

Ready for the Road: How to build employee confidence (Part 2 of 2)

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Manu Wadhwa: I'm going to shift the gears here and talk to Kerrie and Angeline about what are some of the things that airlines and hotel industry are doing working with each other to provide the baseline for a travelers health and safety? You could share your perspective, both as an employer as well as what is generally happening at large for the traveler.

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Angeline Khoo: Okay, perhaps I can start first. Okay, um, yeah, for the airlines, just like what has been mentioned earlier on, there's a lot of emphasis on governmental restriction, and also some of the travel advisories. So as you know, there are lots of travel ban in place. So it's not a matter of where the airlines would like to fly to, but so much so about working with the government and on all those green lanes and where it is that we need to support that kind of traffic. And as has been mentioned earlier on the traffic right now is very much on a semi permanent basis, not so much for leisure, and also more for homebound traffic. Right. And the customer's journey has very much changed for the air travel, I mean, for those that are traveling or have travel, you will have

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really get to know about some of the changes. For example, it was mentioned about some of the new administration document that needs to be in place, tests that needs to be done. So these are some of the key information that we have assessed, that our customers or a traveler will need before they travel. So we have packaged some of this information in a central repository, knowing that everybody has turned to online for information right now, I mean, next to having some of the offline support that is not available at this stage. We have pushed everything to digital to website for information sharing, as well as preparing better the traveler for their trip. Because a lot of things have changed, right? You know, nobody likes to touch on anything right now. And the key word right now here is about protection, and reducing contacts, right? So we have to manage the travelers about some of the key things that you have to bring on board, for example, in Singapore it's mandatory for face coverings when you get out of your house. Right, and that includes going on board the plane. So we have customers saying that oh, how, how is it I can't imagine having a face covering for that long trip and that many hours on board the plane. So we're trying to manage that expectation and make sure that they know what to expect when they are going on their travel. And not just that, sanitization, as well as health, hygiene is really important as it's been repeatedly mentioned many times. So, you know, behind the scenes that a lot of aircraft cleaning, a lot of disinfection and even about the air in on the aircraft, the cabin cleaning. So all these are happening behind the scenes, but we need to make sure that our customers are aware of audits that are being put in place to ensure their safety and well being. So we have come up with all kinds

of communication because I think the awareness is really important. And also getting them to understand that that the risk is really being mitigated and all measures have been put in place to ensure their safety. So not not just that come to hardcopies. You know, for those regular travelers, you would have identified with your onboard your in flight entertainment touching the screen, touching the magazine, doing your onboard in flight duty free shopping. So all these have been reimagined and cased to a new experience. We are trying to bring on board some of the duty free shopping to before your trip so you can do a pre order. And our crew, we haven't changed our processes to try and push some of these sales, your purchases to be delivered to your seats, or even to your home. I mean, if these are some of the purchases that you would like to do on the duty free

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and climate landscape has changed. When you arrive at the airport, you will see frontliners in masks. I mean it's no longer just in a hospital or in a clinic that you see people in masks, everybody is masked up for the personal protection. And I'm not sure about other parts of Asia Pacific but in Singapore, it's very common to see a protective acrylic screen right now. So on many of our continents with stuff on static position, they can't really move around so that the screens that are segregating, protecting the customers as well as protecting our frontliners, for that kind of safety measures in place.

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Then on top of that, safe distancing, right, I mean, we have seen many surveys and people are concerned when they go on board, the plane, crowded places, like checked in so we are encouraging people to do more check in, check in from home. And thankfully some of these processes are already in progress

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and gain momentum pre COVID day, right. Reducing all this friction about doing any touches on board. And even for boarding pass right now, you know that traditional boarding pass or hardcopy, we have already converted to mobile boarding pass, but even still printed at home for I mean, for those that are still liking the hard copies, but you don't like to get it part from a third party, third party. So this is also made accessible for our customers. Then, for lounge, even the food, you know, our usual buffet spread that has been redesigned, you know, no longer a buffet that is available to our customers. But right now we are changing to an ala carte service. So they can make their orders based on their preferred dishes, and then we can actually deliver to them.

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So coming to onboard, even our cabin crew, you know, the buyers, right now is done with masks, who are wearing masks aboard the plane throughout the flight, because it's mandatory for us to

do so, as well as goggles for the extra protection, just to make sure that they are phased out well covered. And again, the food on board is designed.

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You know, for our premium travelers, they are used to the course by course, service delivery of their meals. But that has been changed.

