

TO: General Services Administration, Office of Governmentwide Policy

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Opening Remarks: It has been my personal experience during the last ten years in which I have worked in the government sector for Carlson Hotels, that the General Services Administration has done a credible job, sometimes against great odds, of taking the necessary steps to strive to become a world class supplier. Most programs have been initiated and implemented from ground zero. This path has not been without growing pains, and even missteps along the way, and, because of the ever-changing environment, which is the reality of the travel industry, there will continue to be opportunities and challenges facing those of us who work in this arena. Together we can meet and exceed all expectations to serve our customer, the government employee, who has to utilize these same services, and products to complete the missions on which they embark. As part of this journey the General Services Administration now seeks Best Business Practices already being used by the private sector to enhance and strengthen their programs.

COMPLIANCE: It's an old adage that you can't manage what you can't measure! *You need* to mandate the use of your SmartPay2 credit cards, programs, such as FedRooms, and on-line booking tools! By doing so you not only capture total travel spend data for accountability to the taxpayer, but also, so that you can be responsible employers in knowing where your employees are at any given time in case of emergencies. The government sets the standards for security; they need to implement the practices. In the corporate world, it's easy to get compliance. If you don't use the mandated form of payment, utilize the suppliers with whom there are negotiated agreements, and make your reservations thru the tool designated by the company, you don't get reimbursed! Pretty simple! And it doesn't take a law to make it a reality.

TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS: The government needs travel management professionals in each federal agency. When you have individual government agencies that are bigger than most corporations, as measured by number of employees and travel budgets, you need professional expertise to not only oversee the management of that travel, but to facilitate the on-going training of the travelers, to continually monitor the boundaries and enhancements available thru your booking tools, and to identify weaknesses and opportunities affecting your programs. Furthermore, you need a networking group/committee of similar professionals from the various agencies that meet on a regular basis to continue to develop, share, and adopt best business practices, possibly unique to government entities.

GROUP MEETING PLANNERS: You need to designate specific individuals within federal agencies who have sole responsibilities for meetings. Although some federal agencies already have these subject matter experts, it certainly is not consistent throughout the federal community. This can be a time consuming activity! Mistakes can be costly! There are shortcuts and dollar-saving measures, but it takes a meeting professional to navigate thru the ever-changing and expanding meeting venues. The private sector is just starting to show results in this area.

CLOSING REMARKS: Bottom line, you need Federal Travel Regulations and policies which are simplified, easy to understand, ever evolving, responsive to the changing environment, and to which commonsense can be applied, not hundreds of pages of rules which try to fit every situation, are cumbersome, inflexible, and which no one ever reads! Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address successful best business practices.