5 things to look out for in a brilliant business travel platform

Make Business Travel Easier

R Roomex

"**Despite massive changes in recent years with the advent of online hotel and travel booking, business travel is still overly complicated and time consuming.**"

The pain without the platform

As an industry, business travel is worth €1 trillion. But despite massive changes in recent years with the advent of online hotel and travel booking, business travel is still overly complicated and time consuming.

A lack of transparency, manual procedures, and byzantine travel policies together act more as blockers than gateways to new business opportunities.

If you've ever been responsible for travel booking, you'll understand how messy it can get.

Between a lack of visibility on spending, receipts going missing or out-of-the-blue requests to book a hotel stay for the entire finance team *tomorrow*, travel booking can cause you serious stress and really eat into your time and budget.

Imagine what you could achieve if you were freed from the thankless and inefficient drudgery of tracking expenses with Excel sheets or having to pull together reports for every single hotel stay?

It's simple: business travellers want easy-to-use tech to store and keep track of all their information in one place while travel bookers like you need an easy way to keep track of bookings and expenses on the road while also cashing in on better hotel rates.

Say goodbye to annoying Excel hell once and for all with a business hotel booking platform.

Automation beats hard labour all day long and any business travel platform is a step forward.

But the question remains: how do you know which platform is right for you? You'll want a solution that understands the industry, that employs best business practices and that makes your job easier. This guide will give you all that and more, so read on!

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Why you shouldn't use consumer websites

Your boss asks you to handle a hotel booking request for Janet from accounting. You might go straight to a consumer travel website, thinking that you'll get a good deal...

But that's a big misstep. Sure it aggregates a list of hotels and seems to offer you a good deal but you'll be short-changed because you're not getting the full picture.

It's all-too easy for travel bookers to get caught up in the whirlwind of consumer sites apparently offering lots of tasty deals but consumer sites don't consider the intricacies of hotel pricing; availability; and if the options are the right choice for your staff.

The requirements are different

The requirements of a business traveller are fundamentally different to those of other hotel bookers – for example, a stag party heading to Leeds.

You want your top business negotiator to get a good night's sleep and be refreshed and ready to seal the deal that will transform your prospects – or you want your engineer to be wide awake for the new job onsite.

That's not going to happen if they're booked into the type of hotel that caters for young holidaymakers who are partay-ing hard until 3am.

In the middle of this global travel free-for-all, you also have corporate responsibilities.

Compliance can go out the window when you cede control of your travel arrangements to a host of consumer-oriented travel sites.

Your company must look after the health and safety of employees at all times, no matter where they are in the world.

Bearing that in mind, you don't want your employee booking himself into a hotel in a bad area because he didn't have time to research the location properly.

How hotel pricing works

It's simple: there's no such thing as fixed hotel pricing, so it's very easy to be sucked into a quagmire of ever-changing rates, even within the same hotel.

A big player is the various sources of hotel rooms: wholesalers, OTAs, GDS and direct for example, all of which impact rates.

Plus, every hotel will have its own policy for setting prices, though the basics remain much the same across the globe: pricing is predominantly affected by location, seasonality, demand, star rating, amenities, value of service, and other competition.

Hotels may drive up cost if there's a spell of pleasant weather or a flurry of online searches for their services. For example, The Royal Palm in Dubai is noted for changing its rates up to 14 times per day.

Evidently, getting the best price requires savvy and smart technology – otherwise, you could face a losing battle against managing hotel spend.

You need to know where your employees are staying – and that their accommodation is safe and appropriate for a business trip.

The solution for many companies is a business hotel booking platform that minimises the risk, cost and potential chaos of managing hotel bookings.

With hotel costs rising fast, it's also worth mentioning that you can potentially save an average of 12-21 percent on hotel costs with the right software.

That would inflation-proof your company's travel budget for quite a while!

GDPR and hotel stays

GDPR was a hot-button trend in 2018 but its effect will be felt long into the future. It's a consideration too for hotel bookers, as hotels can be particularly vulnerable to data threats given the high volume of personal information and payment card transactions, as well as third-party info around POS systems, concessions, and their own bookings/marketing efforts.

Using a single specialised business hotel booking platform can mitigate the risk by paying your hotel bills centrally, with one invoice a month, which completely eradicates the hassle of bulk billing, expenses etc.

It's one less thing to worry about!

Duty of care: A big consideration

While duty of care has always been a consideration for those in charge, it's becoming an absolute priority with staff on the go. You need to strongly consider duty of care as it's the employer's legal and moral responsibility to ensure that employees are well looked after and safe no matter where they are.

Solutions could be as simple as ensuring the hotel is safe (i.e. no fire hazards, in a good location, etc.); or logging traveller details (for example in case of a medical incident); and using a platform that gives you oversight on where they are.

> "However, it's all-too easy for staff who look after their company's corporate travel to get caught up in the whirlwind of consumer sites apparently offering lots of tasty deals."

