

MyEvents Updates: Approval timing and process

In its desire to provide excellent customer service and continuous process improvements, the Travel and Entertainment (T&E) team has identified two areas that it needs to address.

I. Events that Triggered Review

A. Change in Policy:

UCOP has announced that it is in the process of revising policy BUS-79 that will result in a common standard across UC locations for timely expense reporting for meetings and entertainment. The following language is expected to be modified within the first quarter of 2015:

A. *Approval of Expenditures*

1. Submission of Meal and Entertainment Expenses for Reimbursement

Employees seeking reimbursement for University business-related meal and entertainment expenses incurred from their personal funds or [Travel Cards] must submit their expense reports within a reasonable amount of time not to exceed 45 days after the expenses were paid or incurred. If the expense reports are not submitted within the reasonable amount of time limit, it is left to the discretion of the campus (based on the facts and circumstances) whether to reimburse the expense or whether a reimbursed late submission is reported on the employee's IRS Form W-2.

This will require preparers to submit events accurately and timely and the need to reduce the overall processing time to ensure compliance.

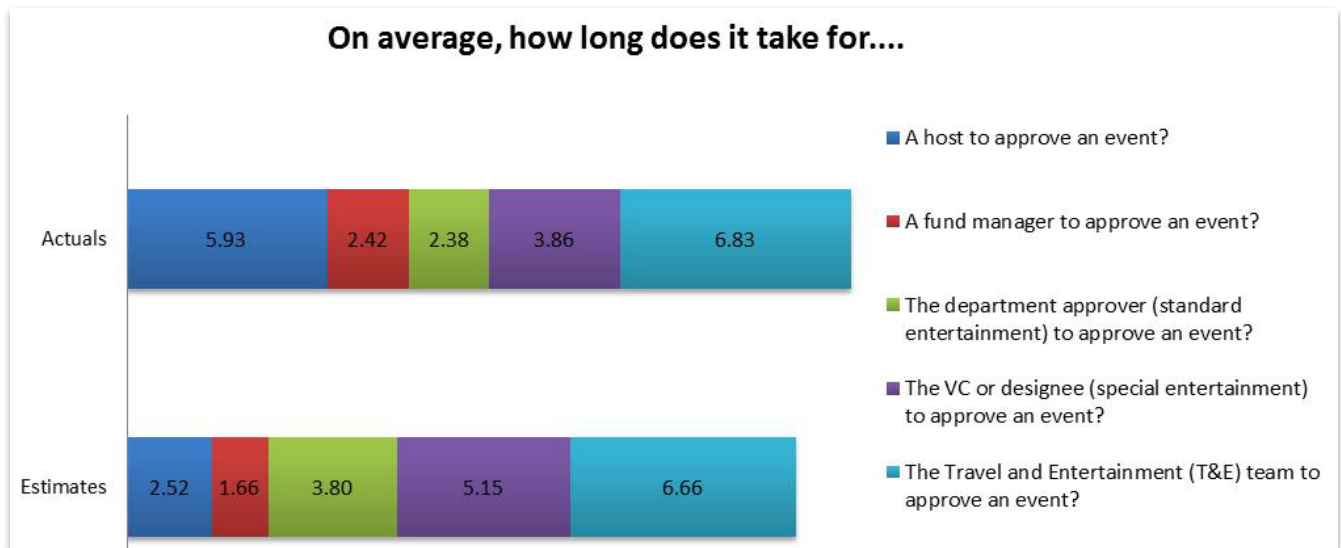
B. Reducing processing times:

Customer feedback indicates the MyEvents process is not meeting expectations in the area of turnaround time. Comments in the 2014 Customer Satisfaction Survey included:

