

Laying down the law for Withers' worldwide travel policy

CLIENT:	Withers
SECTOR:	Professional
COST CATEGORIES:	Utilities, Stationery, Cleaning

Expense Reduction Analysts (ERA) brings Withers' entire travel procurement activity into line, making it accountable and therefore more cost effective, as well as ensuring that the company is acting in a way that is compliant with current legislation when their executives travel the world.

THE CLIENT

Founded in London in 1896, and now with 700 people in 12 offices worldwide, Withers LLP is a law firm which acts for some of the wealthiest individuals and families in the US, Europe and Asia.

THE CHALLENGE

"When I first met Michael Priestley at Withers, I was impressed with the great job he was doing in procurement," says Paul Pearse, Client Relationship Manager at ERA. "Utilities, stationery, cleaning, rates - he had them all pretty well covered. But when we came to discuss travel, we both realised that there was the possibility that Expense Reduction Analysts could add value."

Michael Priestley takes up the story, "At our stage of development - with a £140 million turnover and operating in three continents - we needed a company to come in and assess how we should best manage our travel requirements, and to walk us down the path towards producing a travel policy and selecting the right travel management company."

Paul Pearse called upon the specialist knowledge of his colleague, Derek Hodd, to analyse Withers' worldwide travel requirements and recommend a way forward.

Derek Hodd outlines the project, "Withers' main travel management company (TMC) was really too small for their evolving requirements. Individual travellers were using various TMCs, or booking on the web, so there was no ability within Withers to gain detailed control over their travel spend. It was even difficult for me to get the travel expenditure data together - particularly around hotel bookings - because the whole process was so fragmented.



withers^{LLP}

At our stage of development – with a £140 million turnover and operating in three continents – we needed a company to come in and assess how we should best manage our travel requirements, and to walk us down the path towards producing a travel policy and selecting the right travel management company. Expense Reduction Analysts has performed superbly in fulfilling that requirement. For me personally, overseeing the project from Withers' point of view, what struck me was Expense Reduction Analysts' patience, professionalism and thorough knowledge of the travel market. They talked to a lot of people with a lot of different ideas, and formulated the very best travel policy for us and sourced the best travel management company for our mix of requirements.

MICHAEL PRIESTLEY
HEAD OF BUSINESS SERVICES EUROPE AND ASIA,
WITHERS LLP

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ONLINE BOOKING TOOL AUTOMATICALLY ENFORCES THE TRAVEL POLICY

"I therefore had to ask a lot of questions of a lot of people in order to build up a picture of Withers' travel expenditure. Once this was done, and the results analysed, I started to develop a travel policy and get internal buy-in on its precepts.

"From a full Request for Proposals (RFP) process, we produced a short list of travel management companies, reduced it to two and Withers finally chose one. I helped Withers staff through the implementation process, the necessary systems and processes, including an online booking tool, which automatically supports the parameters defined in the travel policy.

"One important additional point is that the Travel Management Company is contractually obliged to provide detailed management information and hold account review meetings, so that, for example, Withers can over time examine buying patterns in all of their offices."

What are the benefits for Withers LLP of the travel project undertaken by ERA? Derek Hodd explains, "Cost savings will naturally come from this enhanced ability to manage, but that was not the initial focus. At this stage, it was all about bringing Withers' entire travel procurement activity into line, making it accountable and therefore more cost effective, as well as ensuring that the company is acting in a way that is compliant with current legislation when their executives travel the world."

Michael Priestley, Head of Business Services Europe and Asia for Withers LLP, defines the benefits from his point of view, "Expense Reduction Analysts spent a long time getting under our skin, as a company, finding out what we were about. And then they were very tactful in pointing us in the right direction - a direction that we would not have found by ourselves. In fact, the range of travel management companies they selected for us to look at, was so good that we could have chosen any one of three or four."

