



## Alcoa Germany successfully implements an online booking platform under the guidance of American Express

*"A perfect and professional implementation is what is most important. We were able to achieve this with American Express."*

*- Gabi Gröger  
Travel Manager at  
Alcoa Germany*

Alcoa is the world's leading producer and manager of primary aluminum, fabricated aluminum and alumina facilities. Alcoa's EMEA Travel Management division made plans to considerably reduce travel costs in 2006 and 2007. At the heart of this initiative lay the implementation of an online booking platform which could be put to intensive use within a short period of time.

Before cooperating with American Express, Alcoa employees used to book their travel via traditional means such as the telephone, fax and e-mail. In Germany, Alcoa employs 2,600 people across 13 locations. 500 of these employees are in jobs which require travel, and 200 of them in particular are often on the road. The main destinations are principally in Europe. Expenditure in Germany on business travel was 2.6 million euros at that time, accounting for 15% of the travel volume within the entire group.

Alcoa wanted to considerably reduce its expenditure on business travel in 2006 and 2007. It was hoped that this goal could be achieved with the aid of an online booking platform. The plan foresaw this platform being implemented within six weeks, with a subsequent online usage rate of 30% in the three months following this. The implementation required professional support from a travel management partner with expertise in all relevant online booking engines who could assist in the strategic

planning. In order to find the right partner for this ambitious project, Alcoa initiated a worldwide tendering process. American Express emerged as the chosen partner, not least because the travel management company also "offered a good online solution with which we can achieve savings," recalled Travel Manager Gabi Gröger.

The steps to the successful implementation and use of the online booking platform were laid down in a clear process which was overseen by the American Express Key Account Manager Annette von Haefen.

Initially, a firm project plan was formulated. The online implementation was to take place over six weeks in April and May 2006. Two weeks in June were set aside for a pilot phase with selected individuals who would be making journeys and bookings. The introduction of the online booking platform for all involved in the program was scheduled for 3 July.

Once the general support of senior management at Alcoa was secured, the project was kicked off and the responsibilities were divided amongst the 5-person American Express implementation team. American Express Project Manager Ralf Bracht was named as the individual who would keep the various threads together and evaluate the influencing factors and effects. The project team was comprised of five employees from American Express and both travel managers from Alcoa - Gabi Gröger for Alcoa Germany and Sylvia Albert from the European head office. The project team held weekly conference calls during the introduction phase in order to exchange information. Results and outstanding issues were regularly updated by Ralf Bracht. Any snags were also highlighted immediately. "As the devil is always in the details, we immediately discussed every detail as it arose," explained Gabi Gröger. "Alcoa always responded promptly. Communication was really good," praised Key Account Manager Annette von Haefen.

In order to better connect with future users, Gabi Gröger and Annette von Haefen decided to address them in person and organised a roadshow for the company's 13 locations in Germany. "We invited all potential users and explained to them what the tool can do and why online booking is a simpler, quicker and cheaper process," recalled both. As a result, they were able to dispel any doubts at a personal level. The strategy was a successful one – visitors to the roadshow ultimately said of their own volition that they liked the idea of the online tool and would be pleased to use it.

At the end of the implementation period, training was provided to those Alcoa employees who were going to be travelling and booking trips. During the pilot and introduction phase, each took part in a two-hour Webex seminar on the tool. Two months after the platform was introduced, they were given a refresher in the form of another two-hour interactive online seminar.

Perfect planning and implementation has brought success. "The online booking tool has made its mark extremely well," summarised Key Account Manager Annette von Haefen, "not least due to the perfect support on the part of Alcoa Travel Manager Gabi Gröger."



After the roadshow, employees at all locations were convinced of the benefits of the online booking solution. Alcoa is delighted with the positive feedback from all sides. "All of our German locations were actively involved in the decision-making process and were able to convince themselves of the benefits of the online solution," explained Gabi Gröger. The travel manager is convinced that forcing this on the employees could have achieved the opposite effect and would, if anything, have led to "acrimonious resistance."

Instead of this, Alcoa can hail this implementation as a success story. One month following the introduction, the usage rate was already 47%. Not only had the goal been well exceeded after three months, but the employees who were travelling and making the bookings were also expressing their extreme satisfaction. 95% found the service from American Express Business Travel to be "excellent", "very good" or "good".

Alcoa has achieved its goal of reducing expenditure. Travel costs have dropped by 32%. The average price for a ticket to the five main destinations has been reduced by 183 euros, corresponding to a saving of 28%.

The return on investment for the online implementation was achieved just two months after the booking platform was introduced.

To find out more about how you can efficiently manage business travel, please go to: [www.americanexpress.de/businesstravel](http://www.americanexpress.de/businesstravel)