

A woman with curly hair, wearing a white sleeveless top, is smiling and looking down at a tablet computer she is holding. The background is a blurred office setting with windows and shelves.

Tech vs. touch:

The great balancing act



In a world where everything has become 'remote', 'touchless', 'automated' and 'sanitised', it is increasingly apparent that humans crave personal connection more than they desire seamless perfection.

Unfortunately, while it's easy for companies to quantify the value and return on investment of technology, it's difficult – or dare we say it: impossible – to put a concrete value on human capital. After all, how do you calculate values like leadership, education, creativity, and past work experience? But this is exactly what sets companies apart.

Seamless automation and flawless technology have become a given for any successful company – a non-negotiable asset. However, what gives corporations the edge is their human capital.

Take business travel for example. Technology has quite literally revolutionised the sector and has brought about a complete transformation by enhancing and personalising the travel and booking experience like never before.

A new generation of tech-savvy business travellers have come to expect a frictionless end-to-end business travel experience from the booking process to check-in at the airport and the hotel, right up to the moment they arrive back home after their trip. To cater for these evolving demands, the travel industry has seen the most innovative technologies emerge.

Facial recognition technology is promising to speed up the process at airports and ramp up security. Contactless payment options have added an extra layer of security to any payments along the journey. Robots have started to appear at airports and hotels to help with the cleaning processes but also to check in customers. And apps like Corporate Traveller's SAM have become smart personal assistants that keep the business traveller informed at all times.

Artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, virtual reality experiences, the list of technological innovation is endless and each of these technologies brings incredible value to the travel experience. Despite this, there is a clear and defined demand for humanity in corporate travel.

An eye-opening report from Skift recently showed that **70%** of travellers have felt they had to fend for themselves when something went wrong while travelling. The reason? A chatbot just doesn't cut it as it can't take control of a situation, nor can it offer nuanced reassurance and clarity.

The companies that will stand out in the future are those who know how to strike the perfect balance between automation and human assistance. After all, one can't exist without the other.



At your service – Both online and off

Two years of living with a global pandemic has taken its toll on service delivery in general. A great number of companies have unfortunately had to let a number of good people go. Now that life is returning to 'normal', it can be difficult to keep up with high expectations from customers.

If we're honest, the entire global travel industry is certainly struggling to keep up with the sudden increase in travel volumes. Airports worldwide are facing crippling staff shortages, which have led to long queues at check-in and at security. Hotels, restaurants, car rental companies and airlines are all struggling to meet the pent-up demand, which has a direct impact on their service delivery.

This comes at a time when customers expect more than ever before. In fact, a report from Zendesk states that **80%** of customers say they will switch to a competitor after more than one (**50%** on just one) bad experience.

It is imperative that the travel and tourism industry adopts automated solutions to support delivering a high-quality service consistently – even during difficult times. The travel industry can lean on conversational artificial intelligence (AI) and automation to solve travellers' pain points along the journey and eliminate human error in the booking and transactional process. The traveller will experience a seamless booking process, and receive proactive alerts based on locations as well as answers to routine and easy questions thanks to available technology.

This will free up consultants and travel bookers to provide high-touch interactions and jump in when they are needed most: when travellers encounter unexpected delays, cancellations or other emergencies. It is at this point that the customer wants to speak to an empathetic human who understands the issue, can make sense of the confusion quickly and professionally, and offer an adequate solution.

At Corporate Traveller, we believe in living by example. During our onboarding process, customers will experience our balance of tech and personal service first hand. We deliver training, guide employees through a thorough change management process and trouble-shoot any technology to make sure it works for your company. After all, that is our aim: to design customised solutions that perfectly fit your organisation.

Trust us:
Travel booking just
got simpler, faster easier

Who is responsible for travel booking in your organisation? Are you lucky enough to have a dedicated travel manager? For most SMEs, travel booking forms part of an executive assistant or administrator's role, which can prove stressful and time-consuming if they're booking travel in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities.

It is a lot to keep on top of, especially if your team is scaling quickly and you have a number of people on the road. This is where online booking tools, backed by AI, really come into their own.



The right tech can:

1. Save you time (which equals money)

Believe it or not, a simple do-it-yourself Internet booking still takes, on average, 49 minutes to complete (we've checked) by the time you've compared fares, checked accommodation availability and secured a rental car. And this doesn't include time spent making changes, on hold to call centres, or reconciling expenses post trip.

