Protecting Your Mobile Workforce To Protect Your Business

The actions and attitudes of business decision-makers when it comes to the health, safety and security of their global mobile workforce are changing. From impacts of recent events, including hurricanes, terror attacks and disease outbreaks, the need to provide protection for a rapidly growing mobile workforce is clear. Increasingly, this protection is also recognised as a critical aspect of maintaining business resilience and sustainability, regardless of industry – if you have people travelling for business, there are business objectives and brand reputation at risk, as well as the impact on personnel in the event of an incident to consider.

Recently we carried out our Global Business Resilience Trends Watch 2018 survey, which reveals that the perception of risk remains elevated. While organisations are increasingly implementing prevention and mitigation measures, we found there are still opportunities for improvement as major strategic aspects are being missed.

A key aspect of providing a robust programme, and successfully protecting employees, is access to information. Anyone with responsibility for a travelling workforce, or even a single traveller, need to have access to time sensitive information pre, during and post trip. They also need to empower travellers with insight on their destination, access to appropriate preparation and access to around the clock global support and assistance. For instance, risk rating indicators supported by additional destination insight and advice, combined with travel security and medical alerts relating to destinations, both on the ground and remote support, provides a good basis for a robust travel risk mitigation programme.

Understanding the risks are key to keeping the travelling workforce travelling and able to fulfil their business aims. The survey found that travel plans were changed, predominantly, due to concerns over security threats (58%), followed by natural disasters (43%). This was consistent across the globe, apart from the Americas where natural disasters was first and security threats second. At a global level these are followed by country risk ratings (42%) and civil unrest (34%).

Perception of Risk Remains at an Elevated Level

63% of business decision-makers perceive travel risks to have increased in the past year, reflecting a global softening from 72% in the previous year. However, the Americas and Australasia regions stand out with 78% and 72% respectively reporting increased risk in 2017. Risk rating changes on the latest edition of the Travel Risk Map include increase risk in some areas of the Caribbean and Puerto Rico due to the effects of the hurricanes and a decrease in risk in some European countries thanks to improved standards of medical care. These types of insight can be critical to both planning a trip and keeping the workforce safe.

Striving for Business Resilience

While the preventative agenda in medical and travel risk mitigation is clearly on the rise, the survey reveals that a strategic and far-reaching view may currently be a missed opportunity by many organisations. Only 9% of organisations updated their sustainability programme to include their travel risk policy and just 10% introduced a wellbeing policy, falling at the bottom of the risk mitigation techniques implemented in 2017.

Dr Doug Quarry, Group Medical Director of Health Intelligence for International SOS, says *"A staggering 91% of organisations have potentially not included their travel risk programme in their overall business sustainability programme and 90% are seemingly ignoring the impact a wellbeing policy could have on their travelling workforce. This is despite an increasing understanding of how these techniques can impact within the context of the GRI Index"* [i].

James Wood, security expert at International SOS & Control Risks, comments, *"Success in future global mobility programmes will be those that include consideration of the changing demographic of the mobile workforce and new marketplace dynamics, including the increase in use of shared economy services. The immediate obvious risks, such as the recent hurricanes and unforeseeable security incidents, will see organisations scrutinised in terms of preventative measures and recovery".*

Risk Response & Challenges

Organisations continue to introduce risk mitigation techniques. The most frequent step taken in response to travel health and security concerns is the introduction of pre-trip and during trip emails, with 39% of decision makers reporting to have introduced this in 2017.

However, organisations still face barriers in ensuring the health and security of travellers, with educating employees about travel risk (53%), the most common challenge in ensuring the health and security of travellers, followed by communicating with employees in a crisis, and ensuring they have read pre-travel information (both 44%).

Dr Quarry, continues, *"As threats, such as the recent plague in Madagascar, can be fast moving, timely insight is critical to travellers and organisations to avoid potentially disastrous consequences".*

"It is promising to see that risk mitigation techniques are being prioritised, including annual health check up's, which can be key to spotting any potential health issues that need managing prior to travel or assignments. As organisations continue to review and enhance their processes, it is important that new actions to promote a safe, healthy and well workforce are taken into account to help support and strengthen business resilience".

For more information on how to protect your mobile workforce, visit www.internationalsos.com View the Travel Risk Map at www.travelriskmap.com.

Global Business Resilience Trends Watch is an Ipsos Mori research study conducted

Top 6 techniques introduced in response to medical and security risk concerns	
1) Introduced pre-trip and during trip advisory emails	39%
2) Included travel risk assessment in travel approval process	37%
3) Implemented travel safety training and security training	33%
4) Provided annual health check-up's	32%
5) Updated travel risk policy (excluding diversity related issues)	31%
6) Implemented programmes to locate travellers	28%

Opportunities for future business resilience through a robust travel risk mitigation programme	
9%	Updated **sustainability programme** to include travel risk programme
10%	Introduced a **wellbeing policy**
13%	Monitored the number of **road traffic incidents**
14%	Updated travel risk policy to include **diversity-related issues** (e.g. LGBT, female travellers, travellers with disabilities)
16%	Implemented a programme for people to understand **existing health issues** while away on business

Top 5 Challenges in securing the safety and security of the mobile workforce	
1) Educating employees about travel risks	53%
2) Confirming employees have read pre-travel information	44%
3) Communicating with employees during a crisis	44%
4) Tracking employee travel	39%
5) Having adequate resources to manage health and security efforts	35%

among 667 business decision-makers, across all types of organisations which have had previous contact relating to business travel health and security with International SOS, across 69 countries. Research was conducted online in the period October 4th to October 20th 2017. Respondents were those who organise, influence or are responsible for their organisation's travel and risk mitigation policies. Security professionals accounted for 17% of the sample, with HSE and HR staffers comprising the next biggest segments, on 15% each.

Reference:
(i) Sancroft and International SOS Foundation 'Occupational Health & Safety and Workplace Wellness Reporting Guidelines for a Global Workforce: A Practical Guide for Internationally Operating Employers'.

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