

Airbnb's focus on employee and customer experience is having a transformative impact across a number of sectors

Article

The news: Airbnb appears to be succeeding at a time when many others in the travel sector are seeing mixed results. It's doing so by focusing on one thing: experience.

- Employee experience has been improved through a “work from anywhere” hiring policy announced in April—which also doubles as a brand marketing ploy.
- Customer experience has been enhanced through a number of new innovations.
- The net result: The company's gross profit grew from \$3.6 billion in 2019 to \$4.8 billion in 2021.

Future of work □ Future of travel: The company's work from anywhere policy underscores its belief that travel as we knew it has been irrevocably changed.

- The company said that its careers portal received 800,000 visits following its announcement that most of its 14,000 employees would be able to work from anywhere—permanently.
- The trend toward long-term rentals is one result of the change in travel preferences among its comparatively younger, wealthy, tech-focused clientele.
- While weekend vacations are still available, longer stays are growing. In Q1 2022, long-term stays (four weeks or longer) reached an “all-time high,” according to the company, more than doubling from Q1 2019. One in every five nights booked is part of a long-term stay.

Customer needs first: The firm has improved its policies and search options to make it easier for users to make these longer reservations, as Adweek points out.

- **Party home restriction:** In August 2020, Airbnb temporarily restricted “party houses” on its platform because of the pandemic. Last month, it made that prohibition permanent to satisfy complaining neighbors and housing advocates. The result: a 44% decrease in the number of party reports year over year.
- **“AirCover for guests,”** a new service described as “complete travel protection,” comes free of charge with all reservations.
- **“Split Stays,”** introduced in May, allow a user to split time between two residences. According to global head of marketing Hiroki Asai, the feature automatically considers start and finish

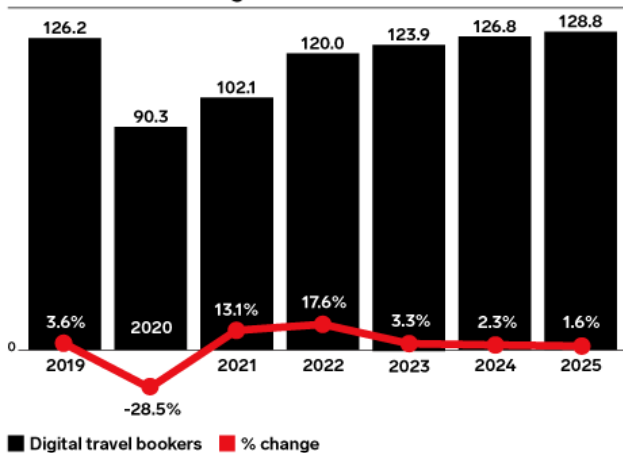
dates, the distance between listings, the caliber and value of each home, and any extra filters selected when users are shown a pair of houses.

Same industry, different result: Airbnb's ruthless focus on customer experience stands in contrast with the airline industry nowadays. The Transportation Security Administration projected that 6 million travelers checked in between Friday and Sunday over the Fourth of July weekend—a positive for an industry hoping for a rebound.

- But 1,400 flights were canceled and over 17,000 were delayed during that time, according to tracking service FlightAware. Given rising costs, air travel is already under assault, and the industry needs to improve on experience to continue its pandemic rebound.

US Digital Travel Bookers, 2019-2025

millions and % change



Note: internet users ages 18+ who have booked travel online via any device at least once during the calendar year; digital travel includes accommodation, airline, car rental, cruise, hotel, and transportation
Source: eMarketer, May 2022

275897

eMarketer | InsiderIntelligence.com

Analyst insight: “It’s plain to see that Airbnb’s latest moves are the result of the feedback that it gathers from its customers, hosts, and employees,” said Insider Intelligence principal analyst Patty Soltis. “Airbnb is a prime example of listening and doing something about it.”

The big takeaway: While many companies have work from anywhere policies, Airbnb is the rare company that improves its bottom line by evangelizing that policy to the outside world.

- The company’s flexible hiring makes it easier to both bring in top talent and keep existing personnel happy amid inflation pressures.

- Happier employees are more likely to be engaged and identify opportunities to improve the customer experience—which, in turn, allows the company to identify new revenue opportunities.

Go further: Listen to our [recent podcast on Airbnb and the sharing economy](#) and be on the lookout for our **NPS report**, coming out in the next week.