



NOVEMBER 2020

CASE STUDY

UpSkill in a Downturn

Prepare for take-off

EFR Travel, a Focus Travel Partner, have been mighty busy over the past year examining their processes and reinventing themselves as a truly slick tech-first business.

EFR Travel have been trading for the past eighteen years and are a growing business. Last year their volume reached £37.6m (an increase of 200% over the past four years) this places them in the top 30 of TMCs in Europe. In part, this was through acquisitions but also through organic growth. To continue with this trajectory, the company needed to scale and flex in terms of its technology.

EFR decided to partner with MIDOCO, who are the market leaders in Germany for mid-office automation. The company also has the Umbrella Faces profile automation tool in its portfolio. The MIDOCO Group are expanding their footprint in the UK and have successfully deployed into several UK SME TMCs with EFR being the latest. David Chappell (Country Director UK) who joined MIDOCO in August 2020 is spearheading MIDOCO's growth in the UK market. David has a wealth of experience in corporate travel agency process and systems architecture, having spent many years at Gray Dawes Group designing and implementing systems which enabled them to sustain rapid, acquisitive growth. After Gray Dawes, he then joined Fello Travel as Technology Director where he looked to do the same but with outsourced providers. During his assessment of the market for this task, he discovered MIDOCO, which he subsequently implemented into Fello (also a Focus TMC Partner).



We didn't just want to survive this crisis, we wanted to send a clear message to our clients that we would invest and make changes to improve our offering. ”

Edward Rom – MD EFR Travel



At the beginning of this pandemic, Edward Rom, CEO of EFR Travel, decided to look to the future and find ways to keep his clients engaged through this current downturn. He decided to send a clear message telling them that EFR would be investing in technology so that when travel returns, they will not only survive but will be even better than they remember.

EFR started to engage with MIDOCO twelve months ago, but the vision of improving automation and processes accelerated during the downturn in travel.



EFR's
VISION



We are always thinking ahead and have made a conscious choice to enable customers to work with us in a very digital way. This is crucial as the younger generations of employees want to use online tools to book rather than pick up the phone. ”

Edward Rom – MD EFR Travel

Allowing high volumes of simple trips to go online and be automatically processed allows EFR to focus on supporting their customers when they really need it.



We had a recommendation from Chris Lewis (Travelogix CEO), and we were introduced at the Business Travel Show – it's been a great journey over the past twelve months.

Our desire is to always find ways of being as productive as possible, increasing volumes while keeping staffing levels sensible is crucial. Reducing admin from consultants is key. We are also very careful with our data and ensuring it is protected. The customer journey has to be seamless. We can then put our efforts and creativity into the complex offline requests that require support. ”

David Strange – Corporate Director EFR Travel

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During the implementation MIDOCO were phenomenally patient, organised and process-driven. They were regimented and got the job done properly. ”

Edward Rom, MD EFR Travel

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation process was a good experience overall. However, Edward Rom advises that companies really need to understand the nuts and bolts of their operation and then to use the MIDOCO team to help get the most out of the software itself. MIDOCO is not a plug-and-play system, and there is so much in the system to enhance business processes.



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You shouldn't look to replicate your old system in a new tool. This is heart surgery for a business, as everything you touch goes through this tool.

In upgrading your architecture, you are forced to reassess how the business processes its information. Through acquisitions and time, all businesses end up with legacy processes – some of which you can't even recall why you do it in a certain way. These systemic foibles accumulate over time and lead to inefficiency. The process of implementing a mid-office system allows you to completely reimagine your workflows and so become more efficient and, ultimately, scalable. ”

David Chappell – Country Director UK, MIDOCO

The travel ecosystem is complex, and data is passed along the chain to third parties to consume, e.g. reporting systems, duty of care providers, so its vitally important that the information is consistent otherwise downstream processes are impacted. The mid-office system can ensure that data is in the expected format as it enters the TMC environment. It can check that PNRs contain the required information in the expected formats. So it is important to look at the whole picture and have a proper understanding of not just the data coming in but also data coming out.

THE BENEFITS

Ability to grow, flex and scale

The architecture of the EFR setup is now such that they are well equipped to acquire new business, expand teams and customers. They have future-proofed the business and are able to scale. EFR are ultimately now able to bid for a much wider set of clients.



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The new setup allows EFR to significantly scale. With Atriis as our online booking tool, we don't need to touch a booking. It can be fully online from the point of the PA making the booking to literally having the invoice and statement automatically dispatched. If we want to quadruple our business, we can do that efficiently. We are now talking to clients that transact at a much higher rate, for example, 2,000 rail transactions per month, and handling that in a fully touchless way is quite feasible. ”

Edward Rom – MD EFR Travel

Essentially the sweet spot for EFR has become much larger. It has moved from being a TMC that typically handles accounts worth £50-150k to being able to cope with customers many times that. This is regardless of form of payment, so even if individual card payments are needed, this can be handled with automation. It is ultimately all down to configuration and how much is defined in the setup.



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MIDOCO and Umbrella Faces are part of the same group and are very complimentary. Ultimately what we are doing is optimising workflows, mid-office and profile automation is a perfect fit for this. ”

Steffen Faradi, CEO, MIDOCO Holding GmbH

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Two systems can access each other's technologies. There are real advantages with how credit card data is stored with regards to PCI compliance. In an Umbrella-MIDOCO world, cards are stored and tokenised before being passed across the system, retaining PCI compliance. The profile storage tool gives the ability to retrieve and manage the profiles based on need, which is a key requirement for GDPR. Companies using the MIDOCO / Umbrella Faces platform can genuinely achieve PCI and GDPR compliance. ”

David Chappell – Country Director UK, MIDOCO

To conclude, EFR have really made the most of the downturn in travel during the pandemic. Investing in new, efficient & automated systems means that when travel comes back, they will be in a great place to grow and reap the rewards of that investment.

Focus Travel Partnership applauds the work of EFR and MIDOCO in pushing forward with this project and looks forward to seeing the success in the coming months.