

University Travel Reimbursement Problems and Travel Platform Application Exploration

-- Based on the Empirical Analysis of J Universities

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Abstract

With the increase of national investment in higher education and the promotion of the "double first-class" construction strategy, the travel expenses of colleges and universities are becoming increasingly large. The traditional travel reimbursement management is faced with a series of problems such as difficult booking, reimbursement, control, audit and analysis. Based on the actual situation of J colleges and universities, this paper deeply discusses the problems existing in the process of college travel reimbursement, as well as the application of travel platform in college travel management and the difficulties encountered in the process of promotion, and further puts forward the corresponding breakthrough path, in order to further promote and apply travel platform.

Keywords

Universities; Travel Expense Reimbursement; Travel Platform.

1. Introduction

With the deep implementation of China's "Double First-Class" construction strategy, the state's investment in higher education continues to increase, and the importance of financial management in universities is becoming increasingly prominent. Since 2016, the state has introduced policies on 'streamlining administration, delegating powers, and improving services' for scientific research funds, which require improving the quality and efficiency of financial reimbursement services and the satisfaction of teachers and students, while strengthening internal control management of economic matters. The increasing demand for related inspections, academic exchanges, and research surveys in university teaching and scientific research has led to a growing number of travel expenses. The proportion of travel expenses in the daily operating expenses of universities is increasing year by year. However, the complicated travel standards, diversified funding sources and frequently updated management rules make the university travel management face serious challenges. Taking J University as an example, the volume of travel expense business accounts for 10%-16.5% of the total expenditure of the entire school. Faced with the huge amount of travel expense reimbursement, how to balance internal control and the quality of financial reimbursement services is particularly important in daily financial management. Taking J University as an example, traditional management of travel expense reimbursement has a series of problems such as difficulties in booking tickets, reimbursement, control, audit, and analysis, which urgently need to be solved by travel platforms[1-5].

2. Current Status of Travel Expense Reimbursement-A Case Study of University J

According to the expenditure data statistics of J University from 2020 to 2024 (see Table 1), whether it is from the perspective of the volume of reimbursement vouchers or the expenditure amount of travel expenses, travel expenses account for a large proportion.

Table 1. Expenditure data statistics of J University from 2020 to 2024

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Amount (ten thousand yuan)	3371.18	4826.64	2997.17	6699.85	7068.78
Vouchers (pieces)	13230	19868	12430	25869	28263

From the perspective of the amount of travel expenses, from 2020 to 2022, influenced by the situation at home and abroad, the travel business volume of J University will decrease significantly, and the travel expenses in 2020 will be 33.711,800 yuan; In 2021, it will be 48.266,400 yuan; And the lowest in 2022, only 29.9717 million yuan. In 2023, the situation at home and abroad will improve, and the travel expenses of J universities will rise to 66,998,500 yuan, and reach 70,687,800 yuan in 2024.

From the perspective of voucher business volume, the travel reimbursement business volume of J colleges and universities also accounts for a large proportion. The number of travel reimbursement vouchers in J colleges and universities in 2020 is 13,230, accounting for 11.5% of the total number of vouchers in the whole year; 19,868 travel reimbursement vouchers in 2021, accounting for 12.6% of the total number of vouchers in the year; Affected by the domestic and international situation, the volume of travel business decreased significantly, and the number of travel reimbursement vouchers in 2022 decreased significantly to 12,430 vouchers, accounting for 8.4% of the total number of vouchers in the year; Starting from 2023, the number of vouchers for reimbursement showed a sharp upward trend similar to the amount of expenses. By 2023, the number of travel vouchers will rise to 25,869, accounting for 15.5% of the total number of vouchers in the whole year; In 2024, the number of travel vouchers will further increase to 28,263, accounting for 16.5% of the total number of vouchers. Reimbursement processes require verification of itinerary completeness, compliance with transportation and accommodation standards, and accuracy of subsidies, leading to prolonged form-filling for staff and overwhelming audit workloads.

Travel reimbursement requires verification of the integrity of the trip, compliance with transportation and accommodation standards, and the accuracy of subsidy disbursement, which has led to a long time for reimbursement personnel to fill in the form and a surge in financial audit load.

3. Traditional Travel Reimbursement Processes and Issues at University J

(1) Traditional travel reimbursement Process

The traditional travel reimbursement process mainly includes application, approval, bill arrangement, audit, payment and other links. First of all, the business traveler buys the corresponding transportation ticket and accommodation ticket from the business trip, and keeps the corresponding reimbursement credentials and payment records; Secondly, after returning from a business trip, the traveler should log in to the advanced financial management platform reservation and reimbursement system of the Finance Office within 3 months, fill in the Travel Reservation Reimbursement Form according to the reimbursement standards of the travel itinerary and school travel policy. The manager arranges the relevant bills and

supporting materials, pastes the reimbursement voucher to confirm the error and sign it, and then, according to the relevant approval procedures, The relevant approver shall sign and approve accordingly. At last, the manager submits the travel expense booking reimbursement documents to the finance office after the approval is completed, and the finance office reviews the documents and makes the payment. At this point, the travel reimbursement is completed.

