AmTrav Gather

HOW TO PLAN MEETING & EVENT TRAVEL — WITHOUT THE STRESS

A guide to choosing the right travel booking method for your meeting or event.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID pandemic is finally (finally!) passing and you can get back together face-to-face with your friends and colleagues. Meetings and events, conventions, incentive trips, customer forums — in person at last!

But now you have to coordinate travel for those meetings and events: who's attending, how are they getting there, where are they staying and meeting, how are they paying and how do you keep track of all your itineraries and spending? And whether you're an in-house meeting manager, travel manager or independent meeting planner, your tools may be the same that you had in 2019: poorly suited to coordinating travel, negotiating with suppliers, managing rooming lists and handling last-minute travel changes.

It's 2022 — isn't there a better way?

The good news is that you have options, and with this guide you're in the right place to find the best option for you and your attendees.

THE CONTENDERS

Fortunately you have many options for arranging meeting & event travel in 2022. At a high level we can summarize the options in four categories:

DIY travel planning: Either book your attendees on internet travel sites or let attendees book themselves and submit for reimbursement.

Meeting platforms: Cvent, Groupize and others have revolutionized meetings management, making event websites, registration and sometimes even travel for meetings easier.

Corporate travel agencies: Contact your company's travel agency and have them help arrange your attendees' trips.

Meeting travel platforms: Invite your attendees to book within parameters and policies that you set using a tool specially built for coordinating meeting and event travel.

Note: we refer to "attendees" throughout this guide, but you may plan travel for staff, vendors, speakers and others in addition to meeting and event attendees – so think about them too!

THE CRITERIA

You need a way to plan travel for meeting and events attendees quickly and easily — but what does that mean exactly, and how do you decide? Here are the criteria we'll use to evaluate each option to determine which option is best for you and your attendees:

Sourcing & planning: You need to negotiate hotel rates, event space, airline meeting rates and ground transfers, ideally following industry best practices – does your solution help with that?

Control: Can you set controls to make sure your attendees book cost-appropriate options, arrive on time and book into the correct hotel room blocks?

Shopping: Attendees are used to booking their own travel, so how easily can they select flight and hotel options that work for them – and for you, if you're paying for their travel?

Payment: If you need to cover attendees' travel costs, can you easily and securely pay for travel or reimburse travelers?

Spend & safety tracking: Can you see your attendees' latest spending and itineraries so you can confidently report costs and track arrivals and departures (a great way to know how many welcome dinners to order)?

Service: 20% of trips are changed in advance or disrupted by delays or cancellations, so can attendees quickly get help changing travel plans (ideally without calling you late at night or during the meeting!)?

HOW THEY COMPARE

There are two ways to **DIY travel plan:** book for your attendees or let attendees book their own itineraries. (For both methods you'll need to source and manage hotel blocks yourself.)

If you book for your attendees you can follow your own spending controls and pay for attendees' travel. You'll need to talk with each attendee to find flights they like and collect personal details (name spelling, birthdate, loyalty numbers, etc.) then you'll manually track itineraries and spending. If you've booked for others before you know this *sounds* easy, but can be a real pain. And if attendees' flights get delayed or canceled, they'll probably call you for help.

Or you can let attendees book their own itineraries. This works if attendees are paying their own way – no need to control their spending – though you won't know when they're coming or going. If you are paying for their travel, they'll need to follow your spending guidelines and submit receipts for you to manually audit and reimburse – and they're on their own when travel gets disrupted.

So DIY works if attendees pay for their own travel or if you have only a couple travelers, but becomes a time-consuming headache if you have more than a few attendees.

Meeting platforms like Cvent and Groupize handle event registration and operations, and also have software to run hotel RFPs and book into blocks. If the meeting platform is integrated with your corporate booking tool (like Concur) you can use your tool's travel policy and payment capabilities for flight bookings – though travel policies won't be tailored to your specific meeting so you'll need to check that nobody arrives late or leaves early! And attendees who aren't employees can't access to the booking tool to book. Spend and itinerary data is collected at booking, but isn't updated when trips change since service is outsourced to travel agencies who aren't connected to the meeting platform. If you don't have an integrated booking tool or have non-employee travelers you'll likely DIY (above) to book, track data and help travelers.

HOW THEY COMPARE (CONTINUED)

Many companies have their **corporate travel agency** (aka Travel Management Company or TMC – think Amex, BCD) plan attendees' travel. These corporate travel agencies have meeting specialists to source hotel blocks, event space and airline contracts, can apply controls to attendees' trips and securely use company cards to pay for travel. Agencies can show you the latest spend and itinerary data and are available to help attendees change travel plans. Unfortunately corporate travel agencies rely on forms and emails to plan travel with lots of back-and-forth for you and your attendees — a painful way to book travel in the 21st Century that doesn't let attendees quickly, easily get the itineraries they want. And this process is expensive: you get charged for every call to the agency and attendees might hesitate to call them for fear of incurring fees. So corporate travel agencies are reliable, but their cumbersome processes are a pain for you and your attendees.

