

### Convenient Assistance With Inconvenient Truth

The United States may not be a signator of the Kyoto Accord, but there's no denying that national interest in environmentalism and climate change is growing. The documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" probably provided the biggest boost. For him, it was Michael Crichton's thriller "State of Fear," says Michael Steiner, executive vice president of Ovation Travel. And, if there were nothing else, this winter's wind and snow storms have been an emphatic reminder of what's at stake for the travel industry.

Whatever may be driving the decision-makers in Corporate America, Steiner says he's seeing growing evidence in the RFPs that are coming in to Ovation. He postulates that many are originating among multinationals that are influenced by stronger concerns in Europe and Asia. So far, a standard expression of interest is not in evidence: "They're doing it in different ways, often under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility, asking relatively broad-based questions."

Ovation itself is learning more about appropriate CSR responses from its own multinational base. The New York TMC and its partners in RADIS "are educating each other," according to Steiner.

But Ovation has standardized one response, both for its own use and for its customers. In an initiative it's named ECOvation, the TMC has worked with Carbonfund to determine the total metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions (aka carbon footprint) generated by its own business travel in 2006. Ovation will invest in renewable energy, energy efficiency and reforestation projects to offset that total and says it will continue to do so this year and beyond.

It's also providing, free of charge, similar emissions reports to its customers, informing them of their own carbon footprints and its compensating investment level. "Participants can take part at whatever level they're comfortable with," says an Ovation announcement, "including offsetting all or a portion of their business's carbon emissions and reducing their emission baseline where possible."

### It'll Cost You

"Every TMC charges fees differently," writes Michael MacNair in "Smooth Landings: How to Create and Manage a Successful Travel Program." MacNair is president of McNair Travel Management, an American Express representative based in Alexandria, Va. And while one of my favorite tidbits from the book is a recommendation that it take no more than 20 minutes for an employee to read a corporate travel policy, many will prefer his list of services likely to incur TMC charges.

"Be sure to understand all the fees charged for your various requirements and what is or is not included in each," he cautions. Among the possibilities that he lists:

- surcharges added for reservations that include multiple flights.
- fee for voiding a refundable ticket that won't be used to secure a full refund.
- surcharge for using preferred supplier agreements.
- fees for hotel and/or car rental reservations made separately from an airline reservation.

### The Last Word

The brain drain is no longer working in our favor. The oft-cited shrinking pool of skilled labor in North America is about more than the decreasing number of store clerks who can make change if the computers are down, or the increasing number of receptionists who know little more than how to record messages on the company telephone system. Read "America in the Global Economy" from the National Center on Education and the Economy to learn how all of this will affect your standard of living as the global economy becomes more pervasive. Among points made in this argument for a restructuring of the national educational system:

- In the 1970s, the U.S. enrolled about 30 percent of the college students in the world. In 2001, it was 14 percent.
- Many college-educated national workforces will remain significantly cheaper than ours for decades. Despite 7 percent annual wage gains in China, for instance, it will take that country's workers 30 years to reach current levels in the U.S.
- Boosting the U.S. college completion rate from 25 percent to 27.5 percent would yield a full one percent increase in real GDP per worker — That's about \$125 billion for the overall economy. **BTB**



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