5 things to look out for in a brilliant business hotel booking platform

Streamline your business hotel booking workflow

You've just decided to take the plunge and use a hotel booking platform for business trips.

Great. Your corporate life is going to get a lot easier, cheaper, efficient and productive.

But which hotel booking platform should you go for? There are several that will do a good job — and many of them are better than having none at all.

However, you want the best platform, right?

Like every business decision, you need to put the software through its paces, asking the right questions about how it can transform your business.

To help you on your way, here are five features to watch out for:

1. The right hotels — in the right places

Consumer booking sites are brilliant for holiday-makers — but business travellers require a little more specialised attention.

When assessing a platform, ask if it has access to the best relevant hotels — including hotels you'd get on consumer sites, specific business hotels and rooms, hotel rooms from sources such as GDS and wholesalers, and access to chains such as Premier inn, which aren't available on most booking sites.

Roomex, for one, offers the best choice of business hotels of any hotel-booking platform on the market. It provides access to 1.2 million hotels and hotel chains around the world, including millions of hotel rooms not available on leisure hotel booking sites.

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Roomex is always working to add new hotels to its portfolio, including many hotel chains that aren't available on any other site.

2. Visibility and real-time reporting

Timely solutions require timely information. Today's managers want analytics and metrics that tell them what's going on *right now*.

It's not much use knowing your corporate travel budget was blown sky-high three months ago.

Nor will it win you any plaudits if the CFO wants a read on your travel budget and it takes you four days to come up with a report.

And those four days will be hellish, trawling through Excel sheets and various credit card statements and tracking down that errant traveller who's always missing an important receipt.

Instead, go with a good business hotel booking solution that includes real-time reports. You'll get it done twice as fast and be able to get on with the important stuff.

Roomex, for instance, streamlines everything you need in one place by automatically linking up cost centres and cost codes for projects.

In a customised Roomex portal, it's easy to have your company cost codes set up for projects, purchase orders, geographies, suppliers or divisions, etc. Your itemised Roomex invoice will provide a clear breakdown based on the cost codes, supporting speedy account reconciliation and delivering complete visibility of all workforce hotel costs and savings.

Your hard-pressed office management staff will thank you for it!

3. Single payment

Roomex consolidates all your company's hotel booking expenses in a single monthly payment. You receive a single invoice matching internal cost codes and you get a month's free credit.

This means you no longer need to waste time reconciling multiple payments with company credit cards, expenses and hotel invoices.

Say goodbye to complex hotel payments forever.

4. Duty of care

Employers are obligated to provide a duty of care towards their employees — but what does that actually mean? Essentially, it's based around ensuring that staff are safe and well — which can be difficult if they're on the road.

In case of emergency, Roomex provides a special report that enables authorized personnel to quickly find out where staff members are staying around the world.

Once a staff member books into a hotel on your Roomex portal, the system records where they are staying and how to contact them. Staff hotel locations can be instantly displayed on the Duty of Care interactive map, so you can pinpoint anyone, at any location in the world, in seconds.

5. Great savings

A good platform will save you time and money. It's that simple.

With the benefit of rates negotiated by a major booking engine, you should pay less for accommodation, and if you choose the right one, a good deal less.

Roomex, for example, saves clients between 12 and 21 percent on room rates by booking through its seamless, integrated platform.

There's no need to pay for the platform either. Roomex costs businesses nothing. Nada. Zilch.

There are no set-ups costs, and no ongoing fees or charges. Once your company is registered, you and your colleagues can use Roomex for all your company's business hotel booking, management, and payment needs. What's not to like?

> **Roomex provides access to close to 1.2 million hotels and hotel chains around the world, including millions of hotel rooms not available on leisure hotel booking sites**

Roomex Business Hotel Booking Platform Still Delivering Savings for Musgrave after Six Years

Musgrave has been using Roomex for its workforce hotel booking, management, reporting and payment since 2012. The 140-year-old retail group is one of the company's longest standing customers.

The relationship started when David O'Flynn was appointed as Musgrave Group Financial Director. One of the key initiatives he kicked-off was to find a solution that would enable the company to improve control and visibility over accommodation spend, while safeguarding and enhancing existing relationships with preferred hotels.

The goal was to move away from fragmented and time-consuming processes, where each of Musgrave's five divisions managed separate relationships with different hotels. Under the old system it was difficult to accurately track ongoing accommodation spend, and the company lacked the data and visibility needed to improve processes and reduce cost.

Musgrave went live with Roomex, the business hotel booking platform, in June 2012. Roomex provides organisations with a fast, simple, and free, hotel booking, management and payment solution.

"From an operational point of view, Roomex is a seamless online booking tool, personalised for our business, staff and preferences," said Ingrid de Doncker, Musgrave Group eAuction Executive. The solution provides the company with a standard way of booking, managing and paying for all its workforce hotel needs, across the entire group.

