



→ Trainline Business Whitepaper

The “Hidden Habits” of Britain’s Travelling Workforce

 trainline business



→ Introduction

The emergence of Britain's hidden habits

The way people travel for work, and the systems that support these journeys, has changed dramatically in recent years. Rising time pressures, the shift to flexible and hybrid working and the widespread availability of advanced digital tools such as video conference platforms and collaboration software have transformed the daily routines of employees. At the same time, organising business travel has become more fragmented, with multiple booking channels, evolving policies and greater expectations around cost transparency, compliance and sustainability. These shifts have reshaped not only how employees travel, but also how they make decisions in the moments leading up to each journey.

Within this environment, a new pattern of professional conduct has emerged. Faced with limited time, competing priorities and complex booking systems, many business travellers are looking for the path of least resistance. This has given rise to a set of unconscious behaviours which, despite appearing efficient, often have the opposite effect. These behaviours are the hidden habits shaping today's workforce, formed as employees try to simplify processes that feel unclear or unnecessarily complex.

All of this goes some way to shedding light on shifting employee expectations. Workers want booking experiences that are fast, intuitive and easy to navigate. They want systems they can trust and processes that

help them focus on the purpose of the trip rather than the administration behind it. When these expectations are not met, employees compensate by developing personal workarounds.

At an organisational level, the impact of these habits is significant. When thousands of employees repeat the same small workarounds day after day, a substantial amount of time and attention is quietly diverted away from core work. Over time, individual coping mechanisms accumulate into wider organisational inefficiencies, often without organisations realising where they originated.

The consequences extend beyond productivity losses. When employees turn to behaviours such as switching between multiple platforms, visibility of booking spend and expense data is reduced, resulting in avoidable costs and missed opportunities to optimise outgoings.

It is increasingly clear that businesses cannot ignore the impact of these behaviours. Improving the experience of business travel is no longer about convenience alone. It is about improving productivity and removing unnecessary complexity from the working day.

This report explores the hidden habits that form, how they shape the way employees work and travel and what businesses can do to rebuild clearer, more intentional booking behaviours that support both individual performance and organisational goals.



Chapter 1

The habits shaping business travel today





Our research reveals several recurring booking behaviours that consistently show up in the way employees plan their trips.

Business travellers, who are often time poor and looking to reduce administrative tasks, tend to rely on the safest, most familiar choices when booking their travel. Two fifths (40%) of those surveyed say they gravitate towards options they already know, even if these are not the most efficient options.

Such behaviour is strongest amongst frequent travellers, with 43% of those who travel six to ten times a year defaulting to familiar booking options. This creates a significant efficiency gap for organisations that rely heavily on regular travel.

Moreover, ineffective travel booking policies and systems are forcing a third (33%) of business travellers to spend time comparing journeys across several websites or apps. Such an action is necessary to ensure they opt for the fastest and simplest routes. These actions also breed mistrust in the systems, which is why more than a fifth (22%) spend time double checking information they are provided with. When systems feel overcomplicated, employees are more likely to seek out a way to work around them, creating knock-on effects across the business.

These habits are not accidental. They are the product of legacy booking systems designed for a very different travel landscape. As expectations evolve and systems become more fragmented, travellers have adapted by developing routines and shortcuts that may give them a sense of control but ultimately, don't serve them or their business. Over time, these habits expose weaknesses in organisational workflows, revealing where processes are no longer fit for purpose.



Reducing fragmentation when booking rail travel is now essential to help workplaces restore confidence, consistency and clarity for their employees. In this context, having a trusted platform becomes essential for businesses, and Trainline Business is well placed to address this need. As the leading independent rail travel booking company in the UK, Trainline is already used by many workers for personal use, with Trainline Business existing within the same framework. By unifying UK and European rail in a single, coherent platform, it brings clarity to a complex landscape and reduces the need for cross-checking. This enables travellers to make decisions more quickly and confidently, creating the conditions for more intentional and efficient travel choices.



Just in time travel - supporting fast decision making.

Nearly one third (31%) of business travellers book trips just three to six days in advance, reflecting a working culture where meetings and priorities move quickly. Travel decisions are often made close to departure, leaving little time to navigate complex or fragmented booking systems.