Today's booking tech is all about efficiency. Corporate Traveller's platform is easy to navigate and easy to use. You can book and manage every aspect of your travel (be it flights, accommodation or car hire) on one screen. And in five minutes. The tech is intuitive, which means it anticipates what you need, remembers your preferences, and can be customised to your organisation's travel policy.

Bottom line? Your staff are tech savvy, switched on and in control. They just need the right tools. Nifty automation improves and enhances work flows, chat bots take care of simple queries, pop up notifications and alerts eliminate potential problems, and the UX is as effortless and seamless as it comes.

Of course, the best solutions combine the benefits of digital innovation and human interaction. There are times when you just need to speak to someone. And so Corporate Traveller ensures you have instant access to a dedicated Travel Consultant – with years of experience and industry knowledge – whenever you need additional support. Complex itinerary? Clever solutions? The latest travel restrictions or country-entry requirements? After-hours support? It's all handled by a very responsive, very human team.

2. Improve decision-making

Technology has ushered in impressive capabilities and more convenience than ever before, but perhaps most significant development? Data. Imagine the value you'd get from seeing your actual travel numbers in black and white. What are you spending on flights and accommodation? How often does your team travel? Can it be planned and booked in advance?

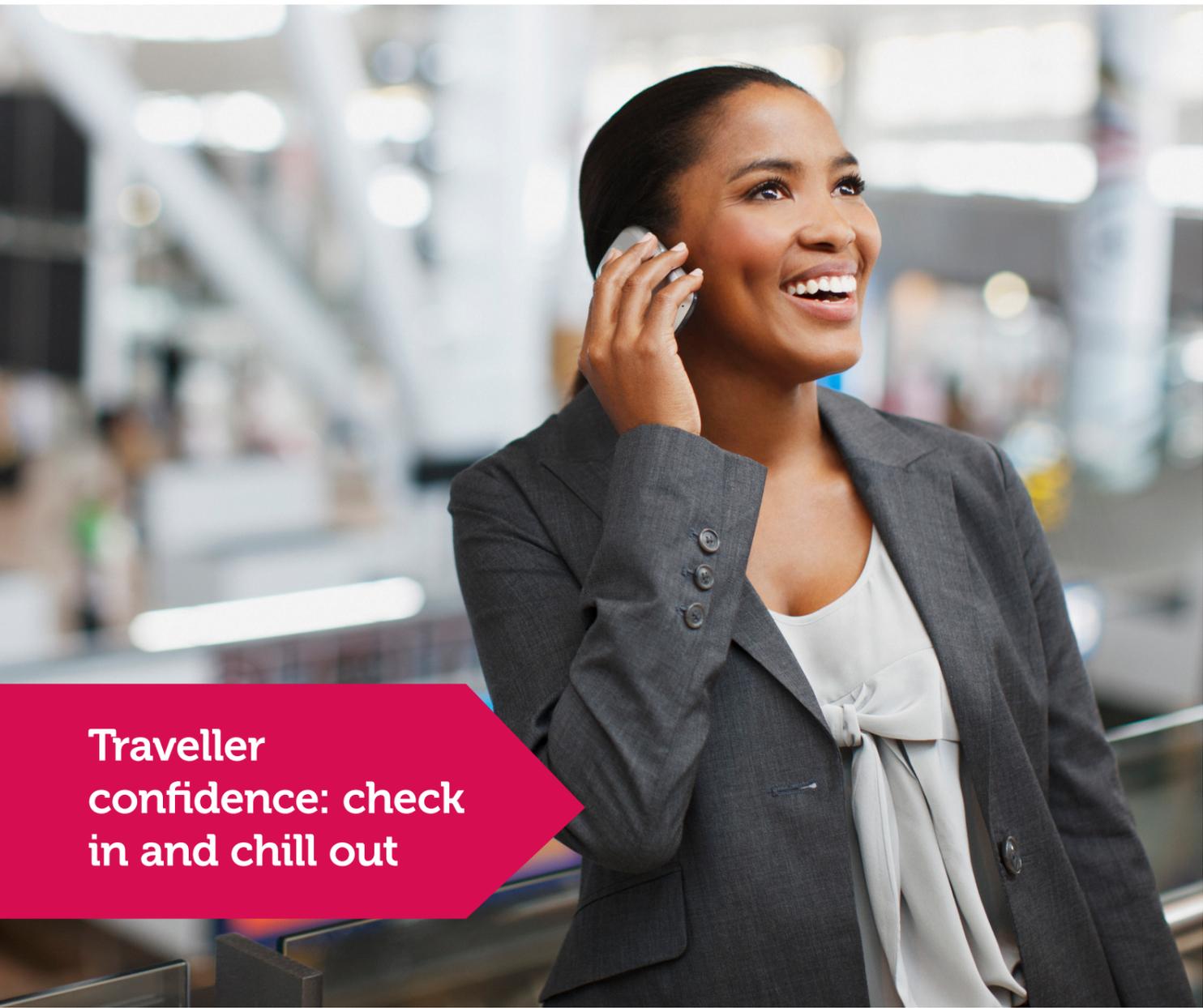
There are endless ways of finding efficiencies and identifying savings (big and small) in order to get the most out of your travel budget. And once again, Corporate Traveller combines tech + travel experts for the win.

