

# Bumps in the road:

5 tips to support traveler well-being

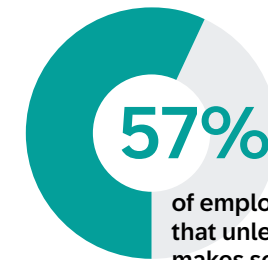




# If you're too stressed to read this, you need to read this

There's no way to gloss over it: your employees are in crisis, and they're not alone. According to a recent [SAP SuccessFactors report](#), there's a mental health and well-being dilemma unfolding across companies, industries, and regions.<sup>1</sup> Why?

- Last year's alarming rates of employee stress, burnout, and disengagement have not been resolved—nor have they caused organizations to address the erosion of trust between employees and senior leadership.
- Contentious policy and personnel decisions, as well as macroeconomic and sociopolitical stressors, have compounded the issue.
- The effect is a state of emergency regarding employees' sense of connection with their leaders and their company.



of employees believe that unless their company makes serious changes, burnout will not get better.<sup>1</sup>



believe their company's leaders would prioritize making more money over keeping workers at the company.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The top 5 HR trends today—and HR's guide to what's next, SAP SuccessFactors, 2025

# Inaction isn't an option

The bottom line is clear: **Organizations need to start reconnecting with employees**—it's imperative to their long-term success that this isn't treated as just a blip on the radar. As you work with leaders across your company to nurture your team's health and well-being, think about how to improve often-overlooked processes that impact the day-to-day experiences of many in your workforce. Take, for example, travel and expense (T&E) processes. T&E isn't going to instantly resolve any macro well-being issue all on its own, of course, but it certainly can help. And ignoring it is sure to hurt.

We're not strictly talking about duty of care here—yes, the physical safety of your employees is critical—but you can't afford to ignore business travel's impact on mental health and overall well-being. Business travel can strain employees in many ways—before, during, and after a trip—so it's important to have a holistic viewpoint on the issue.



*“You can’t get rid of stress—it’s always going to be there. But many organizations today want to find ways to mitigate unnecessary stresses in the workplace. And they’ve realized that inefficient business processes have a major impact on people’s stress.”*

*—Dr. Myles Druckman,  
Global Medical Director,  
Senior Vice President, International SOS*



## The impact of boundaries on psychological safety

As remote work subsides, there's a risk that employees will feel less empowered to redraw the important boundaries they once maintained between the work and non-work parts of their lives.

Companies need to be hypervigilant in promoting psychological safety, so that employees feel comfortable reestablishing these boundaries, expressing their concerns, and sharing any well-being issues they face.

It's also important for leaders and managers to create space for conversation and encourage the sharing of questions, doubts, or concerns. Beyond that, they need to listen to those concerns and respond with tangible plans to address them.

Hear more on the [SAP Concur Conversations podcast](#).

# So what's HR to do?

**It's simple: If you aren't already, get involved in your travel program.** Work with your travel, finance, and overall leadership to make sure travel policies, travel tools, and the general travel culture of your company cover the following concepts.

## 1 Think down the road.

In this environment, one-off, disjointed initiatives just won't cut it. As you evaluate your overall travel and expense policies—and examine individual decisions about each business trip—take a forward-thinking approach with a big picture view that what's best for employees will deliver the best ROI for the business:

- Consider the qualitative costs of employee confidence and stability when evaluating the quantitative costs of travel, like room rates, per diem, mileage reimbursement, or airfare class.
- Build a culture that rewards long-term strategic planning and avoids last-minute trips that strain employees and their families. For example, scrambling to find childcare or rearranging personal budgets until travel expenses are reimbursed (if using a corporate card isn't an option).
- Strike a balance between prioritizing long-term employee health, satisfaction, and retention while maintaining compliance and safety, rather than focusing solely on meeting short-term budget goals.