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The whole idea is really reducing and minimizing the contact between our crew and the customers. So for passengers in the premium class yeah they're still getting some of their signature dishes from Asian products, but it's hard to cram within that tray that we have to redeem them for a premium travel experience. And for our inflight entertainment, for those that are not so thrilled about touching screens, we even have a companion app, you know, you can actually pair your app with your mobile device. So you know, nowadays you can't travel without a mobile phone, right. So everybody has a mobile phone with them. And they can actually pair it with our in flight entertainment, that kind of interaction so that they can minimize all the touches onboard. Everything has gone digital, if you can. And then I guess it's not no longer about the number of interactions, but it's really about the quality of integration. But end of the day, it's really to, to make sure that we have the essential measures in place, redesign the whole journey to lock customers also restoring their travel confidence because it is in the state if we have put in some of the measures. Yeah, maybe over to you Kerrie

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Kerrie: Thanks Angeline. Obviously, I agree with a lot of that, we're probably going through very similar journey, just kind of jumping to the last point first and then go back to what we're doing. But, you know, there's been a lot of talk in the industry across brands, hospitality groups, airlines, a lot of the language of coming into contact with environment contact as processes. And of course, yes, we all accept that that was a trend pre COVID and has been exacerbated during COVID. But there's this line that we're really looking at it. We believe it needs to be low touch. But absolutely, to your point, high emotion. I mean, I'm listening to what Benji and Peter have talked about, some of the experiences, we have to be able to recognize that when they get to, in my case, you know, a hotel, but what did they actually had to go through to get there? How are they feeling? What is their mental well being like? And that's where we're trying to reimagine how do we get closer to it? And be better able to deliver an experience when they're staying without that makes them feel like? Okay, I've got some sanity. So I think, you know, the old safe label, which we've developed in conjunction with Bureau Veritas and a couple of the leading medical authorities. That's the bare minimum. I mean, we're hospitality, we've always had

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lots of standard operating procedures, like the airlines, we've been very high in cleanliness. But of course, these are now highly defined, and there are obviously extra steps. So I'll go through 16 major areas and major focus points, which need to be certified through. So that's the process that we're undertaking now. Because we absolutely know that your customers, your employees, our customers, need that extra level of competence and trust. But that's the expectation and the minimum. And of course, most of you have talked about the the sort of different government regulations. So depending on which country we're operating with, I mean, we have to not only try and deploy safe in a way that it can be the baseline expectation, and then you can work with the local governments. But what if I take the case of Fairmont Hotel here in Singapore

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I've been through what all safe looks like and what if.

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And to your point, I mean, there was a lot of cost for the hotels, which, you know, as you can imagine in a crisis mode when half of our hotels around the world pause and obviously, thankfully, in some cases reopening, it's a difficult conversation with your own, I just say,

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it's paramount it's paramount to bringing the business travel back. So of course, we will do that. And you know, I guess,

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take that, that assurance one step further. We did announce recently and some more communication coming out in a couple of days, a partnership with AXA, and that's really to try to give in house guest access to a complimentary tele medical conversation with a medical expert in that location, if needed.

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So I guess, you know, for for us, this is the bare minimum, it has to be deployed before, I think we're living at people back in the front doors, but the winning hearts of the mind and the customer, would be understanding their story. And that's that personalized experience in house. And the, you talked a little bit about Angeline before, the ability to be able to communicate, what is the level of expectation, depending on which country you're in, it's going to be paramount to see we're not setting ourselves up for failure, and the customer is not even more stressed when they arrive. They have to do different things. Because like you, I also think that digitally is an

enabler, and it's going to help streamline processes and procedures, but we're still going to need the human part of the equation.

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Manu: Thank you. Thank you so much, Kerrie and Angelina listening to you, my traveler confidence has risen. I'm based out of Delhi in India. And I work in Mumbai, which is towards the west of India. And my stay is actually at an apartment or studio in a hotel. And since the times the entire lockdown period has been going on, one of the biggest concern personally I've had as a traveler is how do I go back to that hotel because technically, it is hotel, it's not an apartment, it's not my house. And listening in it just brings that confidence back in.

Benji, Peter just shifting the gear towards you.

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Confidence to be still has to have multiple parts. The travel industry plays a role, hotels, airlines, everybody plays a role. But what can you think of as organizations preparation towards instilling that confidence for our business travelers, and encouraging them to feel safe as business travel opens up in the future?

