MONEY SAVING TRAVEL TIPS

How to Avoid Travel Burnout

Stay Productive During Flight Delays

Business Ideas for Travel Lovers

International Travel Safety Ideas

Spotlight:
National Small Business Week
Publisher's Letter

Editor's Report

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For the Love of Business Travel

No matter how many conference calls or remote sales demos you do, at some point you’re likely to travel for business – even just to attend an industry conference.

If you’re like some of us, you have a love-hate relationship with business travel. You love it because of the excitement of seeing new places and meeting new people, and the opportunities it opens up. You may hate the inconvenience and expense of travel, though.

This edition of the Small Business Trends magazine is dedicated to those with this love-hate relationship.

In this edition we focus on strategies to help minimize the downsides of travel, including tips for saving money. And then there’s burnout, the bane of seasoned travelers everywhere; you’ll find helpful techniques to avoid burnout.

If you go outside the country, we have safety tips for traveling internationally.

To reduce the impact of your travel expenses, we have a piece from tax expert Barbara Weltman about deductions you may not realize exist. And if you travel by car a lot, we have the latest information on IRS standard deduction rates so you can deduct vehicle mileage.

Last but certainly not least, if you just love to travel and can’t get enough of it and are looking to start a business around travel, we have something for you. Check out our list of new business ideas around travel.

And there’s lots more.

Wishing you much success,

Anita

Being Dragged Off Your Flight is NOT an Example of Good Customer Service!

But, of course, that’s exactly what happened to Dr. David Dao. The good doctor was quite literally dragged kicking and screaming from his seat earlier this month when United Airlines needed to make room for some of its own employees. The result was -- uh -- not good -- obviously. So note to your own staff. Don’t man-handle the customers!

And This New Airline Regulation Won’t Thrill Customers Either

Although in this case it really isn’t their fault. Due to alleged terrorist threats, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will restrict passengers from carrying any electronic device larger than a smartphone during flight when traveling from 10 international airports. This means laptops and tablets will be placed in checked baggage. So no working on the plane.

SnapChat Ad Options Are Growing

Some of those include the opportunity to buy space on SnapChat’s selfie filters (called Lenses) and later be able to target those customers in a different way. How about being able to show them a full-screen video of your product or service, for example?

And Instagram Influencer Marketing Comes of Age

Were you one of those people who snickered at the idea Instagram influencers -- those personalities on the platform who some pay to pitch their products -- would ever be a thing? Be honest! Did you know the industry has now hit the $1 billion mark? So who’s snickering now?

Meanwhile, Have You Seen Google’s New Analytics Home?

Yes, the center for data on the web is going through some big changes. If you do business online and maintain a website, Google Analytics is a critical destination. But have you been there lately? In addition to a new home page, the new design replaces the familiar Audience Overview with data showing things like the location of your visitors and the kind of device from which they are visiting.
25 Tips for Staying Productive During a Flight Delay

Flight delays can be hard enough on the average traveler. But if you’re busy running a small business, those delays can be even more of a hassle. Fortunately, you don’t have to just accept a lack of productivity. There are plenty of ways you can use that delay to get stuff done. Here are 25 tips for staying productive during your next flight delay.

Streamline the Check-in Process

Even if your flight is delayed, you’re not likely to get much accomplished at the airport if you have to spend a lot of time checking in and finding your gate. You can make that process quicker and easier by signing up for airline mobile apps and downloading your boarding pass or even signing up for TSA PreCheck.

Make a List

Even if you’re just working on the fly, it’s a good idea to have goals in mind for what you’d like to accomplish. So when you first discover that your flight is delayed, make a quick list of tasks you could potentially accomplish in that time. And then get to work.
Make Sure You Have Personal WiFi

Some of those tasks you’d like to accomplish are probably going to require internet access. For that reason, having a personal WiFi hotspot on your phone or other mobile device can be invaluable for traveling entrepreneurs.

Find a Business Lounge

You could also potentially increase your productivity by finding a first class or business lounge that offers WiFi, comfortable seats and other amenities.

Remember Your Chargers

And nothing is worse than getting into a groove with your work and then having your computer or mobile device shut down. So remember to bring any chargers you might need, or even purchase mobile chargers.

Ask for Help

No matter how many devices you have at your disposal, there might be some things you just can’t do while sitting at an airport. So don’t be afraid to call or email other members of your team to ask them to cover any urgent tasks that you can’t get to.

Find New Productivity Apps

There are also plenty of mobile apps you might be able to use to make it easier to get things done from your smartphone or tablet. So check some of those out during your delay or even before.

Prep for Your Upcoming Trip

If you’re on your way to a big client meeting or other important business outing, there’s likely to be some prep work needed. So take the opportunity during your delay to get organized so you’ll have less to do once you arrive.

