

Use Your Travel Downtime Wisely

You'll Never 'Kill Time' In An Airport Again!

So many time-management books and seminars focus on finding little pockets of time in one's day to perform small tasks that, all told, can add up to big successes. Got five minutes to kill before a lunch meeting? Call a prospect or touch base with someone in your professional network. Got a 10-minute commute on the train? Read over that territory report your rep just handed you. Five minutes here, 10 minutes there — even the briefest portions or smallest blocks of your day can be spent doing something productive.

You don't get to read a whole lot about how to best spend an enormous and unexpected chunk of time when it falls in your lap, although most business travelers are experiencing such chunks with increasing frequency. Between late flights, canceled flights and rescheduled

flights, such travelers (a good number of them sales professionals) can find themselves waylaid for hours upon hours with virtually no end in sight.

These periods can, if used wisely, wind up being some of the most productive hours of your day. Before your next business trip, think about these points:

Treat delays as inevitable. Go into your

trip knowing you're going to have some period of downtime, and plan accordingly to have some material available to work on during that downtime. Bring lighter work (reports to read, performance reviews to fill out, etc.) to fill in periods of an hour or less, but always have something a little more weighty (projection figures, planning materials,



etc.) on hand in case the short delay stretches into two hours or more.

Have what you need handy. Pack your briefcase and/or laptop case with downtime work in mind, keeping the materials you need to do both light and heavy work in appropriate spots where they can be accessed with ease.

Look around for opportunities. Conversations with other business travelers can be effective uses of downtime as well — networking opportunities you might otherwise never have had. Keep business cards close at hand and pen and paper within reach, to make for easy name and number exchanges.

Know where you are, and how to get out. Before you leave on your trip, download maps of the airports you'll be passing through and keep them handy, in case the amount of downtime makes it more efficient for you to rent a car to get to your destination. And for those long drives, keep a couple of book- or seminar-on-tape sets tucked away in your briefcase to make productive use of that time as well. ▲

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