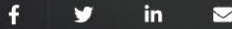


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Tracking down unused air credits: The full-time job you didn't ask for

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To say the COVID-19 pandemic has complicated life would be a drastic understatement.

Further underselling the circumstances, as we approach COVID-19's two-year mark, would be stating that the pandemic has made the corporate travel world infinitely more challenging.

When everything seemingly changed all at once in March 2020, agencies and travel buyers were suddenly faced with sorting through a mountain of dominos that fell as the pandemic's initial shock wave produced an unprecedented volume of canceled flights and hotel reservations.

Among the rubble that needed sifting were air credits. They needed to be identified and tracked down, then somehow managed in a way that would ensure use before expiration. The sheer number of credits spread across multiple airlines created layers of complexity that are still causing headaches today as questions seem to still outnumber answers.

And even in their limited quantity, answers are — you guessed it — complicated, but finding, managing and using air credits produced by the pandemic doesn't have to be a second full-time job for overwhelmed agencies and buyers.

How we got here

While much changed when COVID-19 pushed life's pause button in early 2020, airline cancellation policies and refund windows didn't. As business travel halted and revenue for many companies plummeted, a massive amount of money was tied up in tickets for canceled flights that weren't eligible for full or partial refunds under pre-pandemic policies.

For agencies and travel buyers, this was COVID-19's secondary saga that defined 2020, and it dragged on with little clarity. Businesses pleaded with government officials and organizations to step in, with varying results and seemingly little movement.

Airlines were issuing credits and vouchers, but a fair number were set to expire before the close of 2020, and even more would go bad in early 2021, causing further angst as the pandemic wore on and \$11.7 billion in unused credits remained, according to carriers, at the close of 2020.

Many airlines extended expiration dates into 2022, but that hardly alleviates the issue for agencies and buyers — in fact, it's where many of their problems start.

Layers of complication

Just managing the number of credits as corporate travel rebounds, by itself, creates significant problems for agencies and buyers, but that's only where the complications begin:

- Credits often need to be tracked down, which can be an endless maze of dead-ends and frustration.
- Airlines have different methods of issuing and handling credits, creating a manual, labor-intensive process for agencies and buyers to manage.
- Since credits are spread across airlines, each with different policies, they must be prioritized in order of expiration date to ensure use.
- Credits were often issued at the traveler level, and with furloughs and layoffs, that meant potentially untangling credits tied to someone no longer with the company.
- With nearly every global company addressing the issue of credits, the larger companies may receive dedicated attention from airlines while the pleas of smaller ones are drowned out.

There are countless other nuances that must be negotiated in the process of managing unused air credits, and time is of the essence in a process that requires so much of it.

Save time while using every credit

Faced with the potential to incur expired credits in addition to other pandemic-related bottom-line losses, the pressure is on for agencies and buyers to organize, manage and use every credit available. Navigating this minefield can be a time-consuming process — but it doesn't have to be.

We've entered a new world of travel, and that makes using an intelligent travel management platform that's nimble enough to address the ever-changing challenges of this undiscovered landscape all the more important. Zeno combines traveler safety and duty-of-care priorities, cost control that maintains travelers' preferences, and the latest generation of technology in one platform that delivers a safer, leaner and smarter one-platform travel management solution.

As travel plans change or get canceled, Zeno stores qualified flight purchases as unused ticket credits automatically, so there's no detective work required to track credits or by-hand process to organize them. Within the booking flow for future flights, Zeno applies unused credits automatically for domestic

trips (and coming soon for international), which reduces the risk of lost fares and eliminates the need to visit other sites, streamlining bookings up to 53% faster than first-generation online booking tools.

The ever-shifting landscape of corporate travel presents plenty of challenges, but Zeno's seamless air credit tracking and management abilities turn complexity to efficiency — and save you from the second full-time job you never asked for.