

The age of the conscious business traveler

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Emma Woodhouse: Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening and wherever you are in the world, welcome to Business Travel on the fly. I'm Emma Woodhouse, and I'm on the communications team here at CWT. For our June episode, we're going to be talking about how attitudes to travel have changed. Are our behaviors, needs and expectations totally different now and how do companies meet those needs. You know, after the pandemic, most of us have a new vision of what we want life to look like, for the volatility and complexity brought on by the pandemic has been a huge social and economic disrupter for most, in the last couple of years continues to transform the way in which we interact, consume, plan and travel. But from its ashes, a new concept, particularly in leisure travel, has emerged, and that's one of the conscious traveler. So the conscious traveler, I guess, would buy local, cares about sustainability, wants to immerse themselves in local culture on a trip, cares for human rights and supporting the local communities. It's such a big phenomenon in leisure, for example, that Panama's tourism minister last year said at skift design a future event that there's a potential audience of 600 million conscious travelers around the world, and that the global adventure travel market is a \$700 billion industry. It's such a big thing that they reposition their entire tourism efforts in Central America. So my question is, does the conscious traveler exist in business travel? Are sustainability and well being and other concepts just as important in this arena, you know, most of all, most of us, but especially millennials, who are twice as likely as baby boomers to change their consumption habits to reduce their environmental impact. Come 2025, millennials will account for 75% of the global workforce. So to say that it's pretty important. I'm here with Christina Scorsis. So Christina, you are VP of traveler experience evolution? What does that mean? What does your role entail?

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Christina Scorsis: So that's really about driving the execution of the TX strategy? And in really simple terms, it's about where we, in traveler experience, work, how we work, and who does that work for the benefit of our customers?

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Emma Woodhouse: Welcome, Christina.

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Christina Scorsis: Thank you, Emma, great to be here with you.

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Emma Woodhouse: Nice to have you. How do you think today's business travelers have changed? What do you think's important to people now?

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Christina Scorsis: Well, I heard you talking a lot about the leisure traveler. And I don't actually think that corporate travelers are that much different. I think we're much more thoughtful in the way we decide where we're going, how we get there, and the things that we do once we get there. So the conscious traveler in the context of business travel is really quite the same. We're all global citizens. And there's an increased awareness about the implications and the impact that we have on the environment, local people, our own well being and safety and security, when we travel. So there's a lot of consistency in that. I think, you know, when you're looking at engaging with a conscious traveler, there's many things that you really need to focus on. And sustainability obviously continues to be a priority. But that's also increased. Sustainability, you know, when speaking to our own clients, you know, they've told us that 67% actually say sustainability goals are more important, since the pandemic, so we have to listen to our travelers and really respect that that is something that we need to highlight, we also need to think about, you know, why we're traveling, that's also changed along the path of, of business travel, since the pandemic, we have to have a stronger purpose for travel, gone are the days where we would just fly in and out of a particular location. So when I think about, you know, my own travel last week, I was in the UK, and I'm based in North America. So when I'm thinking about traveling, now, I don't go in for a day and a half, I was there for the entire week, and made sure that I was there for the core purpose of my meetings, but also for other exercises that I had along the week, where I would meet with other people that I wouldn't be able to meet, you know, via zoom or WebEx teams. You know, safety and security, that continues to be a key priority as we think about it, and then empowering our travelers to make really good choices about everything we do. So when you think about, you know, Omni channel, and that's something that CWT has been really focused on, from the beginning of a trip. So that means from the time you leave your house, to the time you come home, making sure we can empower our travelers to make the right choices every step of the way. And understanding what that impact is, as I've said earlier, around the you know, their environment, and also the impact to the people that we interact with.

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Emma Woodhouse: That sounds really interesting. So it's great that CWT is offering all these, these tools, and I know we've been working with Thrust Carbon recently on the spear point of sale, enabling people to make the best choices at the point of booking. I'm curious, are we seeing changing booking or trip patterns? Or maybe changing behavior regarding the purpose of travel?

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Christina Scorsis: I think what we're seeing right now is, you know, just like my own trip last week, travelers are extending their trip, they want to make sure that, you know, in addition to having a

strong purpose for travel, which is, which is critical, you also utilize the time that you're there to engage with other individuals, whether it be clients or your own internal teams, and get, you know, bigger bang for your buck. And in addition to that helps support sustainability efforts. I also see an opportunity you mentioned at the beginning, around leisure, we're seeing extension of travel, you know, you can call it bleisure. Or, you know, there's other terms around that where people have, you know, this pent up demand to be visiting places. And what we're seeing is, there's quite a bit of that where folks are extending their trips, corporate travelers are indeed, to get the most benefit out of the location that they're visiting.

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Emma Woodhouse: I'm curious, is travel so important to people in their companies?

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Christina Scorsis: I believe it is, I think over the last, you know, two and a half years, people have a strong urge for that people connection now. I think the one thing that has changed with the conscious traveler is it's just broader than that. So, you know, there was an absolute demand for travel, every single flight I've been on has been absolutely full, regardless of where I've been this year, but it's just that added piece of things. So thinking about when you're traveling, what is the supplier that I'm using, or the vendor that I'm using? Or the partner that I'm using? What is their impact? And what are they doing in order to support some of the impact that we as corporate travelers have on the environment, or locally. So you know, we've partnered, for example, with Delta Airlines. And we've co invested in sustainable aviation fuel with them. And as a result of that, delta has received 365,000 gallons of sustainable aviation fuel through their partnerships, not just with CWT, obviously, but also with corporations. So I think about that when I'm when I'm booking my travel, or where I stay, for example, you know, Hilton's got this great partnership that they have, relative to soap recycling efforts. So they take all of the soap that's been discarded, and then they crush it, they sanitize it, they recycle it, and they turn it into new bars of soap, and they send it out to local communities that really have a need for that. And when I think about that, I think last week, when I was staying at a Hilton, that made a difference for me. So not only is there a demand, but there was also I believe, the need to understand exactly what we're getting into when we are traveling, and what efforts are being made by us as individuals, as well as by the places that we stay, or the airlines that we fly in order to make things better.