To support this just in time behaviour, businesses need booking experiences that remove friction rather than add to

it. Seamless, intuitive platforms that surface the best options allow employees to immediately move from decision to booking with confidence, supporting faster responses to opportunities while maintaining visibility and control.





Chapter 2

How these habits affect the rhythm of the working day





Small, repeated habits have a subtle but significant effect on the rhythm of the working day, shaping how workers manage their pace, maintain focus and sustain productivity. These habits may seem minor in isolation, but they can quickly accumulate and influence how effectively employees move through their tasks.

For nearly two thirds of business travellers (62%), the consequence of navigating challenging travel systems is spending too much time comparing travel options, slowing their process and diverting attention from their main responsibilities. But that time lost is compounded by a disruption in workflow with almost six in ten (58%) saying they also lose focus on their day-to-day work.

Employees' stress levels should be front of mind for leaders, as a fifth of workers have taken time off sick due to poor mental health, according to Mental Health UK's 2026 Burnout Report. Therefore, our finding that an innocuous task like booking travel is adding to the travelling workforces' mental load – with almost two thirds (63%) finding travel admin overwhelming – should be a catalyst for action. It is also worth considering the additional stress employees may face when pressured to use travel systems they do not like, and the potential pressure from businesses to use a mandated system.

When booking systems reduce stress and cognitive load, they also change how people behave. With clearer options and fewer steps, employees are more likely to plan ahead

rather than defer decisions until the last moment. And one of the most effective ways to secure better value on rail fares is to book in advance, which can lead to average savings of 58%¹. Furthermore, by giving travellers the confidence to book earlier, platforms such as Trainline Business can help reduce costs, turning clarity into a tangible financial benefit for organisations.

Finally, simpler systems can drive greater efficiency. In fact, more than a third (67%) of business travellers said they would make faster decisions if their company's travel booking platform offered clearer recommendations. Therefore, supporting that ambition would give this proportion of travellers greater freedom to book rail travel when opportunities arise. Ultimately, removing small points of frustration allow employees to maintain a steadier workflow, saving time and effort while supporting overall productivity.



¹ Average savings on advance fares booked at least one week before day of travel vs Anytime fares purchased on day of travel. Subject to availability. Excludes coach.



The top five changes which would make booking or managing business travel easier, according to British business travellers:

