

TIPS FOR TRAVELLERS

Travel is a significant part of lots of working lives. Some people love it, but for some it's stressful, tedious or an unwelcome drain on time. As more of us use technology to communicate with colleagues on different continents, the time we actually spend face-to-face is reducing and the need to make it count is greater. If you're worn out by the travel, you're unlikely to be at your best to do business. Here are some of my top tips for enjoyable international business travel:

Planning

- If it's possible, and especially if I'm travelling out of office hours, I plan NOT to work while I'm travelling. I indulge in a good book and regard it as a treat.
- When I plan a trip, I don't automatically go for the cheapest option. If I can reduce the stress or discomfort by spending a bit extra, then I go for it. (One of the perks of being my own boss!)
- I make realistic plans about what I can get done whilst travelling. Assuming that I can make phone calls or answer emails at specific times just creates more stress.
- I tell people well beforehand that I'm going to be away, so that they are not frustrated by having to wait for a response from me.
- If I'm going to need to call people who are in a different time zone (like home) I plan when I'll do that and write it in my diary.

Packing

- If I'm leaving home before midday, I always pack the day before I travel. That gives me overnight to remember any last-minute items.
- When I used to travel all the time, I had a toilet bag permanently packed with travel sizes of everything and an extra toothbrush, hairbrush and other essentials. It's lighter to carry and saves time when packing.
- I prefer to check in as much as possible and not have a heavy 'carry on' bag to lug around the airport. And it means I don't have to compete for space in the overhead lockers. Yes, it means waiting in the baggage hall. I can read some more of my book...
- When I get to my hotel, I unpack everything. It saves rummaging around in my bags to find things and it's easier for re-packing!

Jet-lag

There are both physical and psychological factors involved in jet-lag:

For the psychological:

- I set my watch to destination time as soon as I get on the plane. That gives me the whole flight to get used to it.
- I resist the temptation to calculate what time it is at home and focus on destination time. (This is why I plan calls in advance – I know that it's a sensible time to call without having to calculate it)
- Wherever I am, I do the things that it's normal to do at that time in that location.

For the physical:

- Sometimes the reason you wake up at odd times after shifting time zone is because it's a mealtime at home. Eat something for dinner that will take a while to digest and keep you satisfied until breakfast. (Pasta with cheese is my favourite)
- Drink lots of water. Air travel is dehydrating and it can leave you feeling disoriented and make it harder to concentrate.
- If the urge to sleep comes at the 'wrong' time of day, take a nap, but only for 90 minutes.

General

- Enjoy the experience! We live in a time when it's possible for lots of us to travel the world at modest cost. Our grandparents didn't have this opportunity and it seems unlikely that our grandchildren will.
- Despite the hassle of parking, of airport security, of airline food and of baggage halls, we are fortunate to be able to cover such great distances so easily. Consider the alternative!!

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