(2) Problems existing in the traditional travel reimbursement process

1)The traditional travel booking process is complicated

Due to the complex provisions of the relevant system of the school on the standards of transportation expenses and accommodation expenses, the standards of different funding items, different levels, different cities and different business trips are different. Teachers and students need to consult the relevant policies in advance when traveling, which leads to a lot of time spent on booking. If they do not consult the relevant policies in advance, it is easy to appear in the booking process of "exceeding the standard" phenomenon, but only when the traveling staff reimburse the travel expenses, the financial staff will find it and reduce it, making the traveling teachers and students bear the corresponding losses by themselves.

2)The traditional travel expense reimbursement procedure is cumbersome

After the completion of the business trip, the business traveler needs to log in the financial system, fill in the online Travel Expense reimbursement Form, fill in the business traveler, business trip time, location, and related transportation expenses and accommodation expenses according to the invoice amount, and fill in the relevant business trip subsidy according to the business trip duration, and submit the completed reimbursement form to the relevant responsible person for approval and submit to the finance Department for review. For the travel expenses to be paid from different funds, it is necessary to find multiple approvers to sign, the project leader needs to be approved by relevant leaders when he travels, the financial department will review the reimbursement materials, check the authenticity and compliance of the bills, whether the relevant expenses exceed the standard and whether the relevant approvers have signed completely. Generally speaking, the application, approval and reimbursement links of traditional travel reimbursement are separated, and the information flow is not smooth. Staff members need to fill out a lot of forms and go through multiple levels of approval, and the entire reimbursement process is time-consuming and labor-intensive.

3)The difficulty of monitoring

There is a regulatory problem that the financial personnel do not know the actual business trip of the reimbursing, it is difficult to judge the authenticity of the reimbursement bill or the invoicing reimbursement (such as splitting the reimbursement of the round-trip transportation ticket to receive the travel subsidy) and other means to extract funds. Such behavior not only violates financial regulations, but also violates financial regulations. It may also lead to the loss of school funds, but the financial department is also difficult to achieve supervision in this case.

4) Difficult audit problem

When reviewing travel expense claims, financial auditors need to audit numerous documents one by one according to the type of offline or Internet travel, personnel rank and project type of the business traveler. Errors are risky and time-consuming, which greatly affects the business speed of financial personnel. Once problems are found, financial personnel need to communicate and explain with teachers and students about the details of policies, travel schedules and so on one by one, which increases the communication cost and the possibility of conflicts.

In view of the above situation, especially the problems in the process and review of the traditional travel reimbursement method, J University began to try to introduce a travel platform system to improve travel management, in order to achieve efficient management of travel and travel reimbursement.

4. Application of the Travel Platform at University J

Based on the problem-oriented approach and the current situation of school travel management, J colleges and universities try to introduce an intelligent travel platform to realize a series of operational processes such as approval, booking and reimbursement in travel reimbursement through the travel platform. It provides an efficient, convenient and intelligent travel application experience for managers at all levels as well as teachers and students.

(1) Advantages of business travel platform

1) Process automation to improve efficiency

The travel platform achieves one-stop service by integrating the whole process of booking, approval and reimbursement. The platform can realize the automation of booking, invoicing, reimbursement and settlement. Teachers and students can complete the application and approval process online, and the approver can quickly process it via mobile or PC, greatly shortening the approval cycle and improving the overall efficiency.

2) Data transparency and enhanced monitoring

The platform provides real-time data reports, and managers can check key indicators such as travel expenses, trip frequency and destination distribution at any time to realize comprehensive monitoring of travel activities. This transparency not only helps detect and correct non-compliance in a timely manner, but also provides data support for formulating more rational travel policies.

3) Cost control and budget optimization

With close cooperation with major suppliers, the travel platform can obtain more favorable prices and services, and use big data analysis to predict travel demand, helping colleges and universities plan budgets in advance and avoid waste of resources. In addition, the system can automatically compare the prices and services of different suppliers and recommend the most cost-effective options for teachers and students, further reducing travel costs.

4) Compliance management to reduce risks

A strict compliance inspection mechanism is built into the platform to ensure that all travel activities comply with relevant regulations of the state and universities. Every step, from booking to reimbursement, is recorded electronically for easy audit and traceability, effectively reducing compliance risks.

5) User experience to improve satisfaction

The travel platform focuses on user experience, friendly interface and easy operation. Teachers and students can complete travel booking and management through mobile phones or computers anytime and anywhere, and enjoy more convenient and efficient services. Through the travel platform, the travel booking process can be greatly simplified, reducing the time spent by teachers and students before the business trip. In addition, the phenomenon of exceeding the standard can be found at the time of booking, avoiding the corresponding losses of teachers and students on business trip when they are reimbursed. At the same time, the platform also provides personalized recommendation and reminder services, such as flight change notification, hotel reservation confirmation, etc., to enhance user satisfaction and loyalty.

