



Microsoft uses start-up tech to win back precious employee travel time

Microsoft Corporation has teamed up with innovative Dutch ISV Roadmap's Azure-delivered software to streamline and simplify global business travel so that eventually two hours out of every business trip could be returned to employees – with a goal of saving of 1 million hours every year, say the partners. Cost savings via integrated travel management, easy cab sharing and other admin improvements are also achievable, say the pair.



Partner

Roadmap

Website:

www.getroadmap.com

Country: The Netherlands

Industry: Information Technology

Company size: 25 employees

Partner profile

Founded in 2015, Roadmap brings together a number of veterans of the business travel sector with a vision for a totally new way of helping brands make their staff travel time more pleasant and efficient

Software and services

Microsoft Azure
Roadmap solution



The MS Travel App's aim: save at least two hours per employee trip - a goal that will deliver an impressive 1.2m extra productivity and family time hours for Microsoft employees every year.

Situation

- Microsoft has 80,000 regular business travelers
- Millions of miles logged globally per year
- Travel team concerned about staff time

Solution

- Senior MS travel exec judge at BTN 2015 Innovator Awards
- Decided new Dutch startup Roadmap had potential to help
- Engaged with ISV to craft custom-made Microsoft-wide solution

Result

- New 'MS Travel App'
- Simplified and streamlined complex travel organization
- Aim to reduce each business trip by two hours
- 10,000 downloads in first three months
- Project could return 1.2m hours annually to travelers

Seamless travel

At any one time, around 5,000 of Microsoft's 124,000 staff are in the air or on the road on important business travel for the company. At Seattle-Tacoma airport, near the company's headquarters, an average of 200 Microsoft employees are either arriving or leaving every hour. Clearly, business travel really matters to this global company.

But as every business traveler knows, there can be a lot of hassle and logistics on each trip. Think about making sure you have all the necessary flight details, airport navigation tips, the most up-to-date and informative set of notes on travel to and from accommodation, all the way to the right way to expense your food and subsistence while flying the company flag.

Microsoft highly values the contribution its road warriors make to the bottom line, as well as the sacrifice they make in terms of family and personal time all this logging of air miles entails. To help, its Global Travel Team has worked with an innovative European business travel startup called Roadmap, using its Azure-based software to build a new service designed to give business travelers like Microsoft's the information they need to have a successful trip.

A unified travel support service

That's in the form of the MS Travel App, developed on Microsoft's Azure Cloud Platform and with tools including .NET. Downloadable from the company cloud and which collects all the detail needed to complete an itinerary, confirms key member of Microsoft's Procurement Office leadership, Director of Travel, Meetings and Payment Eric Bailey, this third party technology is shaping up to offer a highly useful service for Microsoft internally.

Bailey and his team have been looking to put an app into staff hands for some time before they encountered the Roadmap app. They were convinced that a well-designed, truly traveler-centric support system would lead to higher value for travelers and travel managers and had already been pursuing a vision of a seamless traveler experience, powered by a digital pocket travel assistant, before encountering Roadmap and seeing what it could add.

"The information we can make available is something you may need four times on every trip, like flight check-in schedules, or something only needed once in 100,000, like an Embassy location or medical evacuation information," Bailey points out. "The key is getting all of this data in the same place – and the MS Travel App is the best way we have found to get resources directly into travelers hands, when they need it."

The new Travel App is the work of an interesting new ISV from Holland, Delft-based Roadmap. Roadmap is a startup that came on to Bailey's radar when he was an external judge at industry awards scheme Business Travel News' 2015 Awards in New York.

Bailey tipped Roadmap as his choice for innovative product in that sector, but his interest in Roadmap was also piqued by its ability to deliver against his traveler-centric support vision for Microsoft's business travelling community. A dialog commenced that soon led to

“We see the Roadmap-based MS Travel App as the best way to get resources directly into our travelers’ hands.”



Eric Bailey, Director – Travel, Meetings and Payment, Microsoft Procurement

an intense engagement to build the very best in-house customized travel support application possible.

The result is a helpful new service which has already been downloaded by more than 10,000 Microsoft employees. The app, available in the Microsoft staff cloud, unifies data sources from live trip itineraries, keeping them permanently updated, collating them into fully up-to-date, fully contextual travel apps and services. This database includes everything from needed data per trip (flight times, best route to identified accommodation, best eateries on your travel allowance) to access to emergency evacuation guidance, says Bailey. Even better, this is all delivered in one easy-to-access place, literally at employee’s fingertips on smartphones, desktop and tablets.

Budget savings and happier team members

From the employee point of view, this is nothing short of revolutionary, report early users: from being able to ditch the need to print off easily-lost paper records of flight numbers to having help on hand to alert you to delays or issues, as well as great in-pocket guidance on what this next journey is meant to accomplish to a more personalized ‘Microsoft’ look and feel travel companion, time is being saved and convenience increased from the second a staffer leaves their home to get to their destination.

The net result is also helpful to Microsoft corporate – in the shape of cost reduction via simplified processes, and minimizing manual steps in completing a business trip now.

Great, but that’s really not the main aim of the project, important as it is to save budget and reduce inefficiency, points out Bailey; it’s all about helping the Microsoft family by making it easier for them at every step.

This goal has a quantifiable metric, as voiced by the Travel Team’s innovative ISV partner during the app’s creation and rollout. “We aim to win two hours back per business trip for every Microsoft traveler,” says Roadmap’s Chief Executive Officer and co-founder, Jeroen van Velzen.

“That means a potential 1 million hours of productivity or family time Microsoft could return to its people, which will be an amazing achievement for everyone when we do it.”

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