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Benji: Sure, for us, it's so the first definitely recommendation as far as you need to be very consistent in organizing and disseminating information. So now 10 people communicating information that what we have done at Novartis is we only have one global site for all COVID related information, whether it's business travel meetings, when going to the hospital, there's just one site and that's a single source of truth. So and every time we communicate, we make sure that we coordinate with our global security and emergency management team. So we have one message, and again, consistent to what the organization believes should be the direction. We as a travel team have minimized our campaigns on travel, again, to give way to supporting organizations focus on remote working and again, safety. We also second estate the emphasis on on being responsible so we are asking our travelers to be responsible. So if they need to travel, it's no longer it's I select what every beer.

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Everybody has described, the business travelers experience, it's not like what it was before COVID. So you have to be very responsible. We launched a campaign called five golden rules, advising reminding our travelers these are the things that you need to do from you know, social distancing, facemasks, washing your hands, etc, etc. So, and I think recently, CWT actually provided us with the traveler tips guide. That's been very helpful. We have provided that to our associates. And I think the third one is again, having a consistent policy locally, so there may be local deviations, but

there needs to be one consistent policies so that you know travelers are not misunderstanding what the what they need to do and again the last is obviously providing your travelers with all the things that they need when they know they need to go on business travel. Peter?

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Peter: Thanks Manu. Thanks Benji. Yeah, I'm not surprisingly, I'm aligned with Benji, this is about consumer confidence. And in my opinion, I think it all comes down to an easily accessible, clear, concise, complete and and most importantly, up to date information because the information is changing so quickly. So you know, Benji, referred to this. So whilst CWT travel essentials and and the CWT travel checklist will go a long way to help organizations build their content and processes. What we are seeing though, is that no two organizations are the same. And each needs to take the time to engage across their own internal stakeholder groups, um, to develop their short, medium and longer term strategies, you know, for the management of travel. The only thing that I would add to that is under complexity. And Benji, you heard Benji talk about some of that complexity. And, you know, I've got some stealth stories about some of the complex, um, trips that we've had to organize for people that would make your hair color, they just they just a nightmare. So I also think preparing people their travelers, for the unexpected, I think that's going to be a big part of it. So yeah, up to date, information, clear, concise, readily available, use the CWT tools as part of forming your program and plan both short, medium and long term.

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Manu: Thanks a lot, Benji, Peter. I'm going to just, you know, there's the second layer of question which I have to Kerrie and Angeline, you in line with what you stated, are the practices going on, and they're very, very healthy. And, of course, as I stated, I feel very confident to hear about what the airline industry is doing what it tells they're doing.

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I also hear a thread of communication being the need, which is within the corporations. So how are you thinking of bridging and providing more and more of such safety measures, information to corporates so that they know all this is happening? So maybe if you could share some practices there, that would be really helpful.

Angeline: Right, okay, I think before we communicate, what is essential for us to know is, what are the key information that our customers require? Right, I think Kerrie had mentioned and also mentioned many times that some of the key needs are travel restrictions, travel documents, what are the changes, because situations remains dynamic. I mean, there have been days where we, within a day, we actually sent out three different sets of communication, because policy has changed within the days. Right. So that is not uncommon in this climate. So I must admit that it is a challenge. But the few approaches and strategies that we have taken on board is really to reach out in their preferred channels. Right. And survey has shown us that some of the preferred channels actually shift and change through the different stages of their journey. For example,

before their day trip, on the day of travel, they typically prefer communication on the mobile phone, push notification to any mobile app that will be more appreciated rather than an email. Right. But before they leave for that trip, I think typically they will prefer to be communicated via an EDM or an email, which, which is actually a question that I have for Benji, and also Peter, because there has been many talks about communicating some of the changes and things that they need, or even some of the ones right from the employee. But how do you reach out to them in this climate because everybody's working from home and telecommunications. And everybody has their preferred mode of communication. And classic for us, pre COVID is always through the phone, people like to call us

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Or even like to just walk into our touch point. So right now, we have no choice but to turn to digital. But even for digital we realize that there are various channels, and we are trying to approach based on their preferred channel or whatever that makes sense, because so the information needs to be more timely than others. Right? For example, email, we realize that sometimes people do not accept the email until much later. Whereas for a mobile phone, or SMS or WhatsApp messages, it's a lot faster to reach out to them. But the challenge remains for us to really get all these contact details of our customers.

