

2019 'Corporate Travel Grant Competition' winner announced

Flight Centre Business Travel has announced the winner of its 2019 'Corporate Travel Grant Competition'.



L to R Priya Singh, CTO at Niche Integrated Solutions; Nisha Maharaj, CEO at Niche Integrated Solutions; Louise Harty, Corporate Marketing Manager at Flight Centre, and Andrew Grunewald, Brand Leader at Flight Centre Business Travel (FCBT)

Niche Integrated Solutions, a South African black women-owned ICT emerging company, walked away with the top prize of R150,000 in travel credits.

The prize includes:

- R30,000 Avis car hire and transfers
- R30,000 City Lodge Group accommodation credit
- R10,000 Marriott International accommodation credit
- R15,000 Meeting Room credit
- Lounge access to the value of R5,000
- R20,000 TIC annual travel policy coverage
- R30,000 worth of international flights
- R10,000 worth of domestic flights

“Business travel is critically important for the growth of our business,” says Nisha Maharaj, CEO Niche Integrated Solutions.

“The FCBT Travel Grant will allow us to further expand our business into Africa in 2020, without having to worry about the pressure business travel puts our cash flow.”

Niche Integrated Solutions is an up-and-coming black women-owned tech company that specialises in emerging technologies, networks and ICT-managed services. The company launched TechXAfrica in 2018, was one of the 2018 South African Innovation League winners and was cited as one of South Africa's most innovative women-owned tech companies.

“These accolades don't take away from the fact that we are a small emerging company in a very tough economic climate,” says Maharaj. “We want to make a meaningful difference to Africa and we are developing markets in countries such as Lesotho, Ethiopia, Kenya and Botswana. To be successful in Africa, face-to-face meetings are imperative: no company in Africa will conduct business over the phone or e-mail. This means we travel into the continent regularly and often at very short notice, which puts considerable pressure on our cash flow as it would for any SMME.”

Growing business through travel

The FCBT Travel Grant will allow the Niche Integrated Solutions team to travel at short notice to anywhere in Africa or South Africa without having to consider available budgets.

“The Grant will really help us conduct our business across Africa, where telecommunications and emerging technologies such as robotics and machine learning are incredibly relevant. South Africa spends a fortune on ICT import. We want to change this status quo and help South Africa bring more revenue home and improve ICT export to the rest of Africa.”

Having never worked with a travel management company before, Maharaj is excited to see how FCBT can help her grow her business through strategic travel savings and a comprehensive travel risk management plan.

Says Maharaj, “As women, it can be daunting to travel to places in Africa we've never been before. However, we don't want to turn away prospective clients no matter where they are in Africa.”

Maharaj explains the company currently books its travels online, which is a time-consuming process. “When travelling into Africa, booking online also brings some insecurity, as we never know whether the hotel we choose online will match its description in real life,” she says. “Having a travel expert in charge of our travel needs as part of the travel grant is an incredible bonus.”

Andrew Grunewald, FCBT Brand Leader, says “Travel is an essential component of growing a business. But, too often, growing SMEs such as Niche Integrated Solutions are concerned about the pressure travel expenses will put on their cash flow and profits. We can't wait to witness the benefits our Travel Grant will bring this promising and emerging SME.”