Organize Your Expenses

If you’re on your way back from a business trip, you could also take the opportunity to organize any expenses you might have accrued during your travels. Mobile apps can make organizing those expenses easy even when you’re sitting at an airport gate.

Send Overdue Emails to Clients

Flight delays can be a great opportunity for you to do some of those pesky tasks that you’ve been putting off for days or weeks. If you owe anyone an email, take the time to draft a response instead of just sitting there stressing about the status of your flight.

Get to Inbox Zero

You could also simply go through your incoming emails and organize them into folders or delete any unnecessary ones.
Organize Your Goals
If you don’t have any urgent tasks you can work to accomplish while at the airport, you could simply take the opportunity to look at your overall business goals and evaluate your current strategies.

Reevaluate Big Projects
More specifically, if you have any big projects in the works, you can look at some of your metrics and figure out if a change of direction might be necessary.

Make Quick Phone Calls
Though an airport terminal isn’t an ideal location for lengthy phone calls, you can potentially get a few quick calls out of the way while you wait for more information about your upcoming flight.

Catch Up on Industry News
There are plenty of news sources at airports and even more that you can access on your computer or smartphone. So while you’re waiting for your flight, take the time to read through some relevant industry articles or publications.

Cancel Out Noise
It’s tough to get work done when you’re sitting next to someone who’s having a loud, personal phone conversation or across from a crying baby. But you can cancel out at least some of that noise with a good set of headphones.

Set a Timer
But you also don’t want to get too zoned in on your work and miss any announcements regarding your flight status. So consider setting a timer so that you can focus fully on your work without having to constantly check the clock and listen to every announcement in your area.

Get a Tablet Keyboard
If you’re working on mobile devices like tablets instead of a full laptop, typing can be a bit more of a chore. But you can get a fairly inexpensive wireless keyboard to make typing on those devices easier.

Having a personal WiFi hotspot on your phone or other mobile device can be invaluable.

Work Offline
You might also find yourself dealing with distractions on your own computer or mobile devices. In those cases, working offline can be a good solution.

Keep Work Material for Your Flight
You can also use the opportunity to pull up and save any documents or online reading materials that you might want to access during your flight, especially if the plane doesn’t offer WiFi.

Have a Healthy Snack
Being productive isn’t always about completing specific tasks right away. If you spend all your time during a flight delay scrambling to get work done, you might find yourself too worn out to do anything once
you reach your destination. So you might also consider taking a bit of a break during your delay and grabbing a healthy snack to keep your energy levels up throughout the day.

**Practice a Language**

Airports can be a great place for you to get a feel for other cultures. And if you do any business internationally, learning another language can be a great use of your time. So invest in an app or program that can help you learn.

**Read a Book**

You might also consider spending your time reading a book. You can pick one that’s relevant to your business or even just a fun read that can help you unwind.

**Meditate**

Or you could clear your mind so that you can gain some perspective. Meditating, either on your own or with the help of an app, can be a great way to accomplish this.

**Get Compensated for Your Delay**

If you’ve spent valuable business resources on your delayed flight, then you might be able to get some sort of refund to help cover the cost and your lost time. Check with the airline to see if you can get money back or even a credit toward a future flight.

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**HOW TO BUILD A MILLION DOLLAR BUSINESS WITH MICROSOFT CLOUD**

GET EARLY ACCESS
Money Saving Travel Tips

As the weather heats up so does the travel season. With the peak tourism period fast-approaching, travelers are exposed to increasing costs, with airlines, accommodation and other travel services putting up their prices during the premium travel months. If you’re a small business traveler, who does not have the luxury of an endless budget to spend on travel, making savings is essential.

Here are 10 big money saving tips for the discerning small business traveler.

Track Unused, Expired Tickets

Craig Fichtelberg, president and co-founder of Chicago-based travel management company AmTrav, provided us with some insider tips for small business travelers, and how planning smart can save them money on business travel.

One tip Fichtelberg shared is to track unused tickets when they expire.

“This is the most missed opportunity by small businesses that allow their travelers to book on multiple websites. Cancellations of travel plans in business is common and unused tickets that are not tracked will never get used,” Fichtelberg warns.
Book in Advance

Research shows that travel services booked further in advance generally cost less than those made at the last minute. Fichtelberg advises businesses should require approval on last-minute travel purchases, enabling companies to ensure travelers are not waiting until the last minute to book a trip they knew about in advance.

Cancellations of travel plans in business is common and unused tickets that are not tracked will never get used.

Think Twice About Upgrades

Do you really require that legroom upgrade on a short-haul flight? Many airlines and other travel services offer upgrades to try and entice travelers into paying for more expensive tickets. Prices for upgrades vary significantly, so it is important small business travelers determine how much they can realistically afford to pay for upgrades and make it part of their travel budget.

Business Class or First Class?

The differences between business and first class travel are not as dramatic as you may think. In terms of boarding, as Investopedia notes, many airlines board business-class and first-class passengers together, providing no real benefit to first class travelers.