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I mean, if you can identify with me because we don't always have a direct access to the end traveler. We may reach out through only the corporate travel managers, and then you know, there is another layer of distributions which make it extra challenging in terms of timely information dissemination.

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I do not know whether whether Kerrie had anything to add or...

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Kerrie: I'm sorry, I thought you were asking Benji and Peter a question.

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I don't want to put you back on the spot. I'm, I will say that it is hard. Of course, there's so many different means of communication.

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Of course, where we have the information, because there are all team members, it makes it a lot easier for us to make sure we're pushing accurate information that's pertinent to that day, or generally, you know, when we do a partnership with AXA or Allstate comes in, but at the moment, we're having conversations with all the GDS partners to make sure as hotels are certified, that information is pushing through. So it's going through to the major GDS is ending turn our major team.

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And, of course, a lot of our strategic corporate customers that we work on in partnership with they were communicating probably simultaneously, there's probably they're double communication, because I'm sure that CWT is building their microbots with information, etc, etc, on on what all the chains are doing. And of course, you know, even if the customer finds its way to an OTA channel in the future, then we're still going to communicate the aerospace because the most important thing is the confidence of knowing a hotel is either OK, you know, has had that label or not right, where they're covered at the baseline criteria, I would think, a travel other than, of course, government restrictions, but I would agree with you that the in the in as we move into the next phase of trying to build that confidence, it will be aligning with our major partnerships on how we communicate timely and accurate information in a very fluid environment until such time as a vaccine, and even then we could have flare ups. We just, you know, as Benji wants to be able to get hold of his customers, and we want to be able to tell them something happens and a lot more.

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Peter: It's paid to, look, I'll answer that question really quickly. I think two key ways that you do that one is through the digital channel, through my CWT, and you really need a digital channel, because you need to be able to consolidate information from multiple sources really quickly and effectively. And to be able to move that on, and to provide that to people through mobile or through desktop in a very efficient way. So you can only use technology to really do that data consolidation and push that and provide that in a meaningful way to people. The second thing I would say is the CWT frontline, our our agents, you know, they're, they're the ones that are actually finding the solutions for people. And they're very aware of what's going on with suppliers, they are seeing all the updates from the suppliers, because those supplier updates, you know, I come in in the current fast as well. So, so combination of two things, you know, your agent offline, that's another reason for the offline at the moment. And the second thing is that digital support, you know, where you got all the border controls, you know, supplier information, refunds, visas and requirements. Yeah, you know, all of that, you know, ISOS, alerts, you know, all of those sorts of things that you need to consider and consolidate in a very quick way.

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Manu: Thanks. Thanks a lot. Peter, Kerrie, Angeline. I think this is one part where and I truly believe the lines are also blurring between commercial and consumer. And a consumer is as much a commercial traveler and they're looking at a lot of social media today for such updates. So maybe an insight could be to actually fast track or progress, the consumer insight on social media.

We're at the top of the hour and just a couple of minutes left for us. Just in a quick round mode. For all of you, if there was one idea that we could think about when when the new world order that the travel and stay industry could actually do differently to reimagine the operating model. What would that be? So really make it quick, sharp one, what would that look for you?

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Angelina: Well, it will be contactless with me.

Kerrie: Okay, I say low touch, high emotion.

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Manu: Low touch high emotion. I'm going to take that back.

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Peter, I would say... Benji, go ahead.

Benji: I think beyond safety and security, I think environment, environmental sustainability is not going away anywhere. So that there needs to be a big focus on that.

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Peter: And for me, I actually think it's about actually looking at that wider ecosystem, understanding all of the variables of that ecosystem and how they relate to an end to end journey and being able to package and streamline those into a very simple and effective single workflow, so that it's effective for the end user.

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Manu: That's very well said, and thank you so much for all of you, we can continue on this conversation for another wrap of the hour, because I'm sure we have stories to tell on our business travel. But I've wrap up my moderation here. It's been great listening to all of you, Coby, back to you. Thank you, Manu. And thank you to Benji, Kerrie, Angeline and Peter for a fantastic session. I think some of my takeaways is that I can no longer use my boarding pass as a bookmark, or for my expensive time for that matter if it's on my mobile phone. And I also think to you know, we have to redefine what truly is essential travel and knowing that hotels are certifying their cleanliness are truly valuable insights and I feel these, these will help our attendees to provide



confidence to their traveling population, when the time comes. And with that, thank you again to our panelists, and Manu, our moderator, from our business, to your business and to your employees. Please stay safe and have a great rest of the day. Thank you.