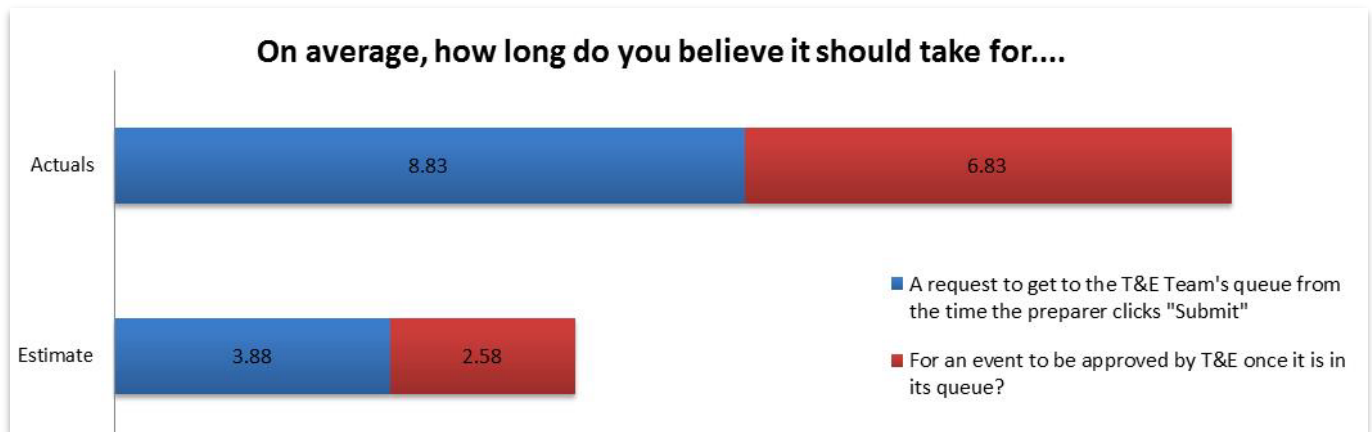
- Entertainment is taking way too long to process.
- Some vendors don't get paid for months after the event has taken place.
- It takes to [sic] long to get reimbursements back once they are sent to our Health Science approvers. In some cases two months to get an entertainment reimbursement pushed through. There needs to be a better turn-around time and the host or person submitting should not have to continually check with approvers to see if they have submitted their part.

Any delays in processing MyEvents may result in financial losses for the University via lost incentives and finance charges due to increased turn days to pay the corporate travel cards and lost vendor discounts for payment terms. It also may result in loss of goodwill by employees and increase in employee expenses when delayed reimbursements result in finance charges on their personal credit cards or lost opportunities.

To better appreciate expectations, T&E surveyed its Travel Focus Group and the top 10 MyEvent preparers across different departments. The survey asked how long the preparers believed it took for each approval step. This data was compared to actual data (FY14).



The survey also asked the participants how long they thought they process *should* take.



NOTE: Survey data is presented in calendar days and not business days.

C. Key points:

- Actual total processing time is shorter than perceived processing time
- Customers believed that the T&E team should be able to approve events within 2.58 days.
- Estimated time it should take for the T&E team to approve an event is correct and is within the team’s goal of four to six business days
- Customers felt that an event should be approved by all approvers other than the T&E team within 3.88 days

II. What We Found

A. Data

Based upon FY14 data of approved events, we found:

- ~90% of the hosts approved within one week, but 8% of host took 45 days or longer to approve an event and up to 3.2 years
- 90% of MyEvents were approved by the fund manager, entertainment approver, and special entertainment approvers within one week (each) with only 1% after 45 days.

Based upon data for the first three weeks of November 2014, we found:

- 11% of MyEvents required additional information and/or clarification
- 17% of departments had error rates that were 33%+

B. Factors Affecting Processing Times

In reviewing the MyEvent process, we identified three areas of process improvements that may address customer concerns and best prepare the University for the upcoming change to policy. These include:

1. Lack of understanding of the approval process on behalf of host resulting in delayed approvals.
2. MyEvent training is offered on a request basis versus a need basis.
3. MyEvents uses a sequential approach to obtaining approvals.

Approvers may not be available to monitor approval queues on a daily basis and, accordingly, it may take several days for a request to be approved. In addition, some approvers work in ways that makes them most efficient. For example, they may approve in batches, such as on Monday mornings. Each approver's process and ability to approve "stacks" the time to final approval.