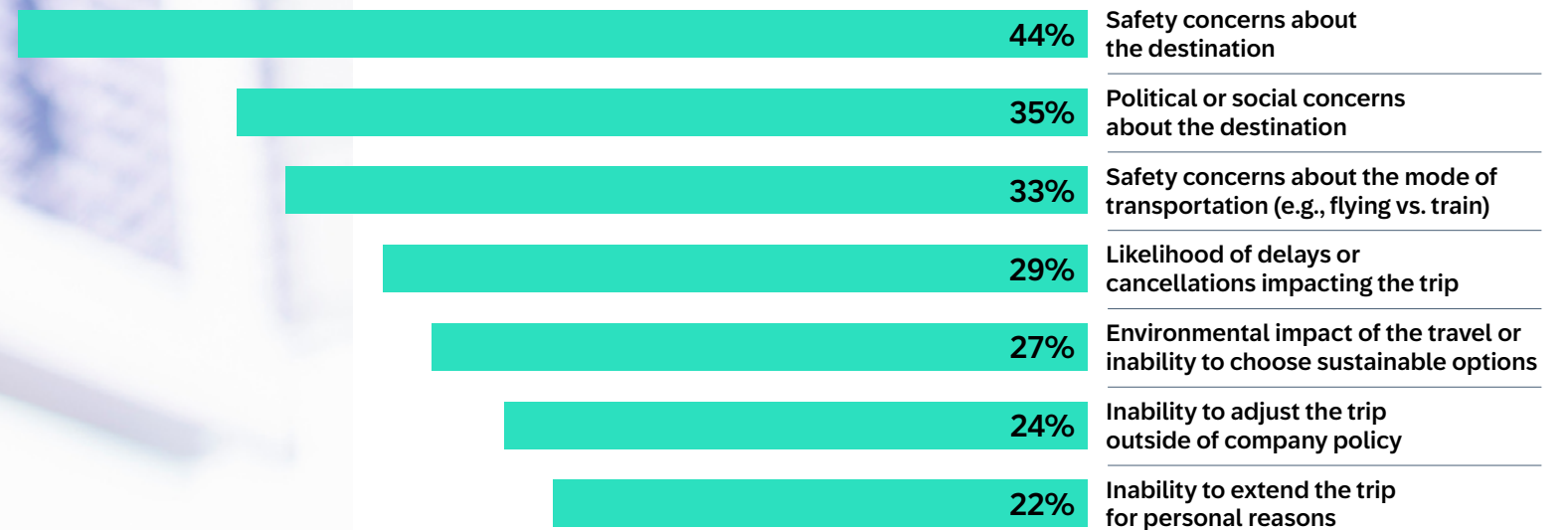




## 2 Embed flexibility into your policies

Like you, employees want options when it comes to travel. Yet **91% of business travelers report that their requests for flexibility have been rejected** over the last 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

Your road warriors want the freedom to make choices about what's most important to them. If their requests aren't met, they might not go. The research also points out the reasons travelers choose to decline a business trip:<sup>1</sup>



Giving travelers flexibility doesn't mean your travel policy becomes a free-for-all, but it's important to offer options and make sure employees have some level of ownership over their travel plans. Their well-being can have a major effect on the outcome of the trip, whether it's a sales call or an industry conference.

Even if HR isn't responsible for developing travel policies, it's important for you to have a seat at the table when they're being crafted and agreed upon. Consider ways to regularly partner with travel managers and other stakeholders to ensure you're part of the conversation.

<sup>1</sup> 6th Annual SAP Concur Global Business Travelers Research Report

## 3 Do the little things, because they're the big things

Sitting by the window—or even worse, the dreaded middle seat—when you want the aisle may not seem like a huge issue, but when it happens over and over again, it becomes a pain point. And anything you do to ease the strain on your travelers can improve their long-term well-being and productivity. Consider these tips:



### **Give employees ways to travel more comfortably.**

Long flights spent stuffed into a coach seat can impact both physical and mental health. This doesn't mean free access to business class, but travelers with longer legs, for example, should be able to book seats with extra legroom. If you truly can't afford that, consider other ways to ease the trip, like airline lounge access, extra time off after stressful or extended trips, etc. In addition, make sure your booking tool has New Distribution Capability (NDC) connections that offer a wide range of fares and self-service options. It should also allow travelers to connect their air, hotel, car, and rail loyalty accounts—so they can earn points, enjoy perks, and rest assured that their preferred brands will deliver a positive experience.



**Consider a travel buddy system** where employees can travel together or have a designated contact person for support during their trips. This simple addition can help reduce feelings of isolation and provide a sense of security and camaraderie.



## Do the little things, because they're the big things



**Use your data to your advantage.** Partner with your travel manager or data analyst to review trip data and explore who's taking the longest trips most frequently, who gets delayed the most, who has to take connecting flights most often, or who ends up traveling on weekends. Then work to cut down on some of the more stressful trips or try to arrange them differently. You can also consider adding recognition and rewards for your weariest road warriors—like additional time off, wellness incentives, or public acknowledgment of their efforts.



**Use corporate cards to build employee sentiment and trust.** Employees can get easily frustrated—or worse, face financial hardship—if they're expected to front business expenses using personal funds. On top of that, having to wait days, weeks, or even months to be reimbursed doesn't make them feel trusted or valued. By trusting your workforce with corporate cards that integrate with your T&E platform to automatically capture expenses, you can empower employees to spend within corporate policies. Card usage not only reduces receipts and out-of-pocket burdens, it also reduces the time spent creating and submitting expense reports.



**Add a travel wellness program** to your existing benefits program that encourages healthy habits on the road. This can include providing subscriptions to virtual fitness and meditation apps, or partnering with hotels with fitness facilities, healthy meal options, or relaxation spaces.





## 4 Keep two-way communication flowing freely

You want employees to be informed and feel confident about their travel plans, but more importantly, they should be informed and feel confident about their company's commitment to making travel as safe, simple, and valuable as possible.

What does that look like?

- Clear, consistent, accessible communication about travel policies, safety measures, and available support.
- An easy way for employees to give feedback about their travel experiences—this is input you can use to continuously refine travel policies and support employee well-being.
- Regular check-ins with travelers and/or their leadership to assess their mental health and well-being, the state of your program, their input on policies, their preferences, and so on. This will help you identify issues before they become systemic problems.

## 5 Devote yourself to duty of care

Work with travel managers, risk and security teams, and your most valuable travelers to develop duty of care policies that support the best possible employee experience while ensuring safety and meeting legal and ethical standards. And don't be afraid to review and adjust them as your business and the broader travel landscape evolve.

Be sure all the key players are at the table. As an HR leader, you're in a great position to be the broker/liaison who brings together all the right voices from all parts of the company. You'll also want to make sure employees know exactly what your company is doing to keep them safe. If they don't know how you're fulfilling your duty of care, for example, they'll assume you're not, and they'll be nervous about traveling.

# Smooth sailing

The ideas outlined here aren't earth-shattering or—just as importantly—budget-busting. And they don't have to be. They're simply designed to reduce the hassles and hurdles of working on the road, so employees can be happier and more productive.

And the simple fact that you're paying attention to travelers' wants and needs goes a long, long way.

Learn more about protecting employee health, safety, and well-being in the eBook: [Your Most Important Duty is Duty of Care](#).



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