

Business Travel's 2024 Year in Review:

Top trends and insights
from Corporate Traveler



Turning the page on travel for 2024

2024 is done and what a year! We're looking back at our customer travel data and trends from January 1 to December 15, gathering insights from our savings, customer success, and travel manager teams.

This report – Corporate Traveler's 2024 Year in Review – shares key customer trends, strategies, and developments in business travel for small-to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By keeping ahead of these trends, Corporate Traveler continues to support our clients with high-value cost-saving travel solutions and expert advice.

Methodology

This report is based on an analysis of booking data from Corporate Traveler's U.S. clients, covering travel booked between January 1, 2024, and December 15, 2024. The findings are complemented by qualitative insights gathered from Corporate Traveler's industry experts, travel managers, and customer success teams.

The data highlights key trends and patterns across 625K of trips booked, spanning a variety of industries. All data is anonymized to ensure customer privacy while providing actionable insights for the small-to-medium-sized enterprise (SME) travel market.

"This year was truly an exciting, successful, and transformative year for the business travel industry, especially in the small-to-medium-sized enterprise market. With more companies embracing business travel, we've seen remarkable growth across cities nationwide.

Our teams have worked tirelessly to deliver custom travel strategies, empowering businesses to connect and collaborate across borders. Through careful analysis of market demands and traveler behavior, we've maintained our commitment to flexibility, savings, and personalized service.

As we move into 2025, I'm optimistic about building on this momentum to further enhance business travel programs for our clients."



Charlene Leiss
President, Flight Centre Travel Group Americas



Executive summary: 2024 key trends in business travel



- 1. Smarter savings across categories:** Corporate Traveler delivered over \$18.3 million in savings for customers (\$19 million over the full 2024 year), driven by preferred vendor rates, detailed booking optimizations, and new strategic ticketing practices. Businesses found value in prioritizing cost-efficient options like name-change waivers and optimized airfares.
- 2. Evolving preferences in airline booking:** The adoption of New Distribution Capability (NDC) transformed airfare transparency and traveler decision-making, with more businesses empowering employees to choose between flexible and restricted fares based on their needs.
- 3. Shifting preferences toward value:** While cost-consciousness continues to dominate, businesses are prioritizing value over luxury. There are examples of this in air ticket preferences, reflecting a commitment to cost management while balancing comfort and efficiency.
- 4. Data-driven savings strategies take center stage:** Businesses leaned heavily into data-driven travel management to cut costs. Time-saving tools like Melon enabled smarter choices, from split-ticketing to optimizing vendor partnerships, helping SMEs save millions without compromising productivity.
- 5. Growing adoption of traveler-focused tech:** Beyond cost savings, companies turned to 24/7 support and automation to elevate the traveler experience. In 2024, Corporate Traveler saw 29,000 chat conversations via Melon Chat, with an average customer rating of 4.68 and a 5-second first-reply time.

**What's
next?**



Dive deeper into these trends and discover actionable strategies to optimize travel programs for 2025 in the full report.

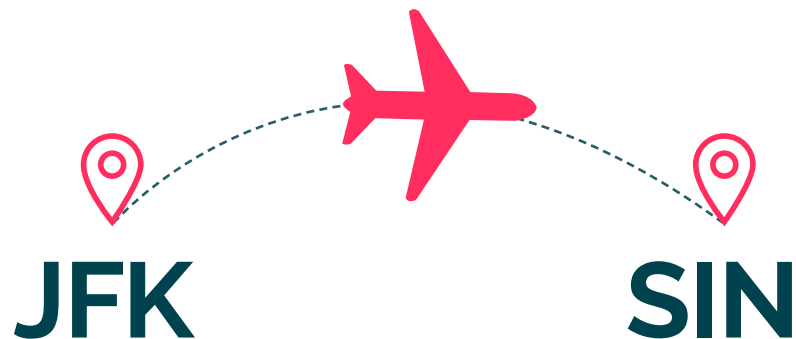
The 2024 top trends in business travel

Business travel is going strong, with 625,000 trips taken this year by our clients and 184,000 travelers in total. The data shows travel happening all over the world, from Sitka, Alaska to Thies, Senegal.