Consequently, businesses should determine whether and when first class and business travel is allowed, which could be tied into the length of the trip or the mileage.

Use Virtual Credit Cards to Reduce the Risk of Fraud

Another top travel tip for small business travelers from Craig Fichtelberg, is that, in order to reduce the risk of a business falling victim to fraud, employees should travel on a virtual card which is created per trip, so they don’t need to carry a physical card and run the risk of being a victim of fraud.

Avoid Booking Airfares that Don’t Allow You to Make Alterations

As Fichtelberg highlights, changes are common in business travel. Consequently, money-conscious business travelers should:

“Avoid booking the new airline basic fares that do not allow changes, seat selection and boarding preferences.”

If changes to the travel arrangements need to be made, business travelers will lose the full price of the ticket.

Join Company Loyalty Programs

Company loyalty points and programs are there to be benefited from. Fichtelberg advises companies to sign up for company-loyalty programs where the business earns benefits from air, hotel and car suppliers.

Take Advantage of Cash Back and Other Perks on Business Credit Card Deals

Credit cards for business use can come with a whole host of benefits, including cash back and travel insurance. Small businesses would be wise to take advantage of such deals, which could help them make significant savings on the likes of travel insurance and earn valuable
cash back when they book flights and other travel services with the business credit card.

**Use Hotel Comparison Websites**

Business travelers can save money on accommodation expenses by taking advantage of hotel comparison websites. The likes of Trivago and Travel Supermarket compare the prices of thousands of websites around the world, helping travelers find the best deals. For cash-strapped small business travelers, paying less for hotels has to be a priority.

**Get Uber Savvy**

Uber has taken the world of taxi travel by storm, offering significantly cheaper rates for taxi services compared to traditional taxi companies. Small businesses that are traveling on a budget would be wise to take advantage of Uber and enjoy getting from A to B in an unfamiliar town or city for less.

Do you have any great tips on saving money on business travel you would like to share?

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**Gabrielle Pickard Whitehead**

Staff Writer

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Outside-the-Box Travel Expenses — What’s Deductible?

Most small business owners incur, to a greater or lesser extent, travel expenses for their business. You probably know how to treat the most common costs — hotel rooms, airline tickets, business meals — but there are a slew of other travel-related costs that you may incur. Some are deductible and some are not. Here’s a rundown.

As a general rule, the cost of out-of-town travel is deductible. This includes airfare, lodging, and 50% of the cost of meals. Examples of other deductible expenses:

**Cancellation Fees**

It’s common to book a hotel room or a flight but later be forced to cancel...for business or personal reasons. If the travel would have been deductible (i.e., for business), then any cancellation fees are also deductible.

**Cash Tips**

Gratuities to porters, baggage carriers, and hotel staff may seem like minor expenses, but during the course of a trip they can add up. What’s more, unlike tips on meals that show up on your credit card bill, there’s no paper trail for cash. It’s up to you to keep a record of your cash outlays for tips.

**Beverages**

Another cash outlay that’s common on business trips is for the purchase of water,
coffee, or other beverages throughout the day. On a four-day business trip, how many of these beverages do you think you consume? Try to obtain receipts for any purchases.

**Internet Access**

A growing number of airlines and hotels offer free Internet access, but others charge you (or charge you for upgraded service). You may charge the access to your credit card; it may not be part of your hotel bill. Don’t overlook the charge as a deductible business expense.

**Laundry and Dry Cleaners**

On a short trip, you may not have any of these costs, but if you’re away for a while, or if you have a mishap, the hotel laundry services may be needed. Usually, it shows up on your hotel bill so you won’t overlook the cost. But if you go outside of the hotel (e.g., to use a one-hour cleaners), don’t overlook the cost as a deductible business expense.

There are various tax rules that may prevent you from deducting a cost that you view as arguably related to business travel. The tax law has some specific rules against certain deductions:

**Airline and Hotel Clubs**

The annual fee to belong to a special travel club, such as one that gives you access to airline lounges or hotel discounts, is not deductible. The tax law prohibits any deduction for most types of club dues.

**Traffic Tickets and Parking Fines**

But for the travel, you may not have received a speeding ticket or a fine for overtime parking. Nonetheless, the tax law bars any deduction for fines and penalties.

**Commuting**

You have to get to and from work, but the tax law views this as a nondeductible personal expense. There are some minor exceptions, but by and large, the cost of commuting, including any tolls and parking, are not deductible.

**Carpooling**

Carpooling is merely a variation on the commuting theme. It’s a nondeductible personal expense.

**As a general rule, the cost of out-of-town travel is deductible.**

**Travel Costs of a Companion**

If you bring your spouse or someone else with you who is not there on business, you can’t deduct the cost of that person’s airfare, meals, or any other additional cost. Of course, there’s no added cost for riding along in your car, or in most cases, sharing your hotel room so the cost is nominal to not be lonely.

