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The most significant challenge Reid has faced while managing travel for BP has to be this year's FIFA World Cup. "It was a biggie for us. We sponsored at two levels, as a global sponsor with our Castrol brand and as a national sponsor under the BP brand. I headed up the 2010 project for BP with a few people helping me and this really tested me as an individual, especially since we still had our real jobs to do as well!"

The total spend in SA for this event was US\$30m, he says. "We started 20 months beforehand and ended up putting 10 000 people through our hospitality programme, purchasing some 17 000 bed nights at 23 different properties, as an example. Most procurement was done before the tournament arrived. We thought it would be busy, but we never fully understood the implications! We're still doing the tidying up – the admin, reconciliation and reclaiming from head office. There are major frustrations with airlines as we lodged huge deposits against inventory, some of which wasn't used – and the airlines first need to do their recon before we can get our deposits back. We also chartered an Airbus, which was quite fun but with its own set of challenges, on the Paris-Johannesburg route for 87 people over the final weekend. Our big lesson here was: don't change the flight plan or plane – the charter arrived 20 hours late as take-off was delayed!"

He continues: "The CWT team was amazing. They worked on this project since the draw in



Pics: Shannon Hill

December 2009 and in addition to managing 1 800 bookings for about 70 groups of people from some 23 countries coming here as part of our programme, they managed more changes than we ever thought possible, experienced huge challenges in securing inventory and learnt about the challenges of foreign payments from places like Russia, Vietnam and China. They were absolute stars."

On a personal note, while Reid enjoys watching rugby, cricket and hockey, don't ask him to run a marathon or eat chickpeas and bean sprouts. "Virgin Active and Planet Fitness would make money out of me. I take my dogs for a walk and enjoy hiking, playing squash and swimming at home. I'm not a health freak. I eat food because I like food."

Reid says with all his commitments, though, it is tough to achieve that elusive state known by few as balance. "My partner Michelle's job is also demanding and she travels too. We've been known to phone each other at the airport as one leaves and the other arrives! We live together with her two daughters, Siobhan (16) and Nicole (14), but my children – Matthew (20) and Melissa (18) – are both studying at Tukkies (design and medicine respectively) and live up the road with my ex-wife. Somehow we work it all out!"

So when Reid says he's a simple down-to-earth kind of guy, he means it – and it is this approach, together with a dry sense of humour, that he brings to corporate travel management.

Fact file

- Since travellers are not given choices, the selection of suppliers is paramount, says Reid. "Our main local route is JNB-CPT and regionally it's between Walvis Bay and Dar es Salaam. Internationally it's London (head office), Mumbai and Singapore."
- He adds: "Within BP, whoever travels regularly uses their own personal Amex card. If you travel irregularly less than three times a year a lodge card is utilised. We have about 180 regulars at any given week out of about 700 regular travellers in total."
- Only airlines recommended by BP's global aviation safety guide are used. Partners include British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, South African Airways and kulula.com. "No one flies business class unless the flight is over four hours on a single sector."
- Reid says: "We're still fortunate that we can stay in four- and five-star properties in the big cities because we've limited the number of properties we use so we're getting very good rates. We rate hotels on their value proposition (i.e. rate includes breakfast, shuttle to the office, parking, WiFi)." Preferreds in Cape Town include Radisson Blu Hotel Waterfront, Cape Royale and The Westin. In Johannesburg it's the Westcliff, The Rosebank Hotel Crowne Plaza, Protea Hotel Wanderers and the Hilton Sandton. In Durban, the Hilton Durban and Westville Manors. We also use a few properties in Phalaborwa, Tzaneen and Upington where we have sites."
- Car rental: Hertz and Europcar SA.
- How savings are measured: "We take our corporate rate as a benchmark and track everything below that. Where we don't have a corporate deal on a route, we take the full fare less 20% benchmarked. These figures are consolidated. CWT also tracks missed savings. We have a ceiling if you want to make a change to your flight – if it costs more than a certain amount, it has to go through an approval basis, which stops people getting to the airport and changing to a full Y fare to get home half an hour earlier. It's always the same people. I can name the five most errant travellers." ■

A focus on safety

- At any stage BP can identify where each of its travellers are in the world, so if there's a security incident, the team can see in minutes who may be involved. "We avoid high-risk countries, cities, routes and airlines – and continually assess these."
- Adds Reid: "The company's safety culture becomes your own. For example, BP pays for us to complete an advanced driving course, for our partners to attend an anti-hijacking course and for our kids to participate in a defensive driving course. We become our own policemen."
- No travel is authorised into Level 4 countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq unless it's absolutely essential and then it's only with the chief executive's approval. Switzerland is a Level 1 country, Level 2 is the US or UK. Most of Africa and SA are Level 3 but they can become Level 4 during elections for example.
- Every hotel is assessed and even if a property is suitable, if it fails the 'one block rule', it's not used. In other words, what's the level of safety if you walk one block in either direction? "We don't use B&Bs because generally B&Bs are quite cutesy, but some designer did the decor and there's lots of stuff in the corridors and often safety evacuation plans are not up to scratch."
- Hire cars have to be compliant with BP's driver safety standard, which means we use Group B or C depending on the vehicle. Travellers don't just get into taxis at the airport and they use designated drivers to avoid driving in foreign countries. "Locally, if travellers have to drive more than two hours after sunset, they need to stay over at a hotel."
- Generally any issue of non-compliance is taken very seriously because of safety standards.