

Is Instant Booking a Reality in Corporate Housing?

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What Clients Want Most for Their Business Travelers

When corporate clients put their key talent on the road for business travel, they expect business-to-business service. When it comes to alternative accommodations (as in, 'alternative to hotels'), travel professionals value the speed, predictability and familiarity of a hotel, but are also looking for solutions that are both more customized and more affordable than a hotel, with options designed to meet the needs of today's globally mobile workforce.

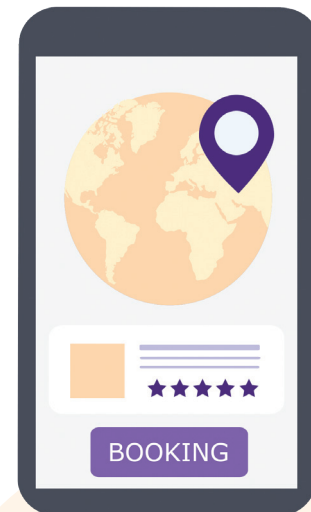
A fast, confirmed booking has value, but not at the price of delivering an incomplete or poorly matched solution. Business customers may have an initially positive response to the consumer-like feel of marketplace platforms for corporate housing, but quickly realize they have needs that go deeper than a friendly interface. **Meeting those needs is the job of a global accommodations solutions provider, a company like Dwellworks Living.** We provide the choice and quick turnaround that clients demand and then back it up with comprehensive customer service support for their business travelers.

When it comes to the expectations of corporate housing clients, self-service and 'instant booking' are no substitute for the ownership and accountability of a full-service provider. Read on to learn more about the difference between a focus on booking and a focus on service solutions.

What is "Instant Booking?"

One of the most important needs of the travel program manager is the ability to secure accommodations for their business travelers quickly. In corporate housing, instant booking is promoted as an instant confirmation of the availability of a specific rental unit for a specific time period. Travel buyers want to know "is an alternative accommodations solution available that meets my specifications, or do I need to keep looking?" and receiving an 'instant booking' confirmation can lead a travel manager to believe that the corporate housing process works like hotel booking or Airbnb. In fact, the corporate housing process is intentionally engineered not to provide 'instant booking' or 'instant confirmation' because clients have more complicated needs and expect not only a confirmation but a solution that meets their specifications.

In addition, corporate housing choices are not in a single global database like the GDS (Global Distribution System) used by hotels and airlines. While hospitality-tech platforms can claim instant booking, the reality is that premier corporate housing works quite differently. And the differences are very important to the corporate traveler.



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Tech Plus Supply Chain Provides Superior Customer Experience

Sometimes a hospitality-tech platform will send a message to the travel manager that a pending booking is confirmed. While it may look “instant” and convey assurance to a client, it is really a tactic to not lose a revenue opportunity and clients should be advised to read the fine print. **A system alert is not a substitute for an authentically confirmed supplier booking.** Experienced corporate housing providers will utilize tech to respond to the request by providing selection, customization and true client support through the ability to access thousands of properties and locations around the world, operated by a globally distributed supply chain of housing/hospitality professionals. Their role is to cut red tape, vet properties and ensure check-in, safety and expected amenities.

“We’re Working On It...” An Inside Look at Platform Technology

The client expectation for instant booking stems in part from overlaying the consumer-driven experience of Airbnb and its look-alikes onto business-to-business extended stay models. Airbnb and its much smaller imitators in the corporate housing market operate on a similar model. They connect the two sides of a platform: hosts and guests. On a platform, the customer searches for a property using certain criteria and the algorithms of the search engine provide property choices from the marketplace database. It’s like Uber for housing.

In this model, there may not be an accommodations services professional to vet the choices or their alignment with the customer’s expectations. The travel manager selects their preferred choice, and the system sends a message advising that a confirmation will be promptly available. **In fact, they are going back to the host/property to confirm availability.** Sometimes the response is immediate; sometimes, the customer is given a ‘we’re working on it’ message and the system confirms availability or nonavailability within the system’s timing guideline. While some systems come back more promptly, most advise an up-to-24 hour ‘please wait’ window for responses.

In all events, the burden is often on the travel manager, their representatives, and their employees to make decisions guided exclusively by the platform’s technology, as though a corporate booking is the same as a consumer/leisure inquiry.



Buyer Beware

The trade-off for a speedier confirmation is a potentially insufficient review/mismatch of the client’s detailed specifications. When a company says they are ‘a technology platform for hospitality,’ take them at their word. It means their business model is to drive as much traffic as possible to their technology and limit the investment in human expertise and a more business-to-business, professional service value proposition.

