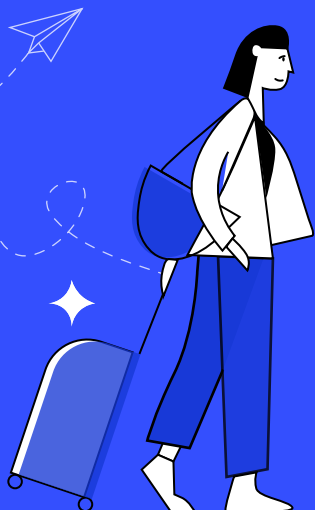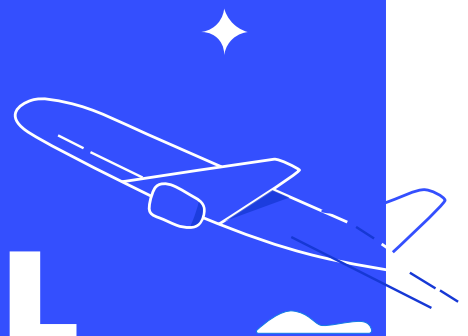# Zoho Expense

A comprehensive guide
to choosing the

BEST TRAVEL MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Introduction

Businesses across the globe are looking to serve an international audience thanks to rapidly evolving technological advances. Whether it is a global enterprise or a small scale startup, businesses of all sizes can now fulfill orders around the world. This global economy enables business stability and helps companies scale faster and more than ever.

With international business operations comes business travel. Employees across organizations—both big and small—are traveling for work. A survey conducted among financial professionals from companies of all sizes reported that **57% of the respondents agreed travel and expense (T&E) is a necessary cost**, and **40% agree that it is a significant enabler for their company's growth**. The survey also highlights the importance of travel in business. Traveling employees require dedicated travel management. Travel and expense management solutions have, thus, gained importance over the last decade, with **43% of financial decision-makers agreeing that adopting these solutions is a crucial innovation.**

This guide will take you through the decision-making process of selecting the right travel solution for your needs. There's also a checklist of critical features to help you choose the best option for your company.

When choosing the right travel management solution, you'll need to confer with multiple departments in your organization including travel management, finance, IT, and HR. Each team is responsible and influential in different capacities throughout the decision-making process.

Who should be involved in the decision-making process?

- **Travel management team**
- **Finance team**
- **IT team**
- **HR team**

Travel management team

Your company's travel management team is likely the foremost influencing authority to weigh in on the decision. The team's input can clarify the requirements, processes, and challenges to help build a correct reference document to use when evaluating your options.

Finance team

In a 2023 survey, 76% of finance teams agreed that travel expense policies are the solution to cut costs without cutting travel, a crucial business objective in recent times. As finance departments realize the importance and effect of efficient travel management and expense policies, their input in choosing the right travel and expense management software becomes necessary. Finance teams are also responsible for calculating and evaluating the costs associated with adopting the tool and the expected ROI from the undertaking. Another thing that finance teams would look into would be the software's capability of integrating with their finance suite.

Considering finances are rather complicated in nature, for employee expenses—specifically travel expenses—maintaining a single source of truth helps simplify and reduce errors across the process. The team would also be one of the final decision-makers post-early evaluation and shortlisting rounds.

IT team

Since technology privacy, security, and upkeep fall under the purview of the IT team, the technical aspect of choosing the right travel management solution would also be a part of their responsibility. While the travel team evaluates solutions based on their requirements, processes, and policies, the IT team gauges the security, privacy, technological compatibility, and other specific aspects of the solution based on the company's existing technical stack. The department must ensure the solution's data processing engine is either preconfigured or can be custom configured to follow company policies. After purchasing the solution, the team would play a crucial role during implementation and change management sessions.

HR team

Lastly, travel management policies, duty of care, employee experience, and employee onboarding within a travel management solution all fall under the HR team's scope of work. Therefore, the company must involve the team's spokespersons when evaluating the tool's capability to ensure employee satisfaction and duty of care. Tracking the effect of employees' travel on their health and safety is of utmost importance to the HR team. The HR team can thoroughly review the solution's ability to track, notify, and serve employees, especially when they're traveling.

Travel management software
buying decision-making process

- Identify the challenges and critical requirements

- Build a travel policy

- Evaluation and shortlisting

- Comparison and negotiation

- Buy and implement the travel management software

- Training and change management

- **Identify the challenges and critical requirements**

  The travel management team must identify the significant challenges faced by them regularly. Whether it is lengthy turnaround times, lack of visibility, or costly delayed travel bookings, the solution must address them all. A comprehensive list of all the challenges and specific individual requirements from all team members is a good starting point.

- **Build a travel policy**

  Once the team has an idea of the challenges it faces, the next step is noting down the ideal process for travel requisitions and fulfillment. From workflows to guidelines, outlining the company's ideal policy helps identify gaps and build robust systems.With your company objective at the center, create processes, guidelines, rules, and alternative workflows that work for your company and its travelers.

- **Evaluation and shortlisting**

  The next step is to research the market, shortlist vendors, and evaluate them based on your company's feature requirements, processes, and challenges. Most organizations start business travel management with the help of a simple worksheet and slowly scale to online solutions. Ensure the team evaluates the scalability and flexibility of the shortlisted software depending on the company's long-term visions of growing across geographies and in terms of user count.

  Ensure your employees handling the day-to-day business travel operations are heavily involved at this stage, too. Let them evaluate and understand the workings of each suggested software option. This can help ensure the shortlisted software can handle your repetitive tasks. Involving employees also allows teams to shortlist easy-to-use software options and helps later during change management.

