



The Startup Revolution in Corporate Travel

What New Tech Can Bring
to Your Business



onyx
CenterSource

For Corporate Travel, Business is Focused on the Consumer

To a significant extent, the problems with corporate travel today are the result of the perfect storm of legacy systems clashing with new consumer travel technology. Think of employees who circumvent the policy and self-book, issues with tracking, scheduling and cancellation, challenges with expense report documentation, and the all-out dismissal of corporate travel policy in preference of the ease of mobile technology. Every one of these issues, while not particularly new, is exacerbated by consumer travel technology that many employees now use for corporate travel booking.

It should come as no surprise to today's corporate travel managers that employees prefer the user experience, mobile-friendliness, and ease of use that is built into modern booking engines. After all, while a lot of commercial focus is put into business vs. consumer products, every last person expected to make a business purchase is a consumer at their core, and the travel management technology industry has taken note.

Addressing the Issues with Legacy Systems

After being essentially ignored for years, and modernization was focused on the consumer travel world, corporate travel is now in the sights of startups and investors. For every corporate travel problem, there's an innovator—or several—who wants to fix the antiquated systems and profit off their ingenuity.

Business travel is a particularly complicated beast because there are so many players involved—the traveler, of course, plus the corporate travel department, accounting, and any third-party platforms used to manage the process.

Traditionally, all vested parties have had different views of what the bottom line needs to be for in-house booking. Travelers want options and ease, corporate travel managers want to see the company travel policy and its associated cost savings realized, and accounting departments want reconciliation and documentation. Many of the legacy third-party systems—while dependable and secure—aren't providing what key travel players at every business need: a singular solution that is intuitive and comprehensive.

As a corporate travel manager, one of the largest pain points is accountability. Holding an employee accountable for following standard operating procedure can be a challenge when you're not part of the scheduling and payment process or if the employee simply proceeds with the "better to ask for forgiveness than permission" philosophy. But at the end of the day, you're accountable for ensuring that your company is benefitting, both financially and administratively, from your corporate travel process.

Luckily, there are plenty of new ventures working to address the issues faced from all parties involved in the travel process, and we're seeing the beginnings of an end-to-end system that corporate travel desperately needs.

The Future of Corporate Travel Tech

Several startups are developing products that offer consumer traveler benefits to the booking corporate employee, thereby increasing the chances that your company's policy will be followed. But, it's not a one-size-fits-all technology landscape we live in, so we've narrowed our focus to the three tools we feel cover the largest issues with policy adherence:

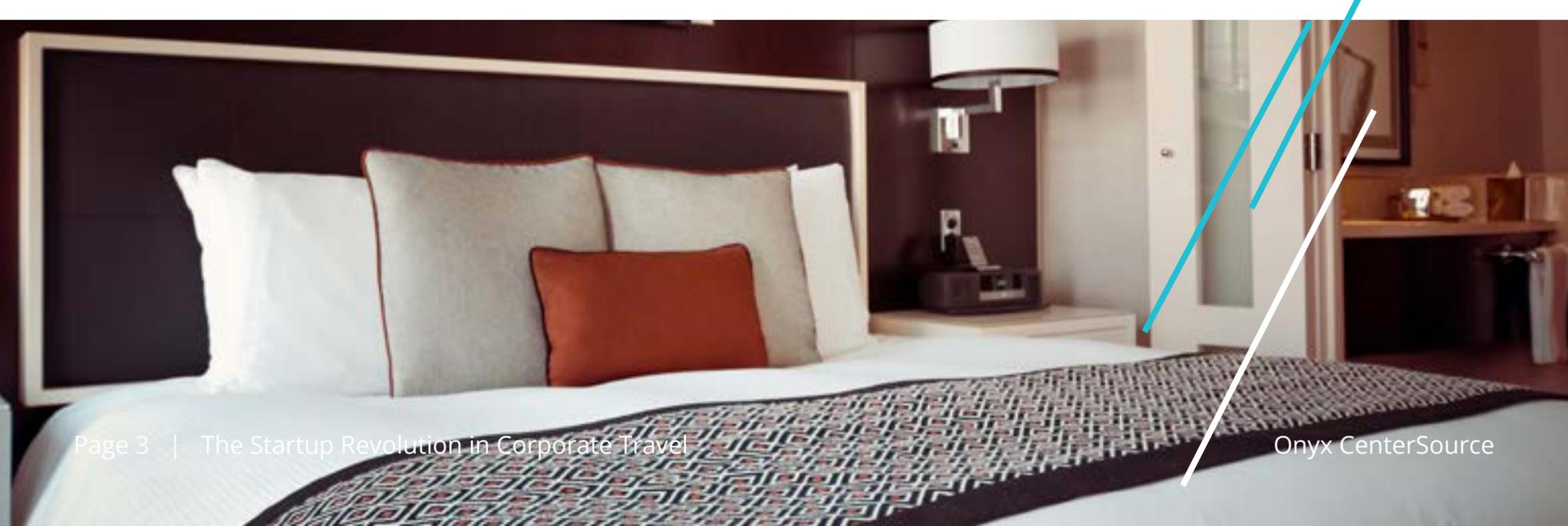
1. Machine Learning That Lets You Manage, Minus the Micro

