



The new reality of flight shopping.

A unique open industry summit.



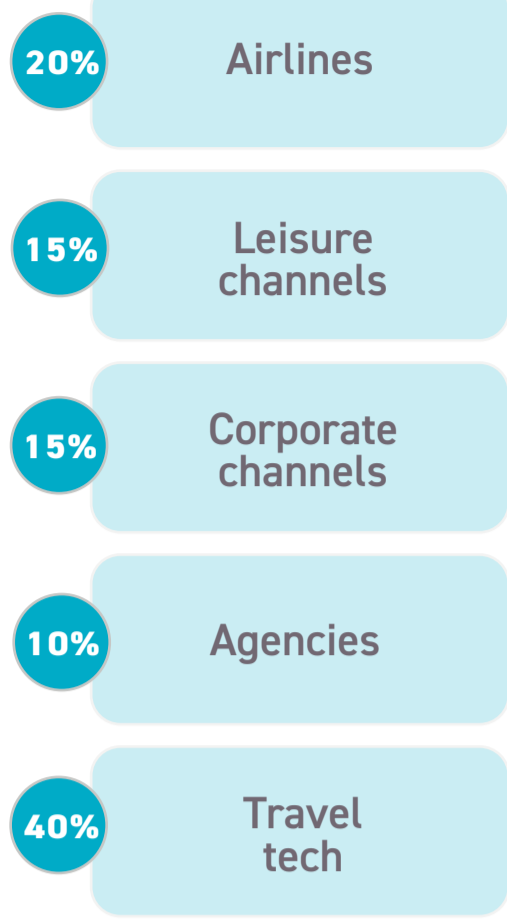
In these small-group roundtables, industry leaders exchanged their perspectives on improving customer sentiment in travel and on identifying relevant offers for the new realities of flight shopping.

New market conditions require tough conversations, both internal and with your partners. Any recovery timeline depends on our collective ability to engage and move quickly.

How?

By rethinking demand stimulation, redefining relevance and experience, and re-engineering our paused innovation plans to use existing infrastructure. Read on to learn more.

FEATURED PARTICIPANTS



DEMAND STIMULATION FOR THIS NEW CONSUMER MINDSET

Flight shopping behaviors have changed. Reassurance and winning travelers' trust is now more important than inspiration. Shoppers are primarily concerned about the shifting logistics of travel, such as quarantine guidelines (for both outbound and return), as well as safety precautions and cancellation policies.

Demand generation needs to reflect this new reality:

- Instead of starting with a destination in mind, leisure shoppers are looking for places they can visit. We can imagine shopping by type of destination—"beach," rather than "Miami," for example.
- When it comes to business travel, **"we have to take that message beyond the traveler, to travel managers and travel decision-makers at corporations,"** said Rob Brown at Southwest Airlines. He explained that Southwest held townhalls with buyers and executives which helped to convey that "there are a lot of safety protocols being put in place to help travelers to stay safe—not just in an aircraft, but on their way to the plane, in the gate area, and once they arrive in the next city."
- The human factor is becoming more important as shoppers look for guidance on the new complexities of travel. According to Roger Hale of Adtrav, the ratio of online versus agent corporate bookings went from pre-pandemic levels of 3:1, to everything through an agent in April, to an even split nowadays. Some companies still haven't switched their online tool back on. Expedia's Alyson Walton said, **"The information that we have on cleanliness and safety upfunnel is the highest clicks [after the non-stop filter]."**

"We're going to see a renaissance in real-time travel planners," said Uplift's Tom Botts.



- Don't miss last-minute demand and mobile opportunities. Amy Wei said Kayak is seeing **"a lot of spontaneous trips...which means shorter booking windows. Mobile conversion rates, specifically on facilitated bookings, are increasing."**
- For international travel, airlines are creating new "country/destination manager" roles to monitor regulations daily, even hourly, to understand who can fly. Vaccination passports could help to improve confidence.
- Personalized targeting and positive stories on social networks could improve conversion. **"Suggesting visiting Facebook friends in specific cities would make customers more likely to purchase (along with mitigating fears about money and health),"** shared Assen Vassilev of CTW. Conducting post-travel customer surveys and spreading real traveler success stories could also help.