- **Comparison and negotiation**

  After a thorough evaluation and shortlisting process comes negotiation. For most enterprises, negotiating with vendors for deals based on license volume and use is a common task for IT procurement. On the other hand, this is not a point of concern for small businesses, as most SaaS firms list their subscription prices for small-scale use on their website. You can also compare prices and features on numerous review sites such as G2, Capterra, and more.Negotiate prices based on the volume of licenses to purchase or bundle pricing for multiple software if you're buying a few licenses. Either way, negotiating with all shortlisted vendors helps you further compare each option.

- **Buy and implement the travel management software**

  Once selected, buying the licenses, implementing the software, and assigning the licenses to the right personnel while maintaining a repository for future use is necessary. As the IT team follows internal processes for license assignment and implementation, they must refer to the travel policy built by the team in Step 2. This will help them configure approvals, rules, audits, restrictions, violation policies, automation, user assignment, access, and more. An easy-to-use, cloud-based software allows companies to implement these solutions across departments without the help of experts and support teams, allowing them to fast-track the implementation project.

- **Training and change management**

  Resistance to change is most IT teams' major challenge when implementing new technologies. It makes achieving efficiency challenging and restricts visibility into travel spending as employees continue managing expenses outside the software. This is where the involvement of employees at the time of evaluation and shortlisting plays a vital part. Not only would they be aware of the solution chosen, they would have evaluated and shortlisted the option based on the challenges they faced, motivating them to make the shift.

  Ensure adequate training material such as product videos, help docs, FAQs, and similar resources are readily available for employees to understand and leverage the technology. Since travel management software is comprised of multiple modules, customizations, and more, the team will eventually have queries for which they'll need to contact the support team. Ensure the software vendor provides dependable support with multiple contact options.

Factors to consider when buying travel management software

- ✓ Ease-of-use
- ✓ Features
- ✓ Customization options
- ✓ Company credentials:
- ✓ Automation

- ✓ Scalability
- ✓ Technology updates
- ✓ Integrations
- ✓ Safety and reliability
- ✓ Customer reviews

Ease-of-use

The software aims to ease and improve the user experience for managing travel bookings and post-travel activities. Ensuring the user interface is intuitive and that users can access the software on multiple platforms, such as desktops, tablets, mobiles, smart watches, and more, eases employee adoption. Finally, the software must allow customization at all levels for users to build a familiar environment to flatten the learning curve.

Features

As companies assess their operations, certain elements are necessary depending on their requirements. It is essential to match these requirements with your potential travel management software so your organization's processes flow through milestones and activities smoothly.The main goal for ensuring the product features match your requirements is to optimize your unique business processes and leverage the technology and the company experience used to build the system.

Customization options

As mentioned above, every company builds processes that are modified and refined over time as employees adopt, review, and suggest changes based on their experience. Travel management software aims to aid this refined process and improve efficiency.

Choosing software with specific customization abilities, such as enforcing company-laid policies, building custom workflows, and more, lets employees adapt to the technology easily, ensuring improved efficiencies.

Automation

If your team members spend the majority of their time executing a repetitive task, like updating requests and preferences onto the booking tool or requesting visa documents for all international travel requests, automation capabilities within the software will help you save time and even money. Automation helps reduce the required number of full-time employees (FTEs) and processes more requests with higher efficiency and lower error rates.

Scalability

Your travel management software will be a long-term investment for it to show fruitful results; it must handle the volatility of your business and its growth. The travel management software must scale on all fronts,including the number of trips and requests handled, the number of users added, or the shared storage size for backups and other media.

Technology updates

As the world of technology and innovation progresses, it becomes necessary for software solutions to update their offerings. Look for your travel technology provider's history of updates and their roadmap. The frequency, quality, and type of updates the company releases speak a lot about its future vision, stability, and trustworthiness.

Integrations

Your company's meticulously curated technology stack has been chosen, built, and implemented to help every department and employee succeed in their operations. However, if not integrated, the software fails to show the big picture. An integrated set of solutions helps businesses maintain cleaner databases, and gather data points and analysis to help further overall business offerings.

Safety and reliability

Another important aspect to consider is the safety and reliability of the software. The number of privacy breach incidents and hacks companies face when handling sensitive customer data are countless.

Companies must choose solutions that prioritize data privacy and invest in stable technologies while ensuring business continuity procedures are in place for untoward incidents.

Customer reviews

Consider customer reviews and testimonials across multiple channels, be it G2, Google reviews, Playstore reviews, or Gartner Peer Insights. Each of these channels collects enormous amounts of data about your potential travel management solution and can help paint a futuristic picture before you finalize your decision.

Company credentials

Who does the software belong to? Where are they based? How long has the company been in business? How many customers do they have? Answer these questions to help establish the parent company's credentials.

The organization must plan to support and enhance the product over the years. Ensure the company believes in the right principles that match your own, whether prioritizing customer data privacy or understanding users' challenges, before identifying a need and building a product.

To summarize, the best travel management software for your business depends on many aspects that must be considered before deciding. Researching and understanding the product might take longer than anticipated, but it will be worth the effort.

About Zoho Expense

Zoho Expense, the comprehensive travel and expense management software, is equipped with detailed customization options and automation engines, making business travel and expense management easier and more cost effective. Zoho Expense offers end-to-end solutions for self-booking, a travel desk management platform, automated visa request management, custom workflows, flexibility to connect with negotiated vendors at preferred rates, fare drop alerts, duty of care towards business travelers, and more.

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