International Data Roaming Charges

What are they?

These days the essential item for a traveler is their smartphone first, and everything else second.

The benefit of the smartphone can quickly sour though when traveling internationally. Once overseas the prepaid or unlimited plan for domestic data consumption no longer applies and roaming rates kick in. An uninformed travel population can quickly incur charges of hundreds of dollars a day, or more.

How do they impact my company?

The costs for an unmanaged program can be staggering. We have seen bills from providers that have exceeded the cost of their trip for travelers that neglected to turn off their data roaming. Further, most companies do not have any written policy if this is reimbursable and under what conditions.

The ultimate result is that over 80% of global travelers these days turn off their smartphones when traveling internationally, which leads to a loss of productivity as well as disconnected employees.

What is the Best Practice?

When a policy is in place—and it is rare—the current practices involve primarily around two solutions: wifi only, or reimbursement of SIM cards.

In the former, the company will require the traveler to turn off data roaming and only use wifi services where and when they are available. This results in travelers continually searching for hotspots (often over public, unsecure networks) and possibly incurring additional charges for access.
The second option allows for the traveler to purchase SIM cards to operate in the local market. The challenge here is the requirement for the traveler to have an unlocked phone and the savvy to make the changes for each country they visit.

Our recommendation is to first and foremost engage with your travelers and understand how they are currently addressing this challenge. Advising travelers that wifi for smartphones is a reimbursable expense may be sufficient. Or it may not.

We would also like to introduce you to two other companies that are attempting to create a solution in this market. Please note that Casto does not have any affiliation with either company, nor has it received any benefit in suggesting them.

**GigSky Enterprise:** This company provides for a global universal SIM and the ability to manage all international data plans at local pricing. Further, it allows for enterprise level management of all purchased SIMs which holds promise for many purchasing divisions. For more information visit [www.gigsky.com](http://www.gigsky.com).

**Be-Bound:** Built as an application to operate within the phone there is no additional installation required and it works on tethered devices. Be-Bound operates on the 2G network which has extensive worldwide coverage, and will provide full access to all services when connected through their application. Visit [https://www.facebook.com/BeBound](https://www.facebook.com/BeBound).

Finally, we’d like to hear from you. How is your company handling this growing challenge? Which services do your travelers like best?

Kind regards,

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President and COO