**Conclusion**

As with other business expenses, your ability to maximize your write-offs depends on good recordkeeping. Use your smartphone to capture receipts for minor expenses so you don’t have to accumulate the paperwork or risk misplacing it. Check with your CPA and IRS Publication 463 to learn other deductible travel costs and the records you need to keep in order to claim them on your return.

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Benefits of Using a Travel Agent

The travel industry is constantly evolving. New destinations come in and out of popularity, new technology makes different kinds of travel possible, and the types of companies that serve travelers change as well. Innovative firms are even creating new travel methodologies like the “remote year” that blends work and travel for remote workers. Business owners are scrambling to think of ways to leverage partnerships with these firms to be a part of the experiences they create.

Travel agencies were once the only way to efficiently book travel, until the rise of self-service online options enabling consumers to research, plan, and book their own trips. A recent resurgence in the popularity of travel agencies marks a shift in consumer preference, back to the small businesses that used to help people explore abroad. Euromonitor International research estimates that global online sales for travel agencies reached $246 billion in 2015, a 19 percent increase from the previous year.

Part of that growth has been driven by new companies that are coming up with exciting ways to leverage today’s self-service technologies alongside local expertise and trip support. This combination is designed to
help remedy some of the shortcomings that have plagued online booking experiences. Research from Statista found that over half of users that booked travel through agencies said their experiences were better than ones they have planned on their own.

Localized Expertise

Zach Smith, founder and CEO of Anywhere, a travel agency that leverages local onsite experts as well as progressive technology solutions to offer custom travel experiences, thinks that the recent shift can be explained, in part, by consumer’s desire for curated experiences.

“The rise of review websites and top-ten lists online has caused a glut of common experiences that are often simply the biggest activities, or the most sponsored at a given destination,” Smith shares, “We leverage local experts to help us craft experiences that match each client’s style, as well as the local culture and beauty.”

Review sites place the responsibility on users to sift through endless options with no customization aside from search filters. The result is a million opinions based on millions of experiences, none of which truly educates those who are researching how to plan their next trip. Agencies are able to cut through the noise based on local partnerships and experience rather than unverified reviews.

Increased Accountability

In addition to adding more work for the individual travel planner, third party websites fail to offer any security or assistance while abroad. They also create issues with the various companies they book with, as the contract is between the traveler and the third party site, not the traveler and the company delivering the service.

For those that want to immerse themselves in local culture, and place accountability on someone else, a modern agency may be a great option.

Most travelers have probably experienced a third party issue like a rental car reservation that went wrong, or know friends who showed up to a hotel booked through a discount site, only to find their reservation did not exist. If you have used any of these services, it’s likely that this has happened to you as well!

This may be one of the biggest reasons travelers are looking for modernized travel agencies to help them book trips. Consumers that have used sites that leverage automation to make reservations quickly find there is minimal accountability when something goes wrong.

Smith explains, “The only kind of ‘AI’ that our customer wants in their travel experience is ‘Accountable Intelligence’. Having someone who is accountable for any issues means they also have an advocate that can prevent travel disruptions.” By providing a safety net for travelers, travel agencies help resolve issues quickly rather than leaving the customer to figure it out for themselves.
Returning to R&R

Travelers need to consider what their goals are when it comes to the trips they plan. When we think of vacation, we usually think of turning our focus away from strategy and work to relaxation. The opposite is the case for self-service travel however, as the traveler has to create itineraries, navigate language barriers and book reservations all on their own.

For those that want to immerse themselves in local culture, and place accountability on someone else, a modern agency may be a great option. For business owners in the travel industry, the best way to capitalize on this trend is by making the execution of trips stress-free.

Research indicates that digital travel sales will increase to an impressive $755.94 billion in revenue by 2019. For agencies looking to take customer share back from third party sites and self-service options, the key is creating personalized experiences, ones that the traveler might not be able to create on their own. As the industry continues to change entrepreneurs and small business owners need to find ways to blend human expertise and technology to create more options for consumers.

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20 Cool Business Ideas for Those Who Love Travel

You don’t have to choose between traveling regularly and running a successful business. There are plenty of different businesses that you can run while traveling. And there are even some that require you to do a fair amount of traveling. So if you want to start a business that supports your love of staying on the move, look no further! Check out this list of travel friendly businesses below.

**Travel Blogger**

Having a love of travel is definitely a plus if you’re going to be a travel blogger. To build a travel blogging business, you can start your own blog about all of your traveling adventures or put together guides and tips based on your experiences.

