

BayernLB

"Simply book a good trip"

An adaptation rate of 40% and at-a-click price transparency: cytric's benefits have already convinced 20 companies in the Bayern Sparkassenfinanzgruppe.



"Simply book a good trip"- This slogan was difficult to overlook, plastered as it was on a huge billboard, on many wall posters and on table displays in the BayernLB canteen. Staff from BayernLB Travel Management spent three days in January 2006 stationed outside the well-visited canteen during dinner time to ensure that no staff members could slip through and not notice the online booking message. BayernLB Travel Management was out in force, telling everyone to use the new online booking tool available in "Travelnet", the Bavarian savings bank association's internet travel portal. Partner organisations such as BCD Travel, Deutsche Bahn, hotel.de, DBA and i:FAO were also present giving live demonstrations on terminals and large screens of how to use cytric to "simply book a good trip". Travel Management also handed out the "Travel Book", a pocket-sized guide giving easy to understand instructions and explanations on how to make online bookings with cytric. Travel Manager Antje Heinrich: "Organising a marketing event of this kind quickly focused people's attention on this new tool right from the start."

The fruits of their labour: 40% adaptation rate within one year. A figure achieved even though Antje Heinrich and her colleague Maria Hölzl did not make use of online booking compulsory. And for good

business reasons: Online travel procurement actually makes no sense for staff who only make two or three trips a year because the time they need to make the booking outweighs the other benefits. "It's actually better," says Antje Heinrich, "for them to simply pick up the phone." This was why BayernLB chose the soft route during the introduction of cytric: online booking with all its advantages is merely a recommendation. It is complemented by the option to book any complex trips by telephone or to use the previous method - an order template sent by e-mail to the travel agent (BCD Travel).

There were two key factors which caused BayernLB to look at the online booking option in 2002. The lack of price transparency in the flight and hotel sectors and the increasing time spent by staff searching the web. Antje Heinrich remembers how staff members would trawl the web looking for best prices and come up with a bounty of cheap tickets. This culminated in data from public websites being transferred into the company's in-house order form. The trouble was the time interval between the price search and the actual booking by the travel agent: it meant the rates didn't coincide. There was a genuine risk that staff would lose faith in the travel agent: "We were bombarded by staff asking why the travel agent couldn't issue the tickets at the lower price. What we needed was at-a-click price transparency for the booking traveller on screen," was the conclusion of the two travel managers.

Staff should also be able to actually book their trips faster. Although BayernLB had an agreement with the travel agent to provide a booking confirmation within 24 hours for the 5000 travelling staff of the S-Finanzgruppe Bayern, this 24 hours was often too long; the rates found in the internet were already fully booked.

The two travel managers started scanning the market for booking systems and soon drafted a shortlist of four contenders. The system from a software company, that offered by an airline subsidiary and that of a travel agent were rejected by BayernLB because "cytric was the most innovative tool, then and now," according to Antje Heinrich. The lowest cost rate at-a-click, a link to German rail's online tickets and a clear display of all booked trips in the Travel Arranger Dashboard™ made cytric the tool of choice. The Bavarian travel managers found a big gap between cytric and the competition. The two experts also thought cytric was best suited to meet special requirements. BayernLB Travel Management provides services to more than 40 companies in the Bavarian savings bank association. Twenty member companies now use cytric for their online bookings. That will probably rise to 30, says Antje Heinrich. In her opinion, cytric is best able to meet the different needs of individual companies.

BayernLB subjected cytric to an unusually long test phase: throughout the 12 months of 2005 cytric was trialled by 35 travel arrangers in nine group companies. Why? Because the bank has particularly high security requirements. One special aspect was that the frequent-flyers used their credit card number for identification purposes, so that both numbers had to be encrypted. The very strict IT security requirements actually disrupted the grid-pricing system at first. i:FAO quickly introduced modifications to implement this and other special BayernLB requirements. cytric was also integrated into the existing "Travelnet" via the Single-Sign-On interface. This means that all 4000 Travelnet users can book in cytric without an additional log-in procedure. Antje Heinrich and Maria Hölzl also wanted to be

absolutely sure that the tool functioned 100%. Antje Heinrich now says: "The route we chose was definitely not wrong, we benefited in real terms and ultimately were able to provide our users with a tool which had been fully tried and tested."

An interesting change identified by BayernLB Travel Management is that since the introduction of online booking, the early booking period has shifted from 6 days to 2 weeks. Staff soon noticed that they were able to travel at lower costs the earlier they made their booking, says Antje Heinrich. The average ticket costs have fallen by 10%, with the potential for a further 5%, thinks Antje Heinrich. The introduction of online booking also means that BayernLB has gained substantial savings from its BCD booking fees. The online flight booking fee is only one third that of flight booking by phone. Staff have nothing but praise for the tool. Frequent-users are particularly enthusiastic, while occasional users have to cope with the tool's learning curve. But they are helped: since the introduction of online booking, Travel Management has offered regular cytric training courses. Users can also use the travel agent's Online Help Desk to answer questions. The members of the help desk team are usually able to clear up any user difficulties within two or three calls.

"Travelnet" also gives BayernLB one further benefit: the user database is used for invoicing travel management services to the independent corporate members of the Sparkassenfinanzgruppe Bayern.

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