What can help stimulate demand right now? Sharing aircraft and destination safety information broadly, and providing personal guidance where possible.

DEFINING RELEVANT OFFERS FOR A NEW CONTEXT

Retailing is still about tailored experiences—but what that experience looks like has shifted to include new attributes like the seat next to you, COVID-19 certificates/testing, and extra insurance.

Participants agreed that safety should be addressed beyond the brand level. The entire industry needs to be consistently talking about safety.

Another area of focus is the customer experience post-sale.

- Customers want airlines to be able to refund fast, no matter where the ticket was purchased.
- Seats remain what customers look for, but instead of legroom or lie-flats, it's an empty adjoining seat. Marketing could play a bigger role positioning that empty seat as "3 for 2" and focusing on the end-to-end experience.
- Changes in travel experience (like self-check-in and baggage drop) are now an essential part of an airline offer, along with the new attributes such as flexible rebooking or bundled COVID-19 health insurance.
- Travel agency partners are noting demand for extended booking windows, in addition to last-minute travel.

"We want everyone to think that air travel is safe, and it's better if airlines are competing on everything else other than safety," said Piero Sierra at Skyscanner, "on the leisure side especially."



- Offers need to be about tailored experiences and making sure passengers feel safe and comfortable. **"There's never been a better time to make sure we're equipping passengers with the ability to choose for themselves what they value and what they'll pay for,"** concluded Chris Engle of Plusgrade.

Most consumers think about the safety of air travel in general, not by airline brand. Whether it's for more space, check-in changes, or refundability, offers that are clear about what travelers will experience after the sale are critical.

AGILITY: THE KEY TO NAVIGATING A PATH TO RECOVERY

Load factors, capacity, and demand won't stay low forever, so it's crucial for airlines and partners to continue to improve the travel experience and pursue innovative technologies and strategies.

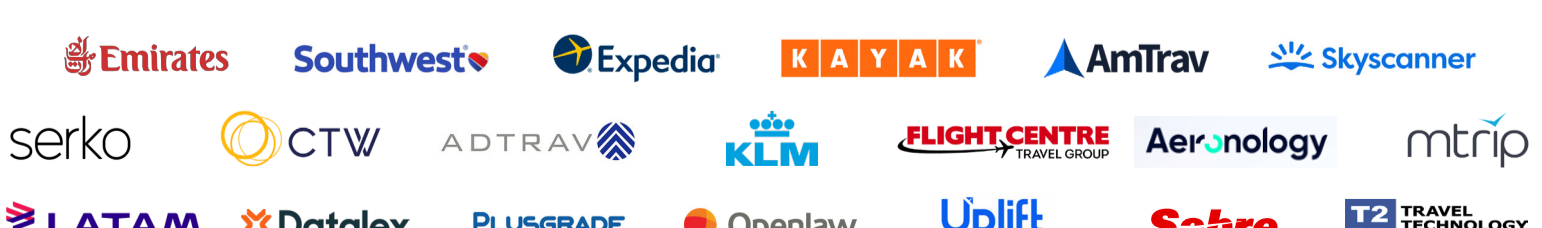
- Current datasets and historical transactions can't help predict patterns because customer behavior has changed drastically. **Revenue management datasets, models, and algorithms need to be reexamined.**
- Technology providers and airlines can control costs by **designing tech improvements over and around legacy systems** instead of completely replacing them.
- Suppliers can consider **"shared success" commercial models** to reduce up-front investment burdens on airlines.
- The industry can use this time to shift mindsets to **facilitate affordable innovation**—leverage partners like startups and institutes, and design minimum viable projects that work for most cases rather than every case.

"The world is slowing down and becoming a lower-risk laboratory, so we can test and accelerate all the things that we have been wanting and waited to do in the last years," said LATAM's Rosario Phillips.



Let's work smartly and collaboratively when we can, leveraging existing systems as the springboard to faster innovation.

FEATURED PARTICIPANTS



Take a deeper dive into the [core themes](#) industry partners are focusing on right now

Thank you to our roundtable participants who shared their insights with openness and honesty. Together we hope to emerge from this crisis more quickly.

Looking to collaborate and innovate? [Get in touch](#). We'd be happy to help. Our airline data, tools, and expertise can accelerate your efforts.