**Public Speaker**

Public speaking can be a lucrative gig if you’ve got some valuable expertise in a given area and the ability to share that expertise at various conferences and events. You can offer your speaking services to people in different parts of the world, and then use those engagements as opportunities to travel to new and exciting locations.
Telecommuting CEO

You can even serve as the CEO of your own company — even if that company does have a physical location — while you yourself are traveling. Telecommuting is becoming more and more common thanks to things like video conferencing and project management apps. So there’s no reason you can’t telecommute regularly — or even live in a whole different place while you run your business from afar.

Wedding or Travel Photographer

If you have some experience in photography and the right equipment, you can make a living by photographing weddings and similar events. And if you enjoy traveling, you can offer your photography services to couples around the world and then travel to those different events for each assignment. You can also use the opportunity to take travel photos of the places you’ve been and sell downloads or license their use from your website.

Translator

If you’ve had the opportunity to travel to different countries and learn other languages, you might be able to start a business as a translator. You can translate anything from books to documents in a variety of different languages. And that’s something that you can often do remotely, so you can work from anywhere.

Language Teacher

Knowledge of another language could also give you another kind of opportunity to offer your services — this time as a teacher or tutor. You could teach or tutor students of the English language in other countries. Or you could teach other languages you may have learned during your travels around the U.S.

Travel Consultant

Big travel agencies have struggled to stay afloat over the last several years. But that doesn’t mean there are no consumers out there who could use a little help booking their trips and finding the best deals. If you’re an experienced traveler, you likely have some valuable expertise that you could share with other travelers. So you could offer up those services as a travel consultant.

House Sitter

Many people prefer to have someone watching their homes or pets when they travel. So if you want to visit different areas while getting paid to do so, you could offer your services as a housesitter in all the different areas you’d like to visit.

Online Coach

You can use the internet to teach basically anything to people online. You can set up online courses in things like marketing and social media. Or you could get even more specific and teach people something like how to save money on travel. But even if your topic of choice doesn’t have anything to do with travel specifically, you can set up and monitor your online courses from pretty much anywhere.
Social Media Influencer

Social media is another tool you can easily access from basically anywhere, especially with the prevalence of mobile apps. And if you're able to build up a fairly sizable and influential presence on certain social media platforms, you can offer your services as an influencer and work with brands to share unique content with your audience from a beach in Hawaii or a ski lodge in Aspen, Colorado.

Handmade Shop Owner

Thanks to online platforms like Etsy and Amazon, it’s easier than ever to sell handmade goods from basically anywhere. But you can also sell handmade creations at various craft fairs and events around the country and the world. So in both ways, travel could work very well with your handmade business. Think about it.

Vintage Reseller

Vintage is another product category that you can easily sell online from basically any location. But you can also sell at flea markets and events. Plus, you can travel around the country or around the world to scavenge through antique stores, markets, fairs or bazaars to find unique treasures to sell online.

Remote Freelancer

If you're skilled in things like writing, design or social media, you can offer your services to companies on a contract basis and work from basically anywhere. You can even become a "digital nomad" with no home base — just working from where ever you are as you travel the world.

Personal Trainer

If you're athletically inclined, you can offer your services as a personal trainer or coach to clients in your area. But you could also take your business on the road to visit clients in other locations, or even offer online training sessions or video chat with clients during your travels.

Traveling Event Planner

True some event planners specialize in creating events close to home — in their own city or region. But event planning is another business where you can work as easily with clients across the country and around the world as in your own home town. You can even work with clients remotely through most of the process and then just travel to their location for the actual event itself.
Mobile DJ

You can offer your services as a DJ for weddings, parties or other events. But you can also offer your services to clients around the world or specifically seek out clients in areas where you’d like to travel. DJs have gone international in recent years attracting a following once reserved for musicians and other performers. You can use that fan base to attract audiences — and gain gigs — anywhere they have a dance floor.

T-shirt Designer

Online platforms like Redbubble and CafePress allow you to create your own designs and have them printed on t-shirts, mugs and other products without requiring you to take care of the actual manufacturing. So you can run a business selling those products without needing a lot of supplies or a fixed location. Create designs during your travels and market them online no matter where in the world you might be.

Website or App Developer

You can design and launch mobile apps from your smartphone or websites from your computer whether you’re at home in your own kitchen or chillin’ in the Caribbean. So long as there’s an internet connection or WiFi you’re good to go. There’s no need to be tied to a specific location. So you can start a location independent business designing your own mobile apps or websites even contracting with other companies to develop apps for them.

Travel Vlogger

This is a variation of the first suggestion on this list and owes much to the popularity of sites like YouTube. YouTube channels devoted exclusively to travel have exploded in recent years. Whether you attract sponsors or have a product of your own to sell, a YouTube travel channel could be an excellent way of creating a massive audience while you share video of your adventures.

Author

Finally, writing books has always been a job you can do from anywhere. But with the dawn of the internet, even the publishing and promotion of your book can be done from almost anywhere. Some writers even find that traveling can be inspirational or therapeutic. And certainly, if you specialize in travel books or other titles drawing from a certain place, traveling may even be a necessity for research and to get a sense of the places and things you are writing about.