Having one trusted platform to book and manage travel



A simpler system that is convenient to use



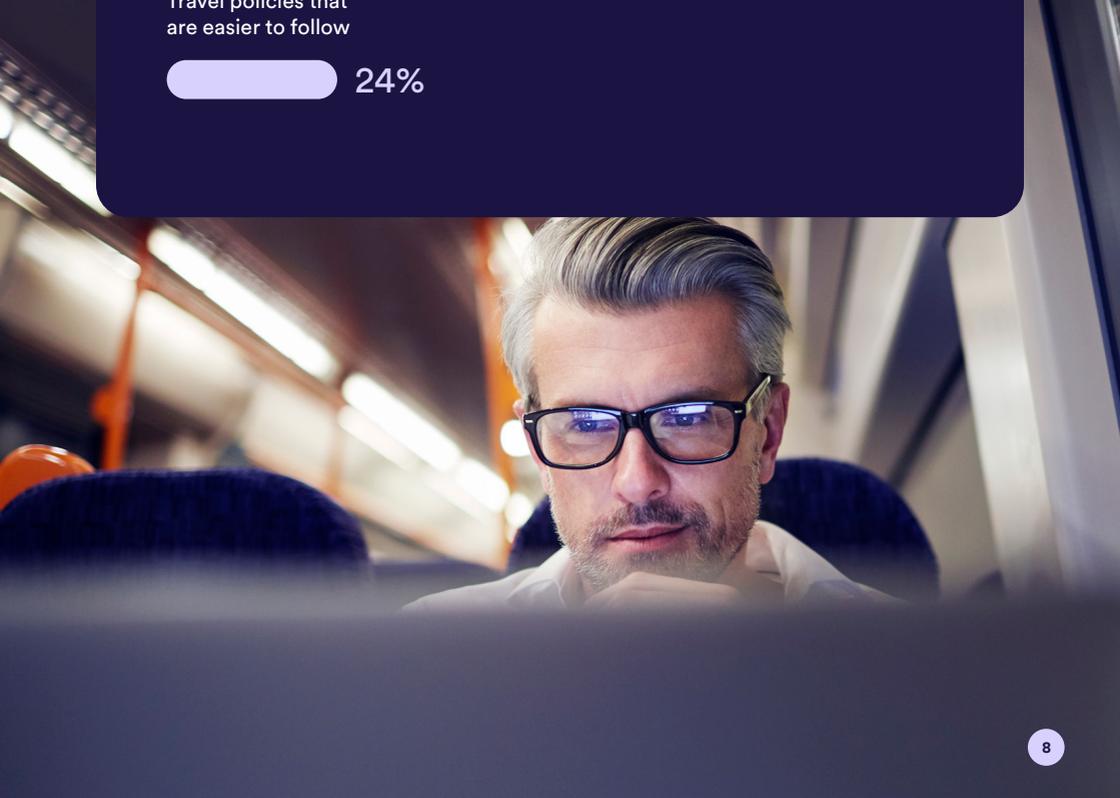
Fewer steps in the booking journey



Being shown the best options automatically in their company's travel system



Travel policies that are easier to follow





Chapter 3

Rebuilding better booking behaviours





Businesses have a significant opportunity to help their employees build better booking habits by untangling the process and providing clearer guidance. By doing so, organisations can replace these hidden behaviours with more consistent and productive habits.

When setting out how to evolve systems, businesses should begin by considering the preferences their employees already have. With 64% of business travellers being more inclined to book work travel by rail when possible, businesses should ensure they opt for platforms that empower this. Doing so demonstrates an empathetic understanding of the workforce, but it also provides them with access to a travel environment which encourages productivity while supporting sustainability goals.

To do this effectively, rail booking systems need to be clearly structured. Making the process faster and more intuitive helps reduce unnecessary steps and makes travel feel more convenient and easier to navigate. When employees are guided through a streamlined process, they are able to take confident travel actions. Our research reflects this with one in three (33%) believing a single platform with centralised guidance would free up time for revenue-generating work.



Reducing friction also does more than save time. It increases willingness to travel. Over a quarter (28%) of business travellers say that having one platform with clear

33%

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guidance would make them more open to taking trips when growth opportunities emerge. For businesses looking to engage their employees for more in-person prospect and customer opportunities, this could be a keyway to increasing employee willingness to travel and boost the potential for growth.

Trainline Business offers a practical route to achieving this shift. As a single, unified rail platform, it brings bookings, expenses and guidance together in a system employees already know and trust. By aggregating all UK rail alongside European rail services, it enables consistent booking experiences both domestically and internationally, reducing the need for travellers to adapt to different systems as they move across

² Average saving for bookings from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025 comparing SplitSave fare vs next cheapest fare available to a Trainline Business customer. Subject to SplitSave fares being available.



borders. Through consolidating information, embedding tailored travel policies and providing access to corporate fares and cost optimising features such as SplitSave, which saves an average of £26 per business trip, the platform reduces the need for workarounds, helping employees make faster and more confident decisions².

Rail platforms that offer integrated guidance and present clear route and fare options remove the need for guesswork, duplicated checks or manual comparisons. Over time, these systems reduce hidden habits, making travel decisions faster, more consistent and better aligned with organisational priorities.

→ Conclusion

Helping workers move with greater ease

This report shows that hidden habits in business travel are not driven by individual inefficiency or resistance to change. They emerge when booking systems feel fragmented or unclear, prompting employees to develop personal shortcuts to keep work moving.

Over time, these small adaptations accumulate. Moments of friction disrupt focus, increase mental load and quietly divert time away from core business activity. When repeated across an organisation, they create a measurable drag on productivity, visibility and confidence in travel decisions.

Addressing these behaviours means improving the environment in which they form. Simplifying booking processes, reducing fragmentation and offering clearer guidance enables employees to make decisions quickly and with certainty. When systems are designed to support how people actually work, travel becomes a seamless part of the working day rather than a disruptive task.

Trainline Business supports this shift by providing a single, streamlined platform for booking and managing rail travel, and is already trusted by over 30,000 businesses. As Europe's leading train and coach app, its familiar, intuitive experience removes the need for cross-checking or switching between tools, helping prevent hidden habits from taking hold. In doing so, it enables employees to move through their day with greater ease, while giving organisations the clarity and control needed to support productivity, growth and better decision making.