

## **First develops new workflow management system**

**A new software programme has been developed in Germany to improve the workflow between travel departments and agents and to offer a better service to clients. These are the main benefits of the new software tool Sky Gate, according to agency First Business Travel, which will introduce it for the first time with an industrial client this summer. Project manager Kai Lembke declines to name the client, however, so that competitors do not copy his plan.**

Sky Gate optimises the internal process steps within the agency and simplifies travel management for companies "because travel policies are linked into the workflow programme right from the start", Lembke says. This has a direct impact on costs. All travel processes are incorporated into the system, archived and can be displayed, Lembke says. "Overviews of current bookings and the data of all past journeys can be called up at any workplace," he points out.

Sky Gate is one of several First products to optimise travel management processes. Later this summer an upgraded version of the travel costs statistics programme "Zoom `N View" is also due to come on to the market. It is based on so-called "neuronal networks", which function similar to the human brain. These networks can handle information parallel to each other, meaning that new information which enters one part of the network can change the work of the whole network.

The main advantage of Zoom `N View is that travel data can be selected according to any desired criteria. "The system can search in the data overviews for those criteria which have substantially influenced a saving in expenditure," praises Lembke the benefits of the software. It works like a guide, recognises exceptions and suggests appropriate solutions. With the data on their booking volumes with specific airlines, travel managers can in future more easily negotiate with carriers over lower fares.

In a report on the entire annual spending on business travel, the consolidated turnover can be split into air, rail, car and hotel expenditure. "In addition, the system shows how much has been saved in comparison to normal fares," Lembke points out. The total spending and travel behaviour of individual employees can also easily be separated out.

The new tools, Lembke believes, will give First "a significant competitive advantage" over rivals. "Their software does not offer this level of functionality." First plans to introduce the software initially in Germany and later internationally. "It would be fatal not to market this tool everywhere because it offers the best pre-condition for doing this. It works independently of the Global Distribution Systems and can thus be used in all offices," he claims.