Employee Vacation Tracking Template
Track vacation, sick-leave, and personal leave accrual. A great tool for HR personnel.

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15 International Travel Safety Tips for Roaming Wisely

When traveling to other countries, it’s important to always keep international travel safety in mind. There are many things you can do when traveling to various international destinations to keep you and your companions safe and secure. Here are some international travel safety tips to keep in mind for your next trip.

**Carry Contact Details for the Host Embassy or Consulate**

When traveling around other countries, the local embassy or consulate can serve as your most important point of contact in the event of an emergency, whether it’s an attack, natural disaster or just a personal emergency. So make sure that you have a copy of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate with you at all times, both in English and the language of the country you’re visiting.

**Leave an Itinerary with Someone at Home**

It’s a good idea when traveling overseas to let someone back home know where you’re going to be at all times. Even if you don’t have an exact itinerary, at least leave the contact details of where you plan on staying. And schedule times to check in with them throughout the trip as well.
Sign Up for Travel Alerts

Before you depart, you can sign up for travel alerts from the U.S. State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). These alerts can call your attention to any issues that might impact your travel destination so that you can plan accordingly. For example, if there’s an emergency situation in the country you’re visiting, you can get an alert with information and instructions from the U.S. government.

See a Travel Doctor

Depending on your destination, you may need to get additional vaccinations to ensure that you don’t get any contagious diseases while traveling. A travel doctor can help you get any required vaccinations or tests and even advise you on any additional precautions that may not be officially required but still beneficial.

Research Local Emergency Centers

While traveling, it’s unlikely that you’ll know just off the top of your head where to go in the event of an emergency. So look up that information before you even leave so that you can be prepared just in case you need to get to a hospital or evacuation center.

Get Travelers Insurance

If you’re traveling and you get sick or injured, your regular insurance policy may not cover any expenses that you incur. But you can purchase a special policy just to cover any emergency expenses that you rack up while traveling internationally.

Check Your Taxis

Taxis can be a great way to get around in many parts of the world. But depending on your destination, riding in taxis isn’t always as reliable as it is in the U.S. So make sure that any taxis you ride in are licensed and that the photo on the license actually looks like the driver.

Carry Emergency Numbers

In addition to having the embassy’s information with you at all times, it’s also a good idea to carry an emergency contact number or two. If you know anyone who lives near your destination, include them. And then also have the number for someone back home.

It’s a good idea when traveling overseas to let someone back home know where you’re going to be at all times.

Have a Phone that Can Make International Calls

Before you leave, even if you don’t plan on making tons of phone calls, make sure that you either get an international calling plan for your phone or buy a temporary phone that will work in your destination. You’ll be glad you have the ability to make calls in the event of an emergency or if you get separated from your group.

Research Cultural Norms

Every country has a different set of customs and acceptable behavior. Some can seem pretty similar to the U.S., while others are much different. So before you leave, do some research online or by talking to others who have visited your destination to make sure that you can avoid any behavior or appearance issues that might offend or anger the residents of your destination.
If you’re traveling and you get sick or injured, your regular insurance policy may not cover any expenses that you incur.

Track and Secure Your Valuables

Theft of valuables can be a major issue for travelers. To combat that, it’s a good idea to have a plan to track and safely carry your valuables. That means you should always be aware of the amount of money and other valuables that you brought with you. You might even consider keeping a running list of what you’ve spent or obtained so that you know what you have at all times. Then when you go out and explore, don’t take all of your money and valuables with you just in case there’s a theft or accident. But make sure you know exactly what you have on you and what you left with the rest of your belongings.

Make Copies of Your Passport

Your passport is your major source of identification when traveling to other countries. So in the event that you lose it, your travel plans can really go awry. That’s why you should have a backup copy with you in another bag just in case. And consider leaving another copy or scan of your passport with someone you know back home as well.

Carry Only What Is Required

Before you leave home and before you go out on any excursions, evaluate whether you actually need everything that you’ve decided to take. If you’re bringing a bunch of cash, expensive tech devices and other valuables that you might not even use, you’re risking those items getting lost or stolen. Instead, bring only what you absolutely need and leave the rest at home or in your secure room.

Clear Any Sensitive Data

If you are bringing a laptop or similar device that contains sensitive personal data, you could risk getting hacked or exposing your data in the case of a theft. If you do absolutely need to bring those devices, clear all of your personal data before leaving on your trip. Then even if your device is hacked or stolen, you can keep the damage to a minimum.

Change Your Passwords When You Return

Then when you get back, change all of the passwords to your devices and major accounts just in case hackers were able to access your devices.