(2) The operating process of the travel platform

1) Business trip application

According to the travel plan, the teachers and students can submit the travel application on the travel platform, including the travel time, destination, business trip reason, fund item number and person in charge. After submitting the application, various tips and travel criteria will be displayed to provide convenience for teachers and students on business trip. In addition, the

platform will also check and freeze the expenditure budget according to the fund item number filled in the business trip application, so as to avoid problems such as travel expenses exceeding the budget.

2) Business trip approval

The system will automatically push the approval process to the relevant approver according to the preset rules, and the approver will conduct the approval through the mobile terminal or the computer terminal. During the approval, the application information can be viewed, and the approval result will be fed back to the applicant in real time.

3) Book the service

After the approval, teachers and students on business trip will enter the travel platform and enter the booking page. The platform will push relevant ticket, air ticket and hotel information according to the information of the application form. Teachers and students can choose the appropriate service providers such as air ticket and hotel on the platform, complete the booking, and choose the payment method of the project, without the need for teachers and students to pay in advance. The corresponding business travel company of the platform will advance the payment in advance, and the subsequent reimbursement will be unified. In addition, there is no need to collect tickets offline through the platform, and the platform will automatically issue tickets after the completion of the business trip.

4) Expense reimbursement

After the end of the business trip, the teachers and students can go to the intelligent reimbursement platform for reimbursement. Select the business trip application form that has been traveled on the platform, and the platform will display the associated invoices. If there are offline invoices, they can also be uploaded to submit the reimbursement application. The reimbursement form shall be reviewed by the project leader after submission. If the business traveler includes the project leader, the reimbursement form filling page shall be reviewed by the designated responsible person. The system will automatically compare the ticket and reservation information to reduce the manual audit workload. After the approval, the financial department will directly transfer the corresponding funds to the teachers and students' accounts and the corresponding accounts of the platform to achieve fast reimbursement.

5. The Current Dilemma of the Promotion and Application of the Business Travel Platform in J Universities

(1) Dependence on traditional habits

Intelligent travel platform covers the whole process functions such as air ticket booking, multi-level approval, expense reimbursement, etc. Teachers and students need to invest time in learning and adaptation, especially for middle-aged and elderly teachers or researchers, the learning cost is high; Some users are used to dealing with business travel affairs offline (such as telephone booking and paper approval), and have low trust in online platforms, believing that "it is not as reliable as manual". At the same time, some financial processes have changed due to the launch of the travel platform, and financial personnel have to spend time learning multiple ways to review and related data.

(2) Business travel standards and approval are complicated, and the platforms are difficult to unify

As a comprehensive university, J's travel standards involve teaching, scientific research, administration and other fields, and vary according to project types, personnel levels and other factors. This complexity makes the travel platform face great challenges in terms of unifying standards and setting multi-level approvers. The platform needs to accurately identify the travel needs of each faculty member and automatically match the corresponding travel criteria,

which is technically difficult to achieve. In addition, if the project leader himself needs to be approved by relevant leaders on business trip, the approvers of different projects will change, and the approval flow can not be accurately pushed.

6. Breakthrough Path of Promotion and Application of Business Travel Platform in J Universities

(1) Strengthen publicity and training to improve the acceptance of faculty and staff

J Colleges and universities can comprehensively introduce the advantages, functions and operation methods of the travel platform to the faculty and staff through various channels such as organizing information conferences, conducting training courses and using public accounts. At the same time, the platform developers can be invited to provide technical support and after-sales service to solve the problems encountered by the faculty and staff in the use of the platform. By strengthening publicity and training, teachers and staff should be more receptive to the travel platform and willing to use it.

(2) Optimize the functions of the platform

In view of the complexity of travel standards, J universities can cooperate with platform developers to optimize platform functions and realize the automatic matching of travel standards. The platform can automatically calculate expenses such as travel subsidies and air ticket discounts based on information such as faculty titles and project types to ensure the standardization and accuracy of travel management.

(3) Promoting system integration to realize data sharing

J Universities can set up special working groups to promote the integration of the travel platform with the existing system. The working group can communicate and coordinate with the developers of various systems, formulate unified data standards and interface specifications, promote cross-system data docking, realize the interconnection of finance, scientific research and OA systems, and improve the intelligent level of travel management.

7. Conclusion

Although the promotion and application of the business travel platform in J universities are faced with many difficulties, these problems can be effectively solved by optimizing the platform functions, strengthening publicity and training, promoting system integration and strengthening data security and compliance management. Looking forward to the future, with the rapid progress of information technology and the continuous optimization of the travel platform, J universities will be able to fully realize the intellectualization, automation and high efficiency of travel management, and provide more convenient and safe travel services for faculty and staff.

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