Customer travel patterns are on the move

Business travel does follow certain regular patterns. Monday was the most common day to start air travel (**25%**), followed by Tuesday (**18%**). September 26th was the most common travel date for 2024 with 6,752 travelers. It was followed closely by September 25th with 6,253 travelers. Wonder what was happening that week? July 4th was the least traveled date (**696**) of 2024 as most people enjoyed the national holiday.

The longest non-stop flight in the world is a Singapore Airlines route from JFK in New York to SIN in Singapore. Travelers fly 9,585 miles in just under 19 hours, crossing the Pacific Ocean where jet stream winds can assist. In 2024, Corporate Traveler booked 110 trips on that route. We booked a grand total of 99 million miles flown in 2024.



Top destinations across the US and the Atlantic

The top 5 hotel cities were New York, Boston, and London (similar to last year), followed by Chicago and San Francisco. Chicago was a new addition to this list, while Cambridge, UK fell from last year's top 5.

Air travel also centered around American cities and the UK, with Boston and La Guardia featuring prominently on domestic routes. These were the top 5 domestic routes for our clients in 2024, shown with the changes from 2023:

Boston - LaGuardia (-12%)

La Guardia - Chicago O'Hare (+25%)

Boston - Philadelphia (-16%)

John F Kennedy - Los Angeles (-1%)

Boston - San Francisco (-26%)

For international air travel, all roads lead to Heathrow. This UK airport was the destination of all of the top 5 international air routes, with departures from New York (JFK), Boston, New Jersey (Newark), Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles (LAX).



Train travel focused on the East Coast, with all of the top 5 routes involving Washington, D.C. or Penn Station, NY. Most were roundtrips, with a single one-way route to D.C. being popular. Massachusetts and Philadelphia were also in the top 5.