Annie Pilon
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How to Prevent Your Employees from Suffering Travel Burnout

The number of business trips in the United States is increasing every year and expected to keep rising. That number is expected to rise from 461.1 million trips in 2008 to an anticipated 471.1 million trips projected to be made by American business travelers in 2020, according to Statista.

No doubt there’s money to be made taking planes, trains and driving automobiles for small business, but there’s another side to the profit coin. Burnout is a factor for the over 1.3 million business travelers that took trips everyday in the United States last year.

Symptoms include having difficulty making decisions and feelings of irritability and anxiety. All these things can affect the way you get the job done on the road.

Reduce Travel Costs

Dan Ruch is the founder and CEO at Rocketrip, Inc., a New York City based company dedicated to helping employees and management combine efforts to reduce travel costs. Although the company’s initial focus isn’t the small business arena, the template they’ve created works well for anyone regardless of the organization’s size.
“We’re in the behavioral change business, in a category we’re creating called incentivized decision making. What we do is make business travel, which can be a very stressful experience, fun and exciting again."

Make It a Game

Generally, business travelers have a set amount and high end they can spend on lodging, food and such. Creating challenging and interesting ways to trim those budgets is one of the first methods to save expenses and reduce travel related stress.

“If you have to go on the road for your company and you’re willing to trade off a little comfort for a little value, you can be recognized for these thoughtful travel decisions,” Ruch says.

Here’s an example. Employees that contribute to a shared knowledge database of economical places to stay in certain cities and towns can be recognized for their contributions in a newsletter.

If you have to go on the road for your company and you’re willing to trade off a little comfort for a little value, you can be recognized for these thoughtful travel decisions.

Use Technology

Of course one of the easiest ways to decrease the stress your employees suffer from is to cut down on the amount of time they need to be on the road. Allowing them to work from home helps to lower their travel related blood pressure spikes. Ruch explains how technology can be used effectively to accomplish this.

“Using virtual meetings instead of in person meetings is another solution. Obviously there’s no replacing face to face time with clients, but this is a very powerful way to cut down on business travel related friction.”

Mix Business and Pleasure

Letting folks take the foot off that business gas pedal and enjoy some leisure time when they’re traveling for your small business also helps to lower anxiety and stress.
“The industry has started to call this Bleisure travel,” Ruch says. “Say you’ve planned a trip for four days, Tuesday to Friday. Why not allow your employee to stay the week and come back on Sunday? It’s the perfect opportunity to cut down on costs since the flight will be cheaper on Sunday and the employee gets the benefit of a little personal time in a new city.”

There are a few other simple things employees can do to make their time as road warriors for small business a little easier.

Don’t leave anything to the last minute. Planning ahead and making sure that every detail is covered makes any business trip a little easier to deal with. No one really wants any surprises when they are out on the road. That’s why it’s a good idea to double check and make sure you’ve got all the electronic and paper files you’ll need as well as all of the devices like tablets and laptops to make any business trip seamless.

We’re living in the digital age and there’s an app for everything including one to make your small business travel time easier. The best ones like AroundMe tell you where to find the essential business services and amenities in a strange city. Other apps like TripIt consolidate everything from flight to meeting schedules into one place.

Finally, Ruch says that some small businesses need to formalize their approach if they only have loose procedures for business travel.

“Small businesses that say they have no travel policy create more stress,” he says. “Employees need guidelines.”

Rob Starr
Staff Writer
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The IRS just announced the official standard mileage rates for 2017 — and there are some minor decreases.

The IRS mileage rates for 2017 for the use of a vehicle are:

- 53.5 cents per mile for business miles driven, down from 54 cents for 2016;
- 17 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes, down from 19 cents for 2016;
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

The IRS mileage rates for 2017 apply to miles driven starting January 1, 2017.

According to the announcement, the business mileage rate decreased half a cent per mile and the medical and moving expense rates each dropped 2 cents per mile from 2016. The charitable rate is set by statute and remains unchanged.

The IRS sets mileage rates each year for business, moving and medical purposes after studying the fixed and variable costs of operating a vehicle. It calculates variable expenses using the average cost of driving a vehicle and factors in gas usage, maintenance and repair. Only the variable rate applies for medical and moving purposes.
Since mileage rates are contingent upon the costs of driving a vehicle, it’s likely the current drop in oil prices factored into the IRS’s decision to decrease rates.

The 2017 mileage rates apply to miles driven in the following types of vehicles: cars, vans, panel vans and pickup trucks.

**Claiming Standard Mileage Rate versus Actual Expenses**

Business owners or employees who use their personal vehicle for work have two options for keeping up with mileage: utilize the standard mileage rate (SMR) or track actual expenses.

Which is better? “It depends,” says a blog post on the MileIQ website. (MileIQ is an app for tracking mileage.)

Using the SMR may be the easier of the two, MileIQ says, but it’s not as simple as it sounds. Not only do you need to keep track of the number of miles driven along with the total miles but also the dates of trips, business destinations and business purpose.

