



# 100% CLOUD AT AMERICAN EXPRESS GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL



GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL

## On Its Own: American Express Global Business Travel

American Express Global Business Travel is a 100-year-old, global corporate business travel company. American Express had long recognized the significant growth opportunities in their travel business, but they had trouble dedicating appropriate resources to it. Consequently, American Express spun out American Express Global Business Travel (AMEX GBT) in 2014 as an independent company with a strategic focus on technology and innovation, and plans for new products and acquisitions. The new company has 15,000 employees and 10,000 corporate customers, many of them large companies. Revenues exceed \$1.5 billion in fees from customers alone; volume of travel spend booked on behalf of their customers is much higher. AMEX GBT offers total program management for corporate travel, driven by innovation and business intelligence gleaned from their wealth of travel data. Having solid business data, systems, and reporting is critical to their business strategy.

## Barriers to Growth: Disjointed Data Systems

Operating as a unit of the larger American Express, the company had dealt with a mix of old and new technology strung together with "spaghetti code," the result of numerous acquisitions whose systems were not fully integrated. Reporting was a nightmare. The business was devoting sizable teams of analysts—100+ professionals—to pulling data from multiple systems, data cleansing, and creating reports. Unintegrated systems also blocked the launch of new products, stifling the innovation that had motivated the spin-out.

## Making a Decision: Determining the New IT Infrastructure

Clearly, the solution was to get rid of the old systems. The prospect of developing a totally new IT infrastructure was daunting but compelling at the same time: It could improve operational efficiency and data quality across the business, and also provide the business agility that AMEX GBT sought.

## Moving on: Planning a "Big Bang" Move to the Cloud

AMEX GBT adopted a revolutionary plan: Go Cloud on all the back office systems. Undertake a wholesale change-out with none of the system customizations that can make system implementations and upgrades so difficult and time-consuming.

Although they knew that Cloud systems offered consistency and ease of implementation, company leaders proceeded cautiously with planning. They talked extensively with each of the Cloud vendors on their short list, to assure themselves that each one could handle the scale and complexity of AMEX GBT. While Coupa was working with fairly large companies already, other vendors had not quite reached that standard. The planners built relationships with vendors at all levels as they carefully studied the systems available.

## COUPA IMPLEMENTATION DETAIL

- ▶ Coupa Expenses, Procurement, Invoicing, Sourcing, Analytics
- ▶ 15,000 Employees
- ▶ 28 Countries
- ▶ 2,000 Suppliers
- ▶ 11 Languages
- ▶ 5 Months from Kickoff to Go-Live
- ▶ 8 Months to Full Rollout

“I've never seen a finance person be so giddy and excited about how easy it was to get information out of these systems.”

**STEVE CURTS**  
CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER,  
AMERICAN EXPRESS  
GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL

## ADVICE FOR CIOs

*"Most of the time you don't get a chance where you can do a big bang switch out. If I couldn't do that, I would probably do procurement and T&E first because it's the least complicated, in my opinion, easier to put in, and probably a great proof point that Cloud systems really are good. And then you get the enthusiasm behind it, and then you can get the support to keep going."*



**STEVE CURTIS**  
CHIEF STRATEGY  
OFFICER, AMEX GBT

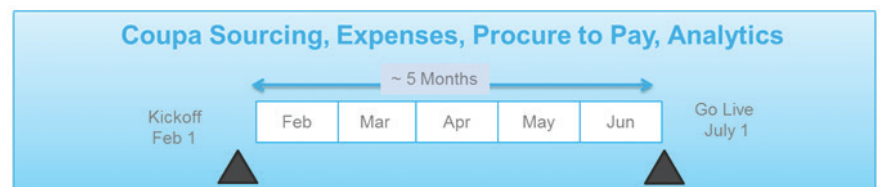
## The Solution: A Sleek Set of Cloud Software

Deliberate planning led AMEX GBT to select the "best of breed" for each area: Coupa, NetSuite, and Workday. They were drawn to Coupa's simplicity and its track record of successful implementations at large companies. In addition to Coupa for Spend Management, they chose NetSuite for ERP, Workday for HR, and Boomi's Cloud-to-Cloud integration platform.

Inside AMEX GBT, the planning team addressed change management for the huge project head-on. As plans came together, the team developed a support network for the new Cloud system: individuals in key areas who could serve as "evangelists." They succeeded in getting executive sponsorship for the project. Town hall meetings for employees around the world created buzz.

## Implementation: Introducing Coupa and Supporting the Users

AMEX GBT introduced Coupa within 5 months of kick-off. Users received on-line training and support from teams of system experts. Demonstrations and painless upgrades convinced skeptics.



## The Results: Smooth Transition to Problem Solutions

AMEX GBT reports a highly favorable experience with their revolutionary change-out to the Cloud. Implementation was faster and easier than anyone had expected. They attribute this result to their single minded focus on configuration - avoiding system customizations - and to the fact that users were jubilant at being freed from the old clunky systems. Now that people have experience with using the Cloud system, grumbling about change has been replaced by remarks on how easy it is to use.

Coupa, NetSuite, and Workday were all extremely responsive, helping AMEX GBT to resolve issues as they arose. These relationships were essential to successful implementation and use of the system. Following implementation, the advantages of the 100% Cloud model quickly became apparent. When upgrades come through, AMEX GBT can just roll them in and get the benefit immediately, without the recoding that was typical with the legacy ERP/HR and even procurement systems. Results like these have made big believers out of the people at AMEX GBT.

This summary of AMEX GBT's story is based on a Coupa webinar [100% Cloud at American Express Global Business Travel](#). Watch the full recording to learn more.