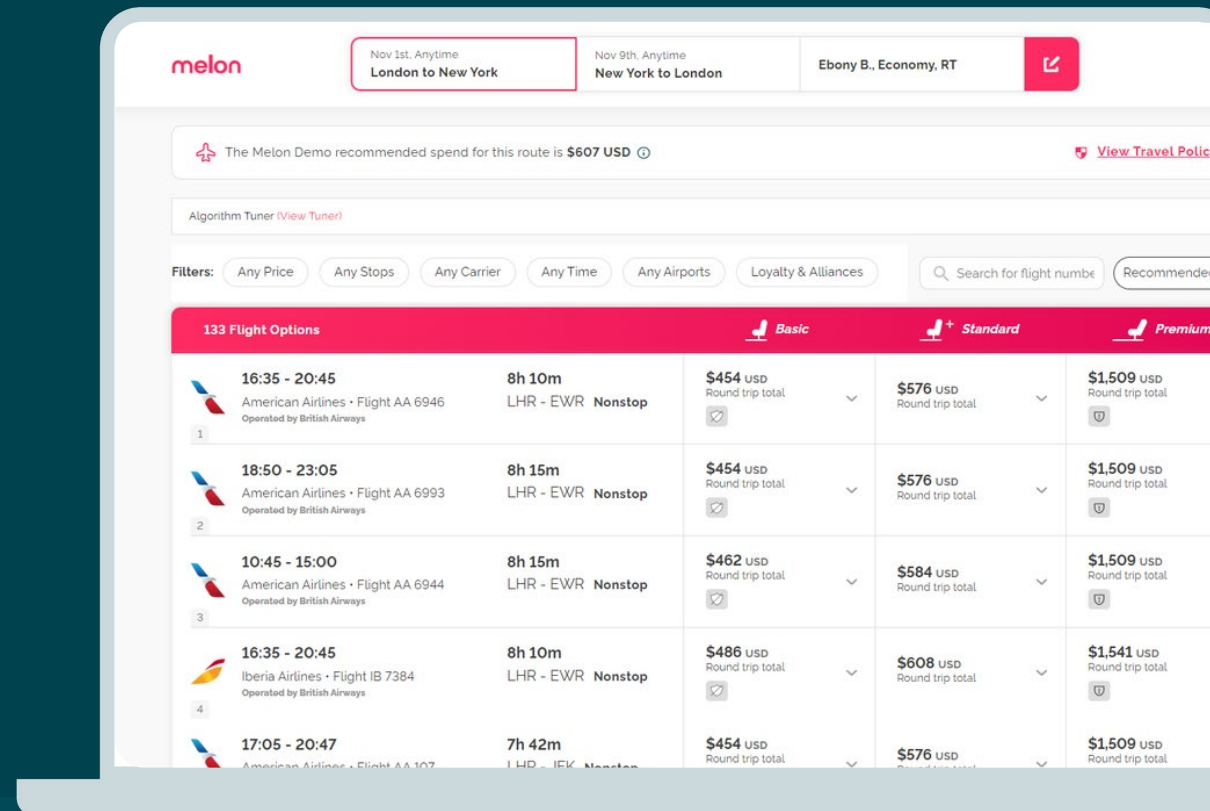
New norms for airline bookings

Innovation is shaking up the world of airline booking. New Distribution Capability (NDC) is the latest method for airlines to distribute all their flight offerings through third parties, connecting to travelers directly via third-party booking platforms (including travel agents or online booking tools).

It's possible to have dynamic, personalized offers with greater flexibility and a higher number of offerings at different price points. Now, travelers will have more choices and greater transparency in airfare pricing. It's no longer a simple choice between low-price restricted fares and flexible tickets.

Tom Arnold, Director of Customer Success - East at Corporate Traveler, explains how this has had an impact on booking preferences for business travelers. "Previously many customers asked to block restricted fares in favor of more flexible tickets. With the shift in NDC, travelers want more visibility on all fare types when choosing their travel. Companies are allowing their travelers to determine if a restricted fare is better for their travel."

As policies and prices change at travel vendors across the industry, Corporate Traveler can provide guidance and insight into coming trends to help ease the challenges of change management.



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Our primary objective is to ensure a mutually successful partnership. Through quarterly and annual travel reviews, we provide suggestions and analytics to help our customers reach their program objectives.

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Tom Arnold, Director of Customer Success - East, Corporate Traveler

Tracking costs for the top 4 travel categories



Corporate travel in 2024 was full of hustle and bustle, with lots of short, domestic trips keeping business moving. Here's how the costs stack up for the main cost categories:

- 1. Air travel is up, and the cost is slightly down.** We booked 485,000 tickets in 2024, an **increase of 9%** from 2023. The average cost per ticket changed from \$930 to \$891, for a **savings of 4%**. Domestic flights made up 80% of the tickets. Our clients flew 1 billion air miles on 1 million routes in 2024.
- 2. Hotels stays are quick and cozy.** Corporate Traveler booked a total of 1.2 million nights of accommodation this year. The average hotel stay was for **3 nights**, and the average cost was \$190 per night.
- 3. Business travelers were putting in the miles.** There were **417,000 car rental days** booked this year and 104,000 car bookings in total. The average daily spend on car rentals was \$78, with intermediate vehicles being the most popular. Full-size, standard, compact, and economy vehicles rounded out the rest of the top five car categories in that order.
- 4. Self-booking is big for train travel.** The average train ticket price in 2024 was \$238, with **49% of trips** booked by the traveler.





Economy tickets remain the most popular tickets for all air travel routes at 93% of domestic and transborder flights and 69% of international flights. However, premium economy tickets are growing faster than the 9% year-over-year total air ticket growth. Here are the details on premium economy trends for 2024:

- Premium economy domestic tickets are growing **294% YoY**. In 2024, 2,979 tickets were bought vs 756 tickets in 2023. Still, they are less than 1% of all domestic tickets.
- Premium economy tickets grew **27% YoY** and are also less than 1% of all transborder tickets.
- Premium economy international tickets grew **12% YoY** and are 8.5% of all international tickets.

“

The biggest impact to the industry this year has been the shift by airlines to offer more NDC content.

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Tom Arnold, Director of Customer Success - East, Corporate Traveler

Customers at all levels are looking for the best deals, while keeping a high standard of service. This has been a big focus for Corporate Traveler, and Branson Heinz shares some of the wins this year. “We have obtained discounted fares with American Airlines on transcontinental fares, fares to and from Chicago and Florida. We have seen a continuation of Delta’s stealth fares, which provide discounts to the UK, Germany, Brazil, and Japan. In 2025, the focus will largely stay the same. We have to continue to get the airlines to see us as a valuable partner and we have been working hard to achieve this,” he says.

