, considering design, content and marketing/behavioral economics theory, to ensure your communications resonate with the target audience. Consider who in your team will take the lead in managing your communications or work with a trusted partner who can coordinate, manage and implement the strategy for you, in partnership with you.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. You are an expert in travel, not necessarily in marketing. You wouldn't find your internal product or service teams managing the consumer or B2B marketing campaigns, they will work with marketing experts, you can do the same.

Measuring impact and refining

With any marketing campaign it is important to consider both hard and soft metrics. Some things have a tangible measure, others are less tangible. If you have set your goals using the SMART framework you will have identified a measurable target. Be sure to establish your baseline before you start and then track progress against this measure on an ongoing basis. You should be reviewing this on a monthly, or at least quarterly basis. Consider also the associated soft metrics, such as traveler satisfaction and wellness.

Don't be afraid to switch direction, focus efforts in other areas or change your approach if the strategy is not delivering the results you need. Look again at the message, channels and audiences and make sure they are aligned. Try using a different approach and track and monitor the impact. If you do make adjustments, only adjust one element at a time. If you change multiple components you will not know exactly what makes the impact.

Although you've built a communication strategy to focus on communication through the return to travel, you can use this as a start point for ongoing traveler and employee engagement. Don't stop once things start to normalize. Use this as your opportunity to position the travel program as a trusted source of information, build further engagement and drive traveler confidence.

Final Tips

- Think about every step of your traveler journey as they plan travel and build your plan to cover every touch point
- Consider every step of the process when they travel and be sure to address any areas where travelers may be unsure of what to do
- Listen to what your travelers have to say, what their concerns are and, once they start traveling again, what their experience are
- Communicate consistent messages across multiple channels
- Engage with your suppliers, have thoughtful conversations about what they are saying directly to your travelers, partner with them to develop communication pieces as needed
- Continually evolve your communications as the situation evolves
- Don't forget to determine your companies risk tolerance and communicate what is expected of your travelers
- Update your travel policy with key changes like health insurance, risk standards, and travel approval processes
- Encourage your travelers to download essential mobile apps to help them before, during and after their trip. Apps that support itinerary management, on trip messaging, bookings and safety and security alerts are key
- Use an expert partner or ensure a lead is identified within your travel team to drive the engagement strategy

ROAD BACK TO TRAVEL COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

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