University of California Larry L. Sautter Award Submission for Innovation in Information Technology

Project Name
Travel Planning and Expense Reporting System

Project Institution
University of California, Riverside

Project Team
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Project Abstract
The Travel Planning and Expense Reporting system is a web-based system available to the entire campus for planning business related travel and documenting expenses in a completely automated and paperless fashion.

UCR’s Travel system is based upon the Oracle DBMS. The web pages were developed in Oracle PL/SQL and are hosted by the Oracle Application Server software. Receipts are stored electronically within the database, and a real-time interface to the UCR Financial System (PeopleSoft) was developed to electronically create travel vouchers upon approval of travel expenses.

For more information, please visit the Travel Planning and Expense Reporting website at: http://travel.ucr.edu

Authentication
To gain access to the Travel Planning and Expense Reporting System, the user must enter a valid UCR Net ID and password. The program authenticates against the UCR Enterprise Directory housed in LDAP.

Authorization
Campus Systems Access Administrators (SAAs) grant access to systems via the Enterprise Access Control System (EACS). After authentication, the Travel system checks EACS to confirm user privileges. For more information on the Enterprise Access Control System, please visit the following site:
http://eacs.ucr.edu
User Roles and Routing Instructions
Several user roles are available within the system:

Traveler
Travel Coordinator
Departmental Pre-Approver
Departmental Final Approver
Accounting Approver

After assigning the appropriate roles to users within the organization, the SAA must specify travel routing instructions. Each SAA must specify one default routing path to control how expense reports are routed from Travelers to Travel Coordinators, and ultimately on for the necessary approvals. Certain individuals may require optional pre-approval, or a different Final Approver than other Travelers. These exceptions are handled by specifying additional, Traveler-specific routing instructions within the system.

As a trip is passed along, from one user to the next, automatic email notifications advise the recipient that a trip is in the queue waiting to be processed.
**Traveler Profiles**

Each Traveler has a profile within the system to store various values and preferences. There are several tabs within the profile for saving data elements such as airline seating preferences, vehicle license numbers, allergies, passports, FAUs, and more. This profile information is used to initialize many fields each time a Traveler creates a new trip.
**Travel Planning**

After logging into the system, the Traveler can make use of the optional Travel Planning module. Travel Planning allows the Traveler to enter details about an upcoming trip. When starting a new travel plan, the system assigns a new Trip ID number and draws a great deal of Traveler settings and preferences from the user’s Traveler Profile.

The Traveler can then specify the type and purpose of the trip, departure and return dates and times, and other notes about the trip. Projected expenses are also entered, along with an ability to specify whether any pre-payments (direct charges) would be required.

The travel plan can then be submitted to the Travel Coordinator, who will review the requested dates and expenses. The Travel Coordinator can enter notes to the Traveler and either approve or deny the travel. Upon approval, the Travel Coordinator can put the trip into Expense Reporting mode, specifying whether the Traveler or Travel Coordinator will be responsible for inputting actual trip expenses.
Travel Expense Reporting
When working in expense reporting mode, several tabs are available for entering Transportation, Lodging, Meals, and Other expenses. Depending on the type of expense being entered, the system will ask for various required fields. For example, when entering a Private Car expense, odometer readings are required for calculating the mileage reimbursement. If the Traveler incurred meal expenses, the reimbursable amount varies based upon the duration of the trip. A number of business rules are embedded within the program to determine which expenses require a receipt. As the Traveler enters expenses, those requiring a receipt are noted within the grid.
After all expenses are entered and submitted via the web, the Traveler gives all required receipts to his or her departmental Travel Coordinator. The Travel Coordinator then scans the receipts to PDF format and uses the web interface to attach the receipts to specific expense line items. Additional signed forms and exceptional approvals can also be scanned and electronically attached to the trip information.
When complete, the trip is submitted back to the Traveler for review. The expense summary form displays all expenses, advances, and pre-payments; calculating the amount due (if any) to the Traveler. All receipts and electronic documents are just a click away for easy viewing.

With the Traveler’s certification, the expense report is now routed to the various approval entities before ultimately being processed by Accounting. At each approval step, the expense summary can be viewed, along with all the specific expense tabs and scanned documents. Upon Accounting Approval, a voucher is created electronically in real time within the UCR Financial System. A reimbursement is then generated for the Traveler on the next business day. The reimbursement can take the form of a printed check, or electronic funds transfer, as specified by the Traveler.
Flexibility
The UCR Travel system is one of the most flexible systems on campus. Knowing that campus departments have individual policies and procedures regarding travel, the system was developed with a tremendous degree of flexibility in order to meet the needs of all departments.

Travel Planning – can be used by departments that want to review travel plans in advance of the trip.

Advances – available to departments that allow travel advances.

Entry of Expenses – Can be done by the Traveler or Travel Coordinator.

Document Imaging – Handles receipts as well as signed/scanned exceptional approvals.

Objective Customer Satisfaction Data / Benchmarks
The Travel Planning and Expense Reporting System has been in pilot production since March 2004. Since its release, over 30 trips have been electronically processed through the system and 17 reimbursements have been created. Amazingly, the system was developed and deployed with the scarcest of resources, as it was developed and implemented with only a single programmer working on the project.

The pilot will be expanded to include additional departments during Summer 2004. Full production status will be achieved by Fall 2004.

The following comments have been provided by users of the system:

- I am VERY happy with the performance. Moving between tabs and submitting/approving trips is VERY fast. (Sally Montanez)
- I especially liked the Expense Summary Form, the format is very easy to read and the comments section at the bottom is handy to see a complete overview of all comments. (Bob Grant)
- Being able to view all receipts and other supporting travel documents electronically (to verify accuracy) was very valuable. (Bob Grant)
- Participants in the user training sessions agreed that the system was easy to use.
- Some users were afraid that a Travel system would be cumbersome, but agreed that starting a trip in the planning stage and entering expenses would be able to be accomplished very quickly.
- Users were particularly happy with the approval history section, being able to see where the expense form was (within the approval routing process).
- Users applauded that the system is web based and that e-mail notifications are automatically generated.