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Emma Woodhouse: That's really great. I think it's amazing all the developments that are happening with sustainable aviation fuel. And seeing how much and how rapidly our lives are changing in terms of hybrid work, in terms of everything, putting the conscious traveler into focus, what are travel managers doing now, what is their role? And how do they engage this new type of traveler?

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Christina Scorsis: I think first of all, you have to really listen to what the travelers needs are, you mentioned Millennials earlier. And you know, they're looking at how they can reduce their environmental impact in the future. So you have to think about that as you're building a new travel program, as well as modifying an existing program. So it's no longer about you know, program optimization on its own, but rather, it's about program optimization and traveler experience. And so you have to think about first of all, we know how difficult it is to attract and retain talent since the pandemic. So with that in mind, build programs that really cater and personalized to the needs of the traveler and integrating, you know, relationships with specific vendor partners, like we have at CWT is and making it known to the travelers communicating what these partnerships are really doing and the impact that they're having is going to be key in ensuring that travelers are content and also ensuring that they are traveling with purpose.

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Emma Woodhouse: So Christina, you know, we work with a lot of very big global suppliers. Are you seeing any interesting innovations and developments that would appeal to the new conscious traveler?

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Christina Scorsis: I do. And I think it's something that travel managers should consider as they're engaging in partnership with their own travel partners. So for example, you know, enterprise, along with many other car rental agencies have invested in electric car adoption. So that's our electric vehicle adoption. And that's critically important. Hilton, for example, has also gone down the path of ensuring that they have EV charging stations at their hotels. And as we look at how we evolve our own my CWT platform, for example, we would want to consider some of those things. So when you're searching, you might want to say, Hey, I'm renting an EV. And I want to make sure that the location that I'm going to has charging stations. Well Hilton makes that easy for you, they are publishing that information. So you know all about it. And they're growing all of their charging locations globally. The other thing that I noticed with enterprise is they really invested in youth sports. This is the kind of information that is critically important to the conscious traveler. They want to know how their travel will contribute in a hopefully positive way to a sustainable future, as well as help our local communities.

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Emma Woodhouse: What about for you personally, after such a long period of not traveling? What is it been like, I know that you're traveling right now, but what has it been like for you traveling again?

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Christina Scorsis: I would say the, you know, the first couple of trips were a bit daunting, just because of all the, you know, different rules, the new COVID requirements for testing, for example. I think what helped was, you know, just getting my feet wet again, and getting on an aircraft, that was first and then having the right tools available to me. So, you know, and speaking with our own corporate travel department, they have the tools and the information available to them across every channel. So whether or not I went online, used chat features, or messaging features, or spoke to a travel counselor directly. They helped guide me through my reservation process and right through to when I came back. And you know, just to add, it's really important that especially right now, you know, we're almost at normal, but we're not quite back to, you know, pre pandemic normal. It's to have the necessary safety and security sort of notifications and messaging ready when you need them prior to your trip and also during and when you come back.

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Emma Woodhouse: Yeah, yeah, that mean that peace of mind that we know, we know, it's more important than ever. That's fantastic. Christina, I know that you have to catch a flight home soon. So we're going to wrap up with a couple of quickfire questions with a test how much of a conscious traveler you are. Okay. So considering that it so much of it is about immersing in local communities and having a fulfilling stay, would you rather stay at a hotel that used ingredients from a local farming cooperative, or had an extended happy hour?

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Christina Scorsis: Oh, come on. Absolutely go local. I mean, if you think about the impact that the pandemic has had on local communities, that alone should entice you to support local wherever you can, so I'm a big supporter of supporting local.

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Emma Woodhouse: Yeah, yeah. And, you know, there's so many areas that that just need so much rebuilding, right? I think actually, traveling, travel can be really a force for good on a local level. Okay. All right. So my second my second question, let's say you're traveling with a colleague, what is the biggest pet peeve traveling with a colleague who doesn't bother to learn the very bare minimum Hello, please, or thank you in the local language? You know, how you sometimes get those people? Or who refuses to leave the main tourist area to explore beyond?

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Christina Scorsis: I have to say number two, because I think number one can actually go by exploring beyond the main tourist areas. And I'll give you an example. We spent some time, we had the absolute good fortune X CWT to spend some time in a local community a few years ago, and help support that local community by building and repairing certain things in the village. And

through that, I actually learn, you know, some a few phrases on my own. So I think they're not binary. You can do both by doing the second one and exploring further.

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Emma Woodhouse: Yeah, I mean, it does seem like the kind of old days of, you know, flying in for a two day trade show here. You know, it seems to have changed, right? People do actually want to commute, experience and help out the places and the places where they visit.

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Christina Scorsis: I think it's also important though, you know, when you're thinking about where we're having team meetings or meeting with clients, and you want to extend some of those meetings, to helping out the community, the one thing that I would recommend is ensuring that you're working in partnership with an organization that's legitimate and is truly there to support local development. You know, over the last couple of years, what we've seen is quite a few organizations have cropped up, and they're not always there with the best intent in mind.

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Emma Woodhouse: Great, Christina, thank you so much for joining us.

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Christina Scorsis: Thank you for having me, Emma.

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Emma Woodhouse: Thank you and until we meet again, on the fly, if you're keen to find out more about the future of travel and work from experts around the world, subscribe on Spotify, Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.