Rather than try and convince (or force) employees to adhere to travel policies, some travel departments are looking to companies that will help them manage travel and keep employees happy at the same time. [TripActions](#) is a management tool that's big on personalization. The more travelers use it, the more the company's technology "learns" about his or her preferences and helps make appropriate bookings. This machine learning can be a big win-win for both parties—travelers can still use major loyalty programs, companies save money, and all parties can track everything on TripActions' platform. A potential long-term benefit? No need for monitoring employees' travel.



2. The Whole Travel Picture Realized Through Automation

[TravelPerk](#) is what we talk about when we talk about consumer-minded tech integrating into the business travel world. The startup's angle is to be an online travel agency for business, with every step managed, from creating a travel program to booking and reporting. TravelPerk's platform is big on automation, too, eliminating the need for things like manual approvals and it gives the booking power back to the employee—with full disclosure and tracking for the travel department. They boast 90% corporate travel policy compliance with their tool, and investors are taking note—the startup [raised \\$21 million](#) last spring and is expanding globally.



3. Incentivize Employees to Follow Travel Policy

Another idea to keep employees faithful to travel policies and company best interest comes in the form of rewards. There are a few startups offering this service—if an employee books according to policy, they get something in return. For example, one startup, [Rocketrip](#), uses what they call “Incentivized Behavioral Change.” Travelers can receive gift cards or donate the equivalent to charity. Since it works alongside your company's current travel program, it's not hard or timely to implement, and the software is designed to give the employee a specific amount below the cost savings to the company, so ROI is definitely measurable.

Travel Expensing is Turning Away from the Desktop

As with the consumer travel market—and basically every market imaginable on the planet—business travel is experiencing a big move to mobile. A shift to mobile was the logical next step in bringing a consumer vibe to corporate travel—as it’s a convenient addition to the busy lives of those least likely to be at their desktop. This progression is not without its corporate travel department headaches, specifically [the increase of mobile payments](#) made by travelling employees.

With the advent of quicker payment via mobile, business travelers are opting to expense more, and subsequently budget less, while on the road. But by still being dependent on necessary approvals, policy guidelines and proper handling of receipts and reporting, mobile payment has made the world of expensing a bit more difficult to navigate and track.

Well, there’s an app for that. In fact, several new startups have thrown their hat in the ring for a chance to streamline your company’s tracking, expensing and reporting on-the-go. It’s too soon to see who will reign supreme in this battle royale, but some new hopefuls have been popping up on “best of” lists across the corporate travel realm.

1. The Frontrunner of Mobile Expense Reporting

No one likes doing expense reports—which is why [Expensify](#) puts reporting on autopilot by gathering expenses from a variety of travel vendors who are popular with corporate travelers— all but taking the employee out of the equation. Plus, they were the first to bring screenshot receipts to the forefront of corporate travel. This, according to their website, caused a bottom-up approach to expensing, where corporate travelers were downloading the Expensify app without their employer’s permission.