III. Identified Solutions

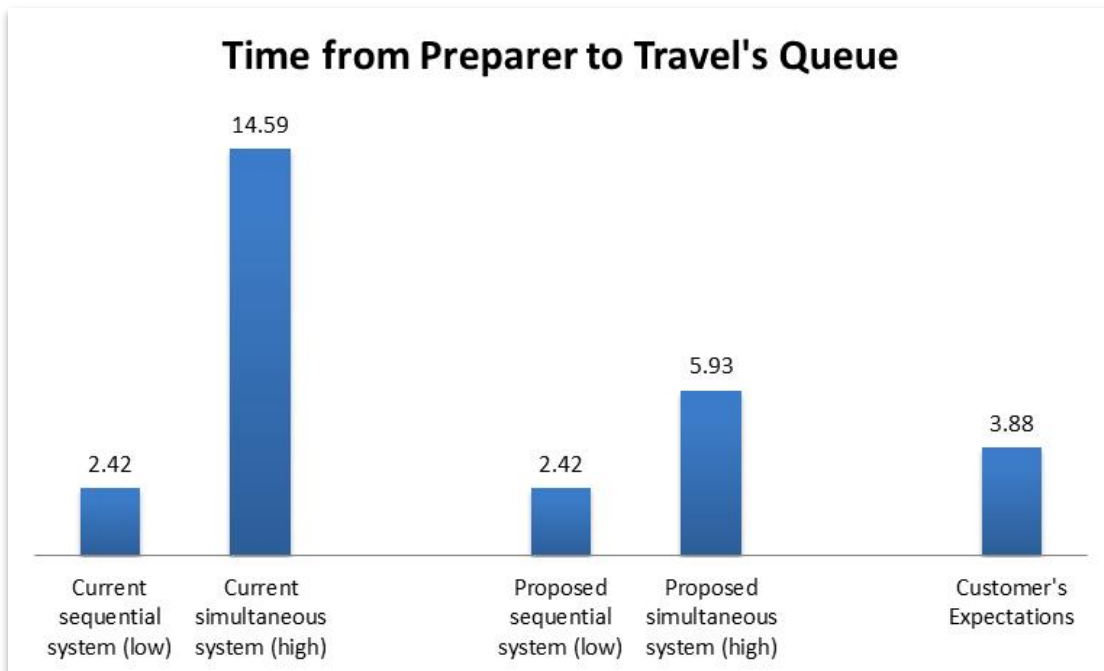
After reviewing the data, policy, process, and customers' comments, the following three improvements were identified.

1. Automated Reminder Notifications to Hosts: Emails will be sent to the host every 8th day until event has been approved or deleted (similar to emails to the traveler in MyTravel). Anticipated results will be improvement in the number of events approved by the host after one week. Current status: In development with an anticipated launch date of December.
2. Proactively Identify Training Needs: Add an administrative tool for the T&E team to flag requests that require clarification, documentation, etc. Anticipated results will be improved identification of departments (and preparers) that may benefit from training by the Travel team and, as a result from such training, a decrease in the number of MyEvents that require additional information and delays in processing. Current status: Implemented with first quarterly data available in January.
3. Simultaneous Approval Process: Modify approval process by sending requests to host and approvers simultaneously instead of sequentially.

Note: Currently, each approver approves the event for a different issue and receives a unique approval message.

Recipient	Message
Host	By approving this document, you are certifying that expenses are for official UCSD business, were incurred on the date(s) indicated, and that receipts were provided for each expense \$75 or more.
Fund Manager	By approving this document, you are certifying that for the fund source(s), the expense(s) is acceptable for nature of the event and if applicable, allowable for alcoholic beverages, Special Entertainment, any other restrictions associated with the fund(s).
Entertainment Approver	By approving this document, you are certifying that the expense(s) serves a clear and necessary business purpose or benefit to UCSD is reasonable and cost effective, and all necessary justifications are complete and accurate.
Special Entertainment Approver	By approving this document, you are certifying that the expenses are for official University business, and were incurred on the date(s) indicated. [This message may be revised to include "special entertainment expenses...."]

Anticipated results are improvement in reduced processing times that could be as high as 41% for some events. Current status: In development with an anticipated launch date of January.



Presented by: Nancy Herbst
 Manager, Travel & Entertainment
 To: The Academic Business Administrators
 When: December 2, 2014