Search. Source. Service.

Dwellworks Living builds technology in a “fit for purpose” application focused on custom searches. Our multi-million-dollar technology investment provides a specific “match score” for every property presented. We couple that technology with an unmatched pre-vetting process delivered by seasoned service experts around the globe. Our team works directly with clients to ensure accommodation requirements are met, including post-booking services. Our customer care is award-winning, on demand, and around the clock.

Corporate client search customization and service engagement needs require a client-led technology, one that powers the well-matched sourcing of intelligently curated properties and supports the service after the selection is confirmed. Dwellworks Living has chosen to build our technology stack around ‘search, source, and service’ in a proprietary environment that completely differentiates our capability.

When clients say they want fast confirmation, we want to deliver that credibly, with matched choices, driven by system intelligence and professional review, not with a false assurance of ‘instant’ booking.

MATCH SCORE EXAMPLE

REQUEST DETAILS

Request Number: #1234567

Client Name:
"Location"

Preferred Address:

Email:

MOVE IN

30

May

2023

MOVE OUT

10

June

2023

Priority Needs #1: Meets Special Requests

Priority Needs #2: Requested Dates Available

Priority Needs #3: Requested Location

Priority Needs #4: None

Priority Needs #5: None

Show All

Map

Satellite

Map

Map

Satellite

Map

Housing Provider Name

100

Match Score

Available Date: 5/30/2023

Nightly Rate w/o Tax: £155.06 (GBP)

Tax Information: 20% for 28 days and under, 4% thereafter

Status: Offered

Status Reason:

More Details

Housing Provider Name

100

Match Score

Available Date: 4/15/2023

Nightly Rate w/o Tax: £185.39 (GBP)

Tax Information: 20% first 28 days, 4% onwards

Status: Offered

Status Reason:

More Details

Housing Provider Name

96

Match Score

Available Date: 5/30/2023

Nightly Rate w/o Tax: £151.69 (GBP)

Tax Information: VAT applicable

Status: Offered

Status Reason:

More Details

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3

Fast or Right? Supplier Selection and Duty of Care

Every client's travel program has unique policies and populations. Travel managers need confidence that a professional is assessing and previewing the alternative accommodations choices precisely because they are not the predictable option of a standard hotel. When clients ask for an alternative temporary housing solution, all searches from any supplier will respond with information such as number of bedrooms, property amenities, and in-suite services. More specific needs such as seasonal rates, flexibility regarding extensions, custom cancellation terms, and the ability to accommodate large group bookings for trainings, interns, or project management teams, typically require a custom designed search form and review.

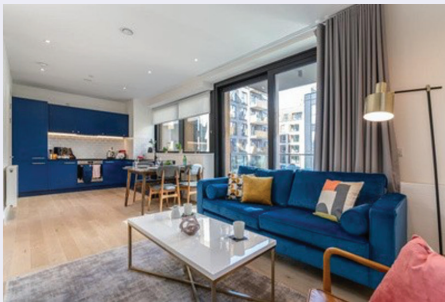
There is also the question of who is in the supplier database. In marketplace-booking platforms, suppliers can run the gamut from a private investor with a single short-term rental property to a multi-hundred-unit property that is one of dozens managed by a professional hospitality management firm.

This is not to say the suppliers in the platform/marketplace model are inferior; it is to note that the reason many of them are on the platform is to broaden their access to potential renters. These suppliers are not all in the 'corporate housing' business, many are in the 'short term rental' business and use the platform as a tool to expand their market reach.

If a supplier is more oriented to a self-serve or consumer/leisure customer, they are likely a poor fit for extended stays for business needs.

At Dwellworks Living, all partners must agree to a stringent code of conduct, to specific leasing and billing terms, to alignment with GDPR requirements regardless of location, and to industry standards ranging from quality of furnishings to compliance with sustainability goals. And, importantly, they must meet KPIs for responsiveness, whether for sourcing property choices or addressing a customer's needs.

MODERN, QUALITY-ASSURED ACCOMMODATIONS



Focus on Performance

The request for 'instant booking' is understandable when the client is eager to confirm the search status and initiate a positive service experience for the employee/traveler.

Given that 'instant' booking itself is not technically possible or even desirable in terms of quality control, your property selection/program partnership should focus on the company who delivers the best overall performance. Fortune 100's, and frankly all businesses when booking corporate accommodations, want efficient, responsive sourcing and standout customer care. Dwellworks Living delivers to those expectations within our value system of transparency, integrity and performance.

Interested in learning more? Connect with us [here](#).