

Best Practice Case Study

Moving to a Managed Travel Program at Six Flags

Starting from a completely unmanaged travel environment, in one short year Lindy Leon, the Corporate Travel Manager for Six Flags, was able to implement a fully managed travel program across the company's disparate locations.

While her work building their program has just begun, she has already **achieved cost savings** for the company, **consolidated the total spend** through a single agency and **acquired the spend visibility** she needs to negotiate better rates from her preferred vendors.

Driving savings with a managed travel program

In 2006, Six Flags' newly hired executive team was on a mission - to consolidate the disparate operations of their regional parks and drive savings.

Travel was one area where they knew the opportunity existed to rein in spending. Until then, each park's team made their own travel arrangements through their agency or website of choice. A travel policy existed but was not being regularly enforced.

Leon was hired in the spring of 2006, with a mission to develop a managed travel program for Six Flags. She knew it would be a roller coaster ride, but after having successfully implemented a managed travel program using Expedia® Corporate Travel for a previous employer, she was up for the challenge.

Steps to Success

Select an Agency Partner

Based on previous experience, Lindy chose Expedia® Corporate Travel as their partner in developing a managed travel program for the company because of the **cost savings in online fees** and the **user friendliness** of the web-based booking tool.



Lindy Leon, CTE, is the Corporate Travel Manager responsible for Six Flags' travel program, including travel policy and procedures, and expense reimbursement.



Leon is based in Grand Prairie, Texas, and previously implemented Expedia® Corporate Travel in March of 2006 for HIT Entertainment.

Six Flags, Inc. is the largest regional theme park company in the world. Six Flags corporate offices are located in Grand Prairie and in New York City.



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Revise the Corporate Travel Policy

Leon revised an out-of-date corporate travel policy, and incorporated the latest best practices. The Executive Team incorporated their input and made the decision to mandate the new travel policy. Travelers were required to use Expedia® Corporate Travel and travel was to be purchased online whenever possible.

Provide Traveler Training & Generate Awareness

In-person implementation and training sessions were conducted consisting of 20-30 employees per session to inform them of the new travel policy and the Expedia® Corporate Travel program. The Q&A portion was critical, as most travelers were unfamiliar with the concept of a managed travel program. Separate sessions were organized for travel arrangers, as well as for executive administrators.

Communicate via E-mail

Leon used e-mails and hosted web-based training to ensure she reached employees who were unable to attend in-person sessions. Employees were given instructions to setup their own profile within the company's Expedia® Corporate Travel account and a copy of the new company policy.

Restructure Corporate Card Program

Soon after the introduction of the travel program, Lindy restructured the corporate card program to streamline expense reimbursement and increase spend visibility. Eventually the card program was converted to achieve greater rebates and incentives on travel spend.

Set up Guest Travel Program

Leon set up a Guest Traveler Group and created a Guest Account for each Six Flags location. Designated travel arrangers at each park have access to a Guest Account, allowing them to purchase travel for recruits and infrequent travelers streamlining the spend to a central billed corporate card.

Develop Negotiated Hotel Program

Seeking greater savings, Leon reached out to her previous hotel contacts and acquired an initial set of negotiated rates. A few months post-launch, she had the spend data she needed to generate room night estimates and acquire more hotel partners. By demonstrating that Six Flags now had a mandated policy and an online booking tool that allowed her to clearly preference a negotiated hotel property in the search results, she was able to negotiate favorable rates with new hotel vendors.

Identifying travel program goals

Six Flags identified five key reasons to move to a managed travel program:

Immediate Cost Savings Were Crucial

Lindy found that many travelers were paying up to \$40 in fees per transaction.

Consolidate Travel Spend With a Single Agency

Who was traveling, what was being purchased and the company's business travel needs were all unknown. Only by consolidating the spend could there be a clear picture of the travel program and potential opportunities for savings.

Implement an Appropriate Travel Policy

To drive savings, Six Flags needed to develop a new policy and ensure compliance.

Maximize Awareness of the Managed Travel Program

With operations spread across North America, communication was key to educating Six Flags employees about the value of a managed travel program and the new policies and procedures.

Leverage Six Flag's Travel Spend

By consolidating Six Flag's travel spend, she could gain leverage in vendor negotiations and drive further savings.

Create Six Flags Hotel Directory

To make following policy easier for travelers, Leon used the custom **hotel destination feature** to create a virtual Six Flags Hotel Directory. Travelers can simply click on a Six Flag's location and the search results will guide them to nearby preferred hotels.

