

Vorwerk & Co. KG

Vorwerk reports: 97.3 per cent satisfaction

The Vorwerk Group can't imagine doing without online booking the cytric way. Early scepticism has withered, staff now appreciates this tool. New transparency of low-cost offers is largely responsible for substantial cut in average flight costs.



16 March 2006 was a happy day for 13 Vorwerk staff members. They were in the Intercity Hotel, Wuppertal to receive valuable prizes from travel manager Gerhard Kaminski. Prizes like a Vorwerk Thermomix worth Euro 780, a flight for two in the Germanwings network, a wellness weekend in Frankfurt including use of a Beetle Cabrio, suitcases and travel bags. Prizes for doing what? These Vorwerk business travellers were winners of an in-house competition. During 2005 they were best at using the cytric online booking tool. For example, one winner booked 18, in some cases international, flights for an average price of Euro 191. "That's a great achievement," says Mr Kaminski, who had the idea of introducing an online booking competition with prizes. The announcement of the competition was itself enough to boost the online booking quota at Vorwerk by ten per cent. There's no doubt about it: the cytric user awards will be back in 2007.

Peak savings are one thing; this family company, established in 1883, actually saved money across the board. Between 2004 and 2005, the average costs per domestic German flight fell by 63 Euro, and for European flights by 38 Euro. The changeover to low-cost carriers was in large part responsible for the lower purchase prices. The Group's location in

Wuppertal means Vorwerk staff are situated in the Düsseldorf, Köln-Bonn and Dortmund airport triangle, with all three offering high frequency, no-frills services. The integration of these new airlines within cytric (DynaWeb) puts Vorwerk business travellers in touch with these low-cost flight alternatives. cytric provides DynaWeb access to more than 70 websites of low-fair airlines. The display includes immediate information on accessibility, pricing - and instant booking. The result: the share of low-cost carriers on Vorwerk's high frequency routes from Düsseldorf to Munich, Berlin and Nuremberg has risen to 30 per cent. The average price for these routes is now around Euro 200 (Berlin), 246 (Munich) and 166 (Nuremberg). Gerhard Kaminski is absolutely convinced: The savings of indirect travel expenditure via the booking system is one thing, "the largest cost reductions are gained via the direct travel costs." Staff members and booking-agents are on a cost-cutting spree. They are happy to save just one Euro on a flight to Milan.

Vorwerk has long since evolved into more than a manufacturer of carpets and vacuum cleaners. The Group now features a broad portfolio, focusing on direct sales. 52,331 staff and sales personnel in more than 60 countries generate a current annual turnover of Euro 2 billion. In 2004 Vorwerk decided to introduce online booking. More than 1,000 employees travel on Group business in Germany alone, the business travel budget has a volume of between 5 and 6 million Euro. Gerhard Kaminski took a careful look at all online systems available, even testing them hands-on at other travel managers' offices. "We listened to what our colleagues said rather than manufacturers' claims." A team of three, made up of travel manager, booking-agent and purchaser, unanimously selected cytric, "because it was simply the best tool at the time," explains Kaminski, travel manager at Vorwerk since 1997.

Since then, travel agent partner Carlson Wagonlit Travel has provided cytric together with help-desk and booking support. A two-week training period was followed in mid-February 2005 by the solution going online in all German Vorwerk locations. In addition to the official help-desk, Gerhard Kaminski also provides personal support to many users at HQ in Wuppertal. This support function is provided at the various locations by booking-agents.

"Travel-Info" is a monthly newsletter issued by travel management to provide additional, more in-depth support. Following its introduction, tool use has risen steadily, reaching 46 per cent in spring 2006 for flight bookings and 51 per cent for all areas, including train, rental cars and hotels - all of which are also integrated in cytric. Mr Kaminski expects the 50 per cent mark to have been reached for flights as well by end-2006. Vorwerk's bank, "afk Bank und Leasing", and a new service centre are also scheduled for system link-up. International activities are not lagging behind, either: cytric went online in Switzerland in April 2006. From there, the instrument is also to be introduced into all countries in which Vorwerk has frequent business travellers.

Travel manager Kaminski was initially surprised at the very positive feedback from Vorwerk employees about the tool. In a customer survey, 97.3 per cent of responding staff was "satisfied and very satisfied" with cytric. Booking-agents are pleased with the "ongoing access to travel information," "improved planning", "transparency" and "the rapid access to alternatives" in addition to traditional carriers. Some comments made about booking were that it was "fun", that the "tool was simple to use". Booking-agents and travellers alike were "surprised" by the huge price differences in the marketplace. Gerhard Kaminski reports that some Vorwerk employees now have a bad conscience if they have to book at higher

rates. The fun of saving has even taken hold in senior management levels. Gerhard Kaminski knows of managers entitled to travel business class but who choose economy class because cytric makes the price differences so obvious.

Other clientele are also on board: assistants were initially fairly sceptical when the tool was introduced. They were worried they would end up with more work. But now, says the travel manager, they also realise the new process is faster than the old. Gerhard Kaminski: "There are no longer any moans and groans to be heard here.

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