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ABB takes an innovative approach to mitigating travel risks

How technology can help keep employees safe when travelling

ABB, winner of the International SOS Foundation's 2017 Duty of Care Award for Innovation, worked with an external supplier to revise its travel risk management processes by integrating its existing system with the latest technology. The result was more efficient and user-friendly operations.

With 30,000 international travellers and 200,000 trips per year, ABB (Asea Brown Boveri Ltd) is a highly mobile organisation. Safety and security of mobile employees is a key element of ABB's Duty of Care approach. In 2016, ABB carried out a major review and revision of its existing system.

The new system merged ABB's structural framework with a platform powered by traveller tracking technology. This reduced operating costs, improved process compliance, delivered higher data quality and enhanced user acceptance.

Regular Reviews

Christoph Bleiker, Group Security Manager, ABB, states: "The wellbeing of employees and contractors on international travel or work assignments is of highest importance to ABB. Our ambition has always been to go well beyond the minimum legal requirements and fulfil our company's moral Duty of Care. We want to enable businesses to operate in challenging environments in a responsible way."

ABB seeks to fulfil its Duty of Care by informing travellers and line managers about risks, helping

them to adequately prepare for and mitigate travel-related threats and establishing procedures to support travellers when they need assistance, in both non-emergency and emergency situations.

Several disruptive incidents in the early 2000's led ABB to develop a robust travel security process, including traveller tracking. Subsequently the process underwent a number of improvements.

The 2016 review found that the existing system was sophisticated but complex. It required the manual entry of travel data and was time-consuming to administer. ABB decided to replace their tool with the help of an external provider to integrate and simplify its existing set-up.

Innovative and Intuitive

The outcome was a fully innovative and integrated travel approval process, built around new travel risk ratings and travel tracking. After a seven-month pilot phase to customise and best adapt the new system, their new travel risk management programme went live in November 2016.

The new travel approval process has the following features:

- Upon making the booking, the traveller is sent a pre-trip advisory email. It contains specific information about the destination as well as health and security risks.
- Pre-trip notifications and reminders are sent to travellers and approving managers throughout the process. Depending on the severity of the risk rating, management is required to approve travel in the system. Approvals are captured by the system. Capturing management approvals is essential to complying with organisational policy.
- The workflow is automated. Travellers receive notification once the trip is approved. The approval may require additional actions, such as travel security briefings or special training.
- The traveller is given access to 24/7 routine and emergency assistance from an external provider. Travel risk information is provided 24/7 via a customised portal and assistance app.



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Above ABB operations include wind power

Benefits

ABB's new travel risk mitigation programme ensures that consistent reliable information is delivered to employees and managers. Processes are automated and travellers can access the information and education they need to prepare for a safe and healthy journey. Additionally, fewer manual procedures increase efficiency and cost effectiveness. Compared with the previous system the risk ratings are more standardised.

Employees have been very receptive to the new programme and protocols. Within five months of launch, more than 12,000 approval processes were initiated and more than 18,000 notifications sent to travellers, line managers and security managers. Portal access rates, assistance app downloads and higher volumes of calls to obtain security briefings and support all indicate improved quantitative results.

Marc Vink, Group Head of Security, is pleased with progress:

"The new process is innovative. Through the use of technology, ABB successfully fulfils all key elements of its Duty of Care towards our many employees and contractors who travel in order to drive our business forward. The new travel risk management process is a prime example of how Group Security contributes to the company's core values like safety, innovation and speed."

KEY ELEMENTS

Combining existing processes with new technology to create an integrated approach

Close cooperation between all relevant internal and external stakeholders

Using automated systems to ensure consistency of information

Ensuring travel approvals take account of risk ratings

Making the most of the latest tools and smartphone technology

For information on the 2017 Duty of Care Awards winners in all categories, go to www.dutyofcareawards.org.