Customised dashboards will help you track your spend, pull up-to-the-minute reports and keep a handle on your budget while our Travel Consultants will help you analyse and interpret your data (including things like spend, booking behaviour and traveller preferences) so you can plan ahead and make more informed – and more strategic – decisions around your travel programme.

3. Make pre- and post-travel admin a breeze

In-house travel bookers have a lot on their plate in terms of travel requests, approvals, bookings, changes and post-trip admin. We'll reduce the time your team spends on admin by automating some of the processes (for example, instant approvals for on-policy travel) and providing you with monthly statements and customised reports.





Traveller confidence: check in and chill out

When it comes to traveller confidence, of course tech plays a part. Handy travel apps can save your itinerary; keep travel documents in one place; send you updated travel information (including flight or gate changes) and travel alerts; and even push through destination information (like the weather, where to eat and what to do).

But there is nothing quite like knowing that someone else is in charge if things go wrong.

Here the scales tip in favour of personal support. Ancillary services like visas and travel insurance generally require more than a little experience and industry know-how (it can get complicated), and you definitely want someone on the end of the line if your flight gets cancelled, borders close or your passport disappears.

Corporate Traveller's dedicated Travel Consultants are on hand to handle any queries or changes on your behalf – with an after-hours team instantly available in an emergency.

But more than that, Corporate Traveller takes a very human approach to your entire trip. This includes ease of travel (like comprehensive itineraries, up-to-date information and insider knowledge); health and wellbeing (for example, avoiding red-eye flights or long layovers); travel perks (think lounge access, early check-in and late check-out), and traveller preferences (from window seats to vegan meals). It's what we like to think of as care uplifted.

Duty of care: Buckle up, things just got serious

The world of travel has changed. Duty of care has never been more important, traveller tracking is now a non-negotiable, and travel management companies are working hard to bring you the tools and the tech to keep your travellers safe.

For example, Corporate Traveller's customised safety dashboards (backed by advanced risk map technology) allow you to:

- See where your travellers are in real time - anywhere in the world
- View a snapshot of your travellers by risk type, location, and flight number
- Receive critical alerts on incidents or unfolding situations
- Identify where your travellers are travelling to this week, next week and in 2+ weeks' time
- Take advantage of instant messaging features and mobile alerts for travellers on the road

Importantly, this tech is backed by a serious and unwavering approach to risk management.

Corporate Traveller's team will be able to give solid pre-trip travel advice, for example, a country-by-country risk assessment; flag any potential risks; alert travellers (and the team back home) to any developments; and actively liaise with local consulates and embassies should the need arise.

There's little doubt that AI-enhanced tech has made the end-to-end travel experience as simple and seamless as possible. It's quick, it's easy and we kind of take it for granted. The real value? The calm, considered and oh-so capable human on the other end of the line.





Looking ahead to 2020, all signs suggest the corporate sector will continue to grow as businesses pursue new opportunities. With the right TMC partner to guide them, entrepreneurs and mid-sized businesses don't need to feel disenfranchised. Our message to South Africans SMEs is: Make 2020 the year to maximise your business travel investment and commit to a travel management policy that reflects your business' needs and specific requirements.

To find out more contact Corporate Traveller
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visit [corporatetraveller.co.za](https://www.corporatetraveller.co.za)