Getting the best airfare deals is becoming more and more of a moving target, but new changes can benefit business travelers. “The biggest impact to the industry this year has been the shift by airlines to offer more NDC content. This has required us to provide more insight and education around airline pricing to our customers than ever before. Corporate Traveler has always been consultative to our customers to guide their program,” says Tom Arnold.

Working with a TMC can have a great ROI for our travelers and their business. Significant savings of time and costs can have a strong impact on the overall business, and partnering with a TMC like Corporate Traveler offers measurable value. The average ROI per customer for our clients is \$1.31:\$1.

Strategies for saving time and money

Savings are consistently a top priority for our customers, with a focus on squeezing more out of travel on each trip. A survey of hundreds of travel professionals earlier this year showed 63% of companies are struggling with rising travel costs. We've put our best savings strategies to work this year and the numbers speak for themselves.

It's been a stellar year with **\$19 million** of savings for Corporate Traveler customers over the entire 2024 year. That's something to celebrate! For this report's period, January 1 through December 15, we delivered \$12.4 million in savings from air travel, \$5.3 million in savings on hotel costs, and \$670,000 in savings on car travel.

2024 Savings for Corporate Traveler Customers

Jan 1 through Dec 15, 2024

\$12.4 million
in savings on
air travel



\$5.3 million
in savings on
hotel costs

\$670,000
in savings on
car travel



Smart ways to save on travel costs



We're able to achieve significant savings for three simple reasons: access to the best rates, intense attention to detail, and a knack for uncovering missed savings.

At Corporate Traveler, we have preferred rates with a wide portfolio of vendors and we were able to negotiate serious savings of \$5.9 million in exclusive deal savings this year. Tom Arnold, our Head of Customer Success, says this is one of the biggest benefits that clients love in 2024.



We have negotiated discount rates for air, hotel, and car expenses which are provided directly to our customers when booking with our consultants or using the Melon tool.

Tom Arnold, Director of Customer Success - East,
Corporate Traveler



Melon is an all-in-one travel management platform that helps travelers book in under 5 minutes. The combination of convenience and increased visibility of savings is popular with many customers.

10-20% off

Corporate Traveler is typically able to negotiate 10-20% off the best available rate (BAR) at preferred hotels, usually including a concession like free breakfast or free parking. Bring on the bagels!