"Roomex goes a long way to ensure that we are getting the best rates, and by 'rate-comparing' every single booking, they are not only measuring the savings we make, but also ensuring that we never pay over the odds. As experts in their field, they have allowed Musgrave to bring our accommodation spend under control and proactively manage it more effectively and efficiently," de Doncker added.

Within a year of go-live, Musgrave had already used Roomex to book 452 different hotels, in 135 cities across nine countries, at reduced rates. Moreover, the company had registered 525 Musgrave staff who were authorised to book their own hotels on its Roomex platform, which was customised to include Musgrave's negotiated rates, preferred hotels and most-frequent locations.

The benefits started to flow immediately, including:
- 19% measured savings against standard rates.
- Instant visibility on bookings by person, hotel, division and Group.
- Completely outsourced negotiation and contracting with hotels.
- Live benchmarking between actual booked and negotiated rates.
- Standardised booking workflow with self-cancel functionality, which helps avoid additional cost.
- Significant time saved across the board, including reduced time taken to make bookings, speedier report generation, better staff communication, and easier hotel contracting.
- Better accounts and VAT compliance.
- Personal, fast and expert Roomex customer service.

...all in a portal that experienced 100% uptime, and delivered with zero booking or transaction fees.

More than six years on, Musgrave is still using Roomex. "I am satisfied that Roomex are delivering savings to the business and strongly recommend the continued use of Roomex as a group requirement in order to achieve lowest cost. Roomex saves us money and time, gives us live reporting, manages our contracting and provides top level support... and there's no cost," said Musgrave Group Financial Controller Michael Kelleher.

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>
> **Michael Kelleher,**
> **Musgrave Group Financial Controller**

Why Roomex?

Roomex is the business hotel booking platform for your workforce, for wherever work takes them.

It provides organisations like yours with a fast, simple, and online business hotel booking, management and payment solution.

And unlike corporate travel agents or travel management companies, it's completely free. There are no fees – and no contract requirement.

Your tally is paid, and you are invoiced in one simple, easy-to-understand monthly bill.
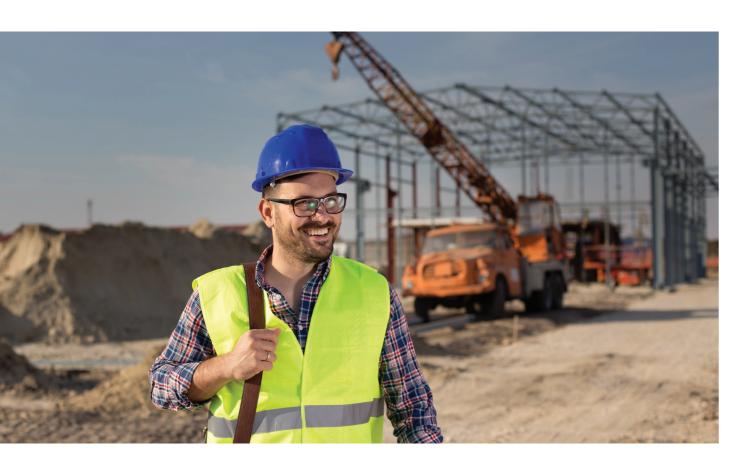
So, you don't have to trawl through a morass of credit card statements and chase down errant executives for that lost receipt that's currently residing in a wastepaper basket in a hotel *somewhere*.

1.2 million reasons why

Roomex provides one view of all bookings – with real-time reporting and instant visibility to all approved employees.

Roomex is the business hotel booking specialist. So, your workers have less chance of sleeping next to a roomful of beer-swilling lads on a stag party in Leeds when they need a good night's sleep for that important project in the morning.

> **And unlike corporate travel agents or travel management companies, it's completely free**

Roomex also provides better hotel choice – for better rates, which are not available on public websites.

It is the #1 business travel booking platform with the best choice of business hotels globally – currently numbering over 1.2 million and rising.

While Roomex prides itself on integrated automation, there is also a self-booking tool, to enable booking or cancelling anytime 24/7, even at the last minute.

Live reporting is a must-have in today's management toolbox, along with metrics to measure the savings on every booking.

Booking through consumer sites also doesn't provide the level of service, visibility and reporting needed by business travellers.

And there is another problem. Surfing websites may be fun in your spare time.

End WILFing once and for all

But it's not only time-consuming in its own right, it invariably leads to WILFing ('What was I Looking For?').

It's hard enough to keep staff away from checking social media on the sly without putting them in temptation's way by tasking them with surfing through hotel websites (which may lead to wandering thoughts about their next holiday).

Existing hotel booking sites are designed to cater for the leisure market and staff will find it hard to avoid ogling and dreaming of holidays while looking up hotels.

Roomex solves all these problems by connecting to all the main public websites in a single portal targeted to your business needs. Sorted!

Ready to make travel management simple? Book a demo with Roomex now.

What is WILFING?

WILFING, noun, the art of being extremely distracted by the task at hand while browsing the net.

Try Roomex now