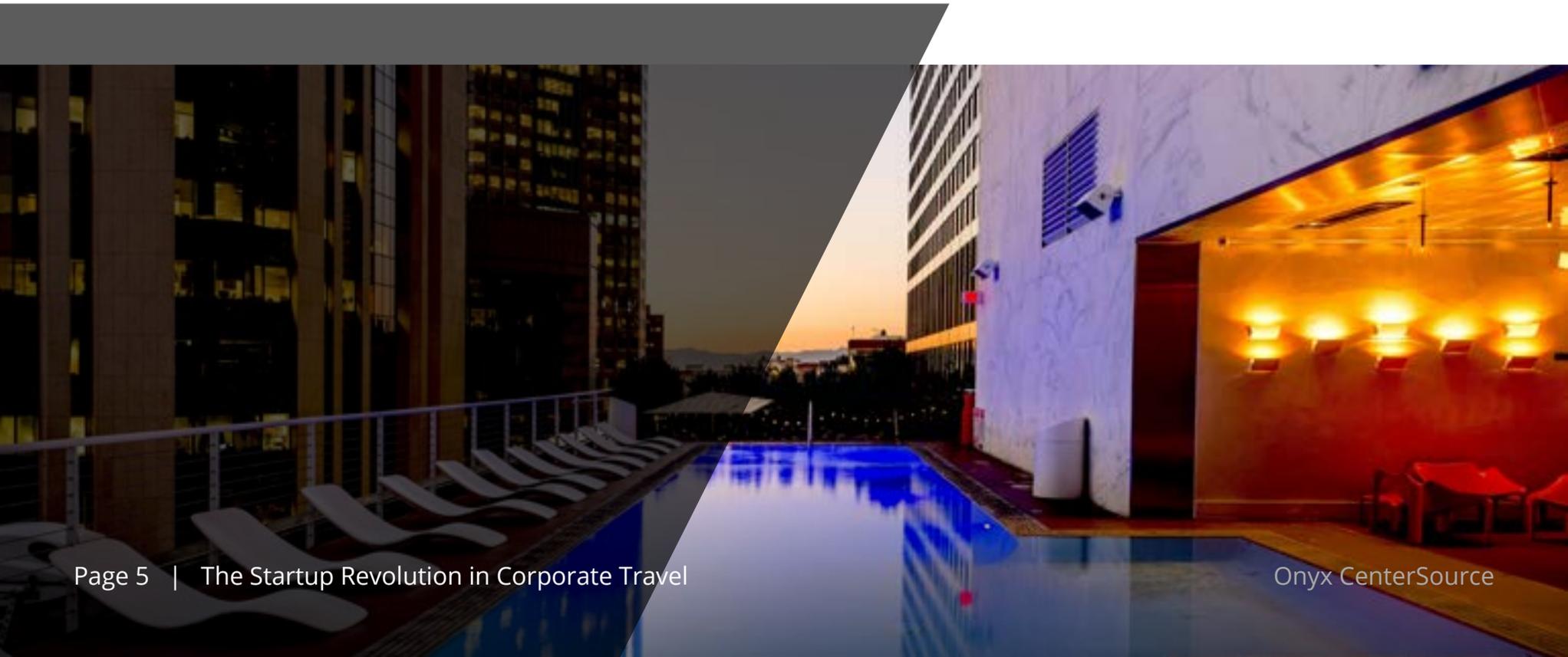
2. Sync Your Personal Card—With the Option To Delete

If someone at your company is traveling sans business credit card, [Zoho Expense](#) can sync their personal credit or debit information to offer a seamless path to expense reporting. If they buy something non-business related on their trip, they can nix that spend from the list and send the rest of the charges for reimbursement. All while giving you the flexibility to set spend limits, expiration periods and more.

3. A Card Specifically Designed for Business Travel Needs

[Bento for Business](#) offers a single platform to manage business spend. This can be looked at in the broader sense of tracking payments for everyday business purchases—like paper for the printer, pens, and ink cartridges—but it can get even more granular with travel. Bento offers a prepaid business card that gives access to live dashboards, alerts and reports that help keep travel expenses in check for both you and the traveler. Cards can even be assigned per trip, so there's no risk of them being used once the business travel is complete.

While we predict the increased intermingling of corporate and personal travel for all businesses, large, small, or medium, the one constant will be startups looking for a niche to get into the large market for corporate travel. Are your pain points being addressed as we speak?



The Trend of Change

While the corporate travel industry is catching up, Onyx CenterSource will remain a reliable partner for corporate travel departments, connecting business travel teams with fast, full payments from hotels and other hospitality partners.

We have a unique understanding of the challenges facing the hospitality industry today, and we count several corporate travel departments among our customers. As a partner, we've been able to show real results in increased commission collection, reconciliation, and data gathering. [View our most recent case study](#) to see how Onyx got results for the corporate travel department of one of the world's largest global aircraft manufacturers, then get in touch to discuss how we can help your business stay abreast with the changes in the industry.



The Best Emerging Tech for Small- to Mid-Size Business Travel Management

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