



There are a lot of corporate travel agencies. How do I pick the right one for my company?

In the electronic age of do-it-yourself travel arrangements, many people forget what it is like to talk to a real person or get after the fact service. If you travel for business, a corporate travel agency may be a better solution than doing it yourself. Travel agencies can provide peace of mind, knowledge of destination, back you up with answers to questions and cover your back in an emergency. So how do you find an agency that will provide you with the service you need at the best price for your budget?

Reputation and Word of Mouth

In a saturated market of travel services, finding a good travel agency may be difficult if you enter your search blind. One way to get your feet wet is to ask your peers and other businesses that you work with whom they use and if they are satisfied with the service. Asking for referrals is a great way to generate a list of possible agencies.

Check Out Credentials

The next step in this process is to research the agencies on your list. See if they have any affiliations or accreditation. If they are accredited make sure that it is a meaningful accreditation.

Accredited by the Airlines Reporting Corporation or the International Air Transport Association means that they are licensed to do business and meet minimum standards of service. This also means that they can print out an airline ticket for you at their office.

Check to see if the agency belongs to a franchise or consortia like Travel Leaders. These types of travel agencies not only have an established reputation, but also get better rates on travel amenities. They are also more likely to be able to negotiate special services or assistance at your travel destination than a private or online travel agency.

Get the Service Your Business Needs

Travel agencies usually specialize in either business travel or personal travel. It is important to ask which they specialize in. Make sure they will be able to provide you with the services you need for a successful business trip.

Questions to Ask a Prospective Travel Agency

1. How long have you been in business? Longevity will indicate companies that have experience. If they have been in business a long time, they must be doing something right.
2. What kind of travel do you specialize in? Make sure they are trained and have the experience needed to support business travel arrangements. Find out the average years of experience for the agents with whom you will be working.

3. Do you offer special programs or discounts for air, car or hotel travel? Discounts and special programs can save you money on your business expenses.

4. When can I reach a travel agent here? What are your hours of operation? Do you have 24/7 emergency coverage? The answer to these questions will help you know what kind of support and service you will receive.

5. How many agents will be assigned to my account? Is this a call center environment or will I be working with the same people? Having agents that you know and that know you make the travel process much faster and easier.

6. Is there a toll free number both domestically and internationally? This is important especially when traveling out of the country.

7. Ask what type of information the agency keeps on file about you. What you are looking for here is a complete record of your preferences and needs. The more information they keep, the better they will be able to meet your business travel needs.

7. Ask if the agency has online booking as well as traditional agent bookings. Online booking through an agency is tailored to your specific business and gives you the benefit of do it yourself with the support and backup of a traditional agency.

8. Get very specific pricing proposals. Make sure there are no additional fees other than what is listed. Hidden fees can really impact your bottom line.

Conclusion

When you have found an agency that will meet your business travel needs and has a pricing policy that fits your budget, make sure you are comfortable with whom you are working. Your agents will be responsible for knowing you well enough to select the right flight schedule and types, hotel amenities and provide other services for you. A good agent will know what to do to save you money while making you as comfortable as possible. A good relationship with your travel agent will put you at ease when making travel arrangements and make your overall travel experience more enjoyable.