

Get demos that reveal operating model reality, not just features

Many vendors focus demos on features and plans. What you want to understand is how their operating model behaves under everyday conditions: how work moves, how changes propagate, and how issues are prevented before they create work for your team.

Ask these questions during demos to surface how work actually flows, not just what the platform can do. Keep note of what's shown live versus promised later. Bring your [modern operating model scorecard](#) and [reactive vs. predictive KPI](#) results to the conversation.

Connectivity: <i>What happens when things change?</i>	Automation: <i>What work disappears for my team?</i>
<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a traveler changes a booking, which systems update automatically? • How long does it take for that change to appear everywhere? • What breaks and who fixes it? <p>Watch for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live examples of changes propagating across booking, service, reporting, and finance • Clear ownership of failures not handoffs 	<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which steps in booking, exchanges, approvals, and unused ticket handling require no human action? • What still generates tickets, calls, or escalations? <p>Watch for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workflow diagrams, not feature lists • Clear boundaries between automated vs. manual work
<p>Red flag: <i>Systems that integrate without showing timing, limits, or exceptions</i></p>	<p>Red flag: <i>Automation described as available but not default</i></p>

Data integrity: <i>Can I trust the data without cleanup?</i>	Policy effectiveness: <i>Is compliance enforced or designed in?</i>
<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How soon after booking is data reportable? • Where do clients typically need to validate or adjust data before using it? • If different systems show different answers, how is that resolved? <p>Watch for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear timelines (real time, same day, next day) • One clear source of truth 	<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is policy applied at the moment of booking? • What happens when a traveler tries to go out of policy? • How many exceptions make it through and why? <p>Watch for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking-time guidance and guardrails • Fewer approvals, not faster approvals
<p>Red flag: <i>Vague assurances that data is “generally accurate” without explaining timing, ownership, or resolution paths</i></p>	<p>Red flag: <i>Compliance measured primarily after booking</i></p>

KPI visibility: <i>What can I see before something goes wrong?</i>	Operational reality: <i>Where does effort still live?</i>
<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which KPIs indicate risk before cost or disruption occurs? • What would I see if adoption, compliance, or data quality started slipping? <p>Watch for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictive signals tied to workflows • Operational metrics, not just savings or spend 	<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What work does my team still do weekly or monthly? • What volume increases headcount or service load? • What happens when things break at scale? <p>Watch for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest discussion of limits • Clear scaling model
<p>Red flag: <i>KPIs focused only on historical reporting</i></p>	<p>Red flag: <i>They talk about what the platform does but never about what your team gets to do instead</i></p>

What these questions reveal

WEAK VENDORS

Talk about features, roadmaps, and customization

They can show you a polished UI but can't explain where the operational load actually goes. The demo looks good without revealing how the program runs day to day.

STRONG VENDORS

Talk about systems, workflows, and constraints

They show you where work disappears, how data stays clean, and how exceptions are prevented. The operating model is visible in the demo, not described in a slide.

If a demo looks perfect but can't explain...

- where work disappears after a booking or change is made
- how data stays clean without manual reconciliation
- how exceptions are prevented before they create escalations

...the operating model hasn't actually changed.

What to do next

The goal isn't to buy a better tool. It's to select a travel platform that reduces handoffs, exceptions, and uncertainty so the program works by default, not because your team is constantly intervening.

Use these other tools and ebook to help guide your decision process.

Tool 1

Operating Model scorecard

Revisit to confirm whether the vendor's model closes the gaps your score identified.

Tool 2

Reactive vs Predictive KPI checklist

Check whether predictive control is realistic with what the vendor actually showed, not promised.

Ebook

Modern operating guide

Revisit the six dimensions detailed in the ebook *The Modern Operating Model for Business Travel*.