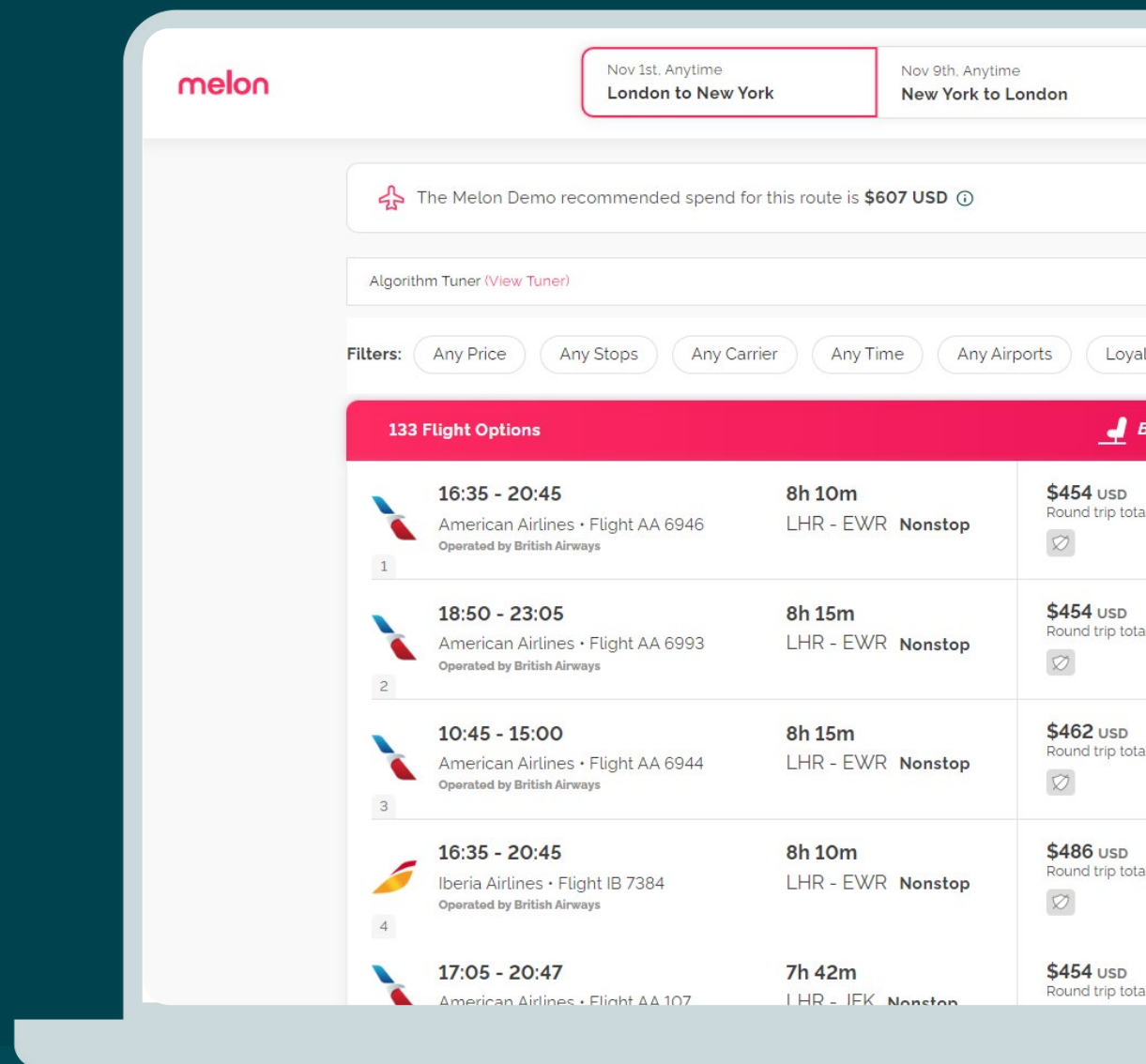
Reviewing bookings for increased savings

Our attention to detail enables us to unlock higher savings by reviewing bookings to make sure tickets are optimized and clients are getting the most from each dollar. Travel managers are able to review all aspects of a booking in detail to ensure the traveler is getting the best deal.

Branson Heinz, Optimization Analyst at Corporate Traveler, explains how it works. "My team and I look at up to 500 bookings per day, and we check each one to see if there are any savings for our clients. We can immediately flag it and get that money back to them."

Saved \$9,700

A client had a company-wide event and brought in 50+ people to one location, with some traveling internationally. Obtaining name-change waivers to use credits from former employees helped save \$9,700.