2 Where do you want to find a hotel?

Near a city Near an airport Near an attraction Near an address

<input type="radio"/> SF America (Wash DC)	<input type="radio"/> SF Great Adv-E Windsor, NJ	<input type="radio"/> SF Mexico
<input type="radio"/> SF Corporate New York	<input type="radio"/> SF Great Adv-Princeton, NJ	<input type="radio"/> SF New England (CT)
<input type="radio"/> SF Corporate Texas	<input type="radio"/> SF Great America (Chicago)	<input type="radio"/> SF New England (MA)
<input type="radio"/> SF Discovery KgdM-Napa Vly	<input type="radio"/> SF Grt Escape Lake George	<input type="radio"/> SF Over Georgia (Atlanta)
<input checked="" type="radio"/> SF Discovery KgdM-San Fran	<input type="radio"/> SF Kentucky Kingdom	<input type="radio"/> SF Over Texas (Arlington)
<input type="radio"/> SF Discovery KgdM-Vallejo	<input type="radio"/> SF LaRonde (Montreal)	<input type="radio"/> SF St Louis (downtown)
<input type="radio"/> SF Fiesta TX (SanAntonio)	<input type="radio"/> SF Magic Mtn (Los Angeles)	<input type="radio"/> SF St. Louis (Eureka MO)
<input type="radio"/> SF Great Adv-E Brunswk NJ		
<input type="radio"/> Other destination: <input type="text"/>		

Lindy Leon, Six Flags Corporate Travel Manager, has configured her company's hotel display to drive bookings to her preferred hotel suppliers, while making it easier for her travelers to book hotels near their theme parks.

Leverage On-Demand Reports for Spend Visibility

Using a set of online reports, Leon can track her program's progress, and continue to gain visibility to identify new opportunities. See the 'Key Reports' section below for details.

The post-implementation results

Leon has already achieved some amazing results in the first year of her new managed travel program.

Immediate Fee Savings

Travelers began using the new online-focused program immediately. In the first quarter of the new program online adoption averaged 91% and remains at that point today.

Significant Spend Consolidation

Leon now estimates that **85%** of Six Flags' total travel spend is now directed through their Expedia® Corporate Travel account. This consolidation, in combination with the corporate card program, has given Leon the leverage needed to be in a stronger negotiating position with new vendors.

New Travel Policy Drives Air Savings

Six Flags employees purchasing via the Expedia® Corporate Travel account are automatically guided to in-policy options. The average ticket price went from being 16% above the industry average to **12% below within just six months** (source: *Topaz National Database Average Ticket Prices 2006 and 2007*).

Key Online Reports Used At Six Flags

- **Service Fee Summary**

This report allows Leon to calculate her fee savings as a result of moving to the new managed travel program and driving online adoption.
- **Air Bookings Summary**

Leon compares this data with total air spend on the corporate card to track program compliance.
- **Advance Purchase Summary**

This summary indicates how far in advance employees are making their air purchases, allowing visibility of advance purchase opportunities and pre-planning efforts.
- **Travel Overview**

This report is helpful as an overview of current travel spend patterns and program status.
- **Online Adoption Summary**

This report shows if travelers are using the online tool vs. calling an agent
- **Hotel Bookings Detail**

Lindy tracks hotel spend within specific cities and downloads the report to Excel to narrow results to a specific hotel property.

High Awareness of Program

The large majority of Six Flags employees are now aware of the company's managed travel program. Awareness is highest within the corporate offices and continues to increase at the regional park locations.

Leveraging Spend Lowers Hotel Costs

In just six months, Leon saw her negotiated hotel rate usage jump from **24% to 41%** of total hotel spend.

A Few Words of Advice

"It is hard to overstate the value of a managed travel program," Leon says. "By streamlining travel to a consolidated program, you are able to **see your spend accurately, gaining leverage** for negotiations and **achieving greater cost savings.**"

"Building a successful travel program is never finished; in the ever-changing travel industry, the challenge remains daily to balance the needs of the business traveler while also meeting the goals and objectives of the company."

"**Partnering with agencies like Expedia® Corporate Travel** is the first step in seeking out strategic cost savings opportunities."

Six Flags Baseline Policy

Traveler Groups

Six Flags has four traveler groups	Executive VIP Group General Traveler Group Guest Traveler - Direct Bill Guest Traveler - Self-Payment
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Reason Codes

Notification	Reason codes are required for out-of-policy bookings 'Guest Travel' reason code for guest travel that must be booked out-of-policy
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Custom Data Fields

Notification	Six Flags requires two additional pieces of information at booking <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Dept Cost Center/Account■ Business Reason for Travel
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Discuss the steps for success in your travel program

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