Finally, there are **meeting travel platforms** like AmTrav Gather that are custom-built for attendee travel. Meeting travel platforms offer expert human assistance sourcing hotel room blocks, event space and airline meeting rates, from researching and running RFPs through negotiating and contracting. Your attendees can choose their own itineraries in modern travel websites with meeting-specific parameters and travel policies (that you set!) automatically applied. Attendees book right into your room block (no rooming list hassles for you) and your payment is securely provided (no reimbursement needed). Platforms automatically track the latest spending and itineraries including any trip changes and provide your travelers with expert human travel service 24x7 in case plans change or there's an emergency. In short, these custom-built platforms offer the control, service and security of corporate travel agencies with the itinerary choice that attendees want, making them a great option for a lot of planners and attendees.

HOW THEY COMPARE (CONTINUED)

	DIY planning (You book attendees or they book themselves)	Meeting platforms (Tools like Cvent or Groupize)	Corporate travel agencies (Your company's TMC helps you book)	Meeting travel platforms (Specialized tools like AmTrav Gather)
Sourcing (Source & secure hotel, event and air rates & services)	👎 Not good	👍 Winner	👍 Winner	👍 Winner
Control (Set guidelines to ensure reasonable attendee spending)	❓ Questionable	❓ Questionable	👍 Winner	👍 Winner
Shopping (Attendees can easily book itineraries they like)	❓ Questionable	❓ Questionable	👎 Not good	👍 Winner
Payment (Easily cover attendees' travel costs)	❓ Questionable	❓ Questionable	👍 Winner	👍 Winner
Spend & safety tracking (Track travel costs & attendee itineraries)	👎 Not good	👎 Not good	👍 Winner	👍 Winner
Service (Travel disruptions happen, get your attendees help fast)	👎 Not good	👎 Not good	👍 Winner	👍 Winner

👍 Winner! Really good!　　❓ Questionable.　　👎 Not good!

CONCLUSION

So which meeting & event travel planning tool is the best for you?

The truth is, there's no one-size-fits-all option for meetings and events attendee travel. DIY can work for very small groups or travelers paying for their own travel, meetings platforms work for some larger organizations, and many companies and planners use their corporate travel agencies. On the other hand an increasing number of planners use meeting travel platforms to coordinate attendee travel in just minutes, saving themselves and their attendees valuable time and significant hassle.

AmTrav Gather

This guide is brought to you by AmTrav Gather, the modern meetings and events travel platform that makes travel planning easy whether you're gathering 10 attendees or 1,000. Gather gives you the sourcing help and control you need while giving your attendees the choice they want, with full visibility into spend and itinerary data, and backed up with unlimited 24x7 expert travel support for your attendees.

How to Gather:

1. Get expert help sourcing hotel room blocks, meeting space and airline meeting contracts.

2. Configure a meeting & invite your attendees in just two minutes, then attendees book themselves with your policies applied and payment securely provided.

3. Get full visibility into your travel spend & attendees' itinerary data.

4. Give attendees peace of mind with guaranteed 24x7 service.
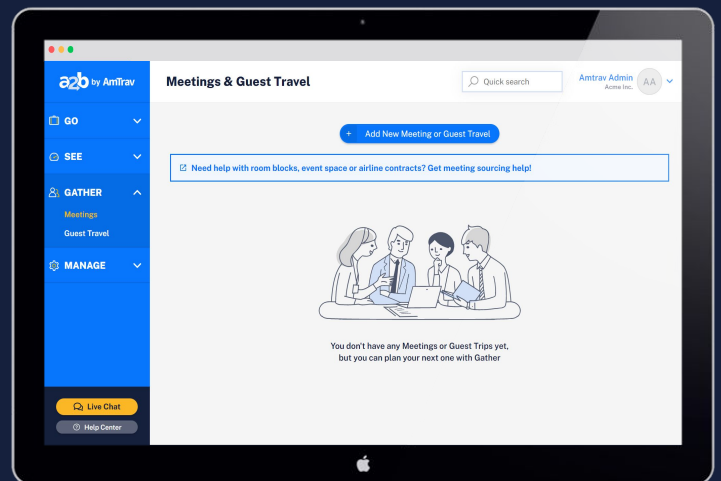
TIME TO GATHER!

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