The most common missed savings

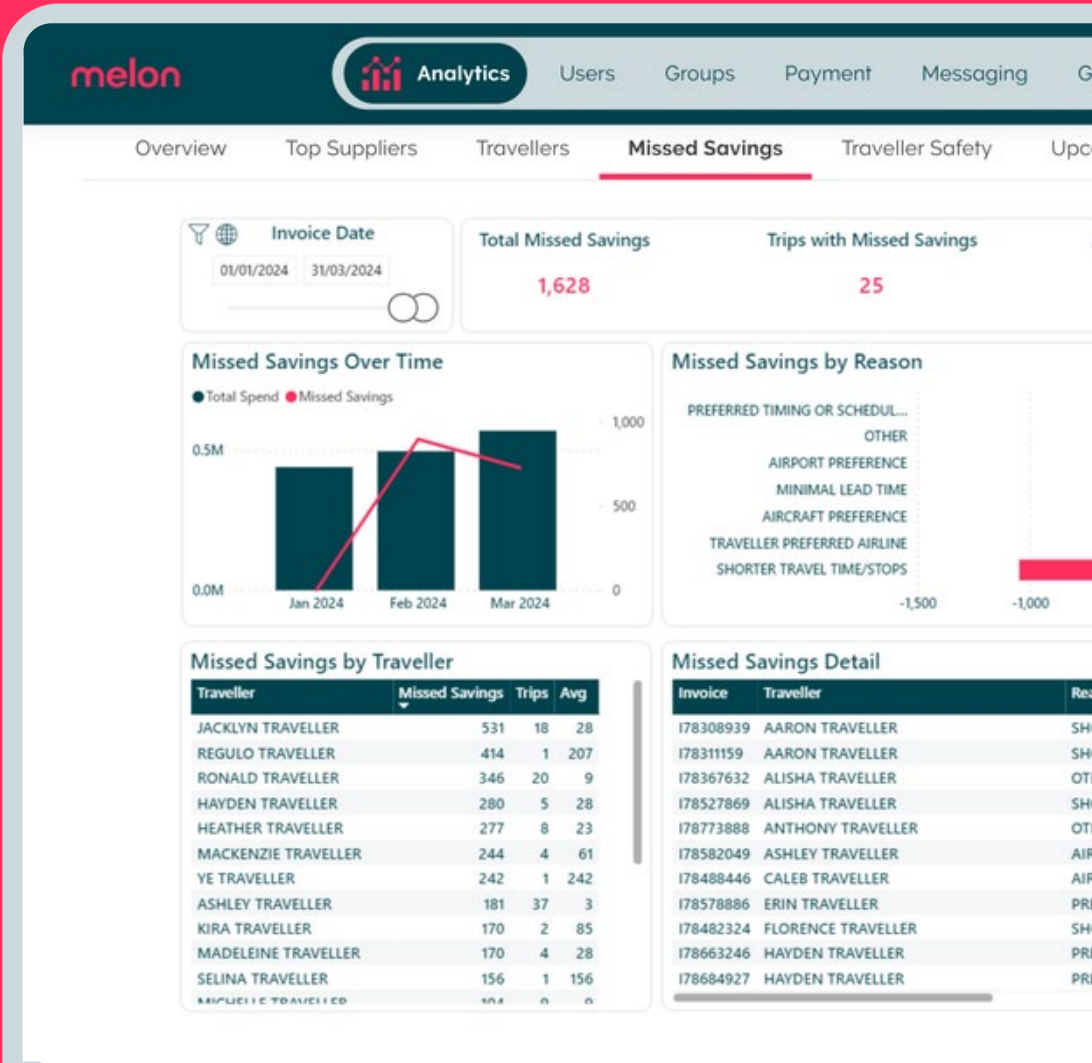
Missed opportunities for travel savings can cost businesses a lot of money, and there are a variety of reasons why a business might miss out on travel savings. The top 3 reasons we see our clients miss out on savings are:

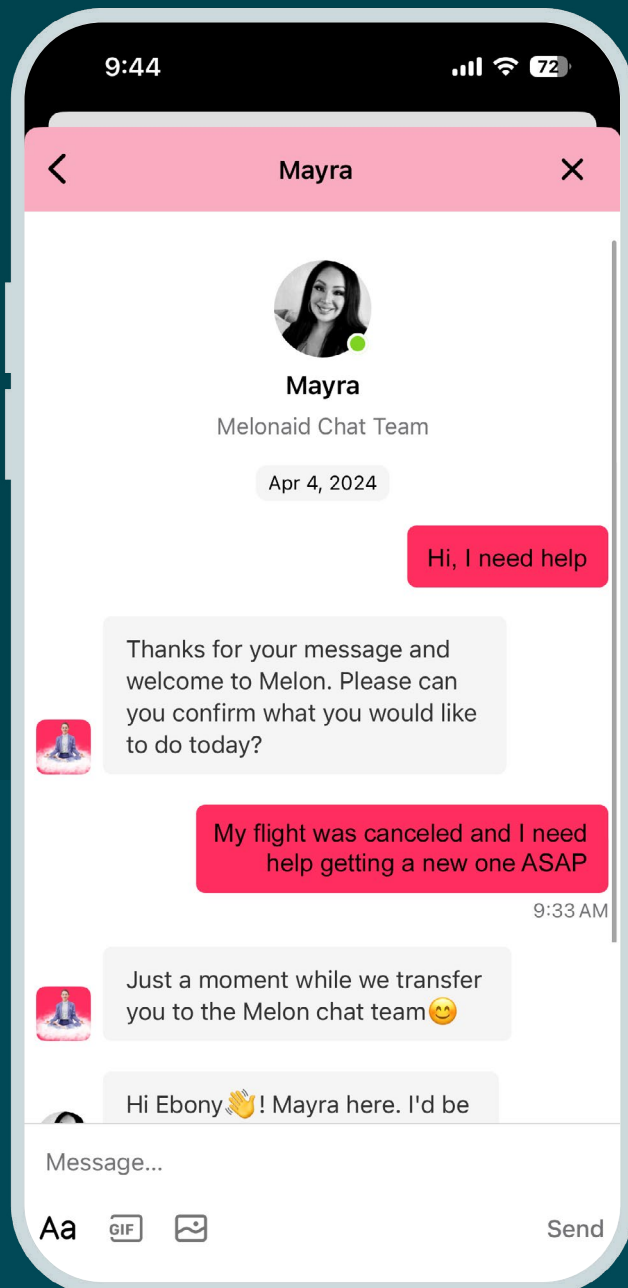
- 1. Preferred timing or schedule conflicts
- 2. Shorter travel times or stops
- 3. Preferred airline

Looking at these factors, we were able to help clients save an average of \$290 per trip in 2024. Having a strong travel policy that addresses these topics is a good measure to prevent unnecessary travel costs and overspending. Tools like Melon can have these policies built-in for easy cost management.

Here's \$5k back

Strategic ticketing helped a client who needed a one-way ticket in Business Class from the UK to the US, but the high price of \$15,000 was too much. Corporate Traveler's Travel Manager, Kristina Montaperto, suggested booking a return for later in the year since he would definitely be returning to the UK. The roundtrip ticket brought the cost down about \$5,000 and we reissued his return to a later date for a small fee.





Melon Chat minimizes travel troubleshooting

This year, business travelers continue to rely on Melon's convenient all-in-one platform for all their business travel needs. In 2024, more and more travelers are taking advantage of Melon Chat, which is available 24/7. There were 29,000 chat conversations this year, with an average customer rating of 4.68. That's a lot of questions!

Melon Chat is staffed by real people, helping to resolve business travel issues in record time. The average reply time for expert help is 5 seconds, and chats were closed with solutions in around 30 minutes on average.

Thank you for the seamless service as always!

Olga Liliel Solís
ConnectGen

Sarah was quick and responsive and helped save me after a 5.5 hour delay! Thank you, Sarah!!

Kaitlyn Perez
National Policing Institute

Melon has many features built-in to prevent issues before they happen, and before you would even get the opportunity to stress about it. With frequent travel you never know what might come up. Melon Chat gives you the expert help you need in those unexpected situations. There's no worry about tackling travel disruptions on your own.

Looking ahead at 2025



The new year in 2025 brings lots of opportunities to partner with travel vendors and continue to enhance services in ways that benefit business travelers. Tom Arnold is excited about the impact that Melon enhancements could have, blending tech and service to support travel programs. “I’m looking forward to supporting travelers with multiple ways to seek travel options, book, or make changes,” he explains.

Branson Heinz sees strong vendor relationships leading to success in 2025. “Our push will always be with the airlines to ensure that they see us as a valued partner. The more they see us in the light of a partner, the more we can ensure they are giving us competitive fares to pass along to our clients.”

Keeping an eye on the pulse of travel changes and adapting to future trends is how Corporate Traveler will add value to corporate travel programs in 2025.



On our end, the continued focus on our quality control efforts, booking optimizations, and staff training will be at the forefront of what we do so that our clients can know that they are seeing long-term savings.



Branson Heinz, Revenue Management Optimization/
Training Specialist

An informed approach and expert support can maximize the ROI of business travel, using it as a strategy for long-term business success. At the end of 2024, we see a year shaped by recovery, innovation, and new efficiencies in business travel.

Corporate Traveler customers embraced smarter ways to save, adapted to evolving booking trends, and leaned into technology to enhance their travel programs. Thank you to all our partners and clients this year and happy travels in 2025!

Leadership insights



It's been incredible to see how our flexible travel solutions, cost-optimization strategies, and data insights have elevated our clients' travel programs this year. In 2024, we saw record usage of new technologies—from dynamic airline booking tools to 24/7 traveler support via Melon Chat. Businesses increasingly expect a smooth, efficient experience that prioritizes time-saving and cost management. We look forward to further innovating and delivering even greater value in the coming year.



John Van den Heuvel
President, Corporate Traveler USA



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