The second option, tracking actual expenses, can result in a larger deduction but demands meticulous record keeping that includes gas and oil, repairs and maintenance, depreciation, fees, insurance and more.

The choice of which to use may come down to the vehicle in question. For example, you may benefit from the standard rate if you drive a smaller car that uses less gas. A larger vehicle, such as a panel van, costs more to operate and, as a result, the actual expenses method may serve you best.

MileIQ recommends keeping track of costs the first year you use the vehicle for business.

Then, at tax time, run the numbers to determine if the deduction will be larger using the standard mileage rate or actual expense method.

**Repaying Employees for Mileage**

Should businesses reimburse employees for mileage associated with the use of their personal vehicle in a work-related context?

According to Pam Steverson, CPA, with the accounting firm Kemp, Williams, Steverson & Bernard, who spoke with Small Business Trends by phone, an employer does not have to reimburse an employee for business miles, although most do.

“The employer does not have to use the standard mileage rate for reimbursement,” she said. “Whatever the reimbursement, the employer gets a business deduction. As long as the reimbursement is done via an accountable plan (i.e., expense report detailing business purpose, miles, client, date), the employee does not have to pick this up as income.”

If the reimbursement is not via an accountable plan — the employer just gives the employee $500 a month for the use of his vehicle, for example — the employer can still get a business deduction, Steverson said. But the reimbursement should be reported as wages and not travel reimbursement, with all of the applicable payroll taxes being paid.
Employees should reference their employee handbook to determine the employer’s reimbursement policy. If no official policy exists, they should ask their supervisor or contact the human resource department for information.

Employers, be sure to update any written policies to reflect changes in the SMR for 2017 and notify employees of those.

Other Mileage Rate Tips and Info

If you are working on the prior year’s tax returns, remember to revert to the mileage rates for that year. Your tax professional can assist you regarding the implementation of mileage rules for a given situation.

Also, once announced, the SMR applies for the entire year. At times, however, the IRS has made mid-year adjustments based on fluctuations in gas prices.

Paul Chaney
Staff Writer
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How Do You Take a Working Vacation and Still Catch a Break?

When you’re standing at the helm of a thriving small business, stepping away for a quick vacation often seems impossible.

As a result, less than half of small business owners opt to take any time off work at all. Yet even those bold enough to get out of the office every so often grab an average of just five days’ vacation per year. Believe it or not, that inability to switch off is hurting your business — not helping.

According to a recent Gallup poll, small business owners who don’t take any vacation days are far more likely to be unsatisfied with their standard of living, and also struggle to maintain any sort of balance between their work lives and personal lives. Work relationships and daily performance will inevitably suffer, too.

Bearing that in mind, it’s crucial that you get yourself out of the office and enjoy a semi-regular change of scenery. Even if you’re unable to unplug completely, it’s totally possible to take a relaxing vacation while still getting a bit of work done.

To help you get started, here are a few tips on how to take a working vacation:

**Rearrange Your To-do List**

Big projects tend to be a huge vacation barrier for small business owners. After all, any big marketing campaign, research and development exercise or production cycle
requires constant attention — and so it can be nearly impossible to manage those projects from abroad. That’s why you should be planning your vacation well in advance in order to work around thorny projects.

Pick some dates you’d like to escape from the office, and ensure those days don’t interfere with crucial projects you may have scheduled. Likewise, don’t be afraid to push an important exercise back until after you’ve had your vacation.

Get Stuff Done Before You Leave

Unfortunately, current deadlines aren’t going to magically disappear just because you need a bit of fun in the sun. In order to make the most of your time off and minimize the time you’re going to have to spend working on your vacation, it’s important to get as many tasks done as possible prior to your departure.

If you’re not going to have constant access to WiFi, get all of your online research done before you leave the office. Likewise, if you’re going to need access to files on a shared drive, be sure to transfer them onto your personal devices beforehand. These sorts of little tasks will make a world of difference when you’re away.

Limit Yourself to Basic Tasks

The whole point of taking a working vacation is to relax. If you’ve brought a gaggle of stressful and time-consuming tasks to do, you won’t enjoy a single minute of your time off. Bearing that in mind, you’ve got to limit yourself to basic tasks like checking emails, following up with key employees or checking analytics. Whatever you do, don’t get sucked into a long conference call or trying to chase down a lost delivery.

Pick a Schedule and Stick To It

If you can’t get around doing a few more complex tasks while on vacation, be sure to stick to a firm schedule. If you need to check in with the office, do it at a set time every day. More important still, let employees know this is the only time of day they will be able to catch you in real time. Likewise, you should set out a strict deadline each day to drop what you’re doing and get back to enjoying yourself. This is particularly crucial if you’re away with family members. Kids grow up fast, and so you’ve got to let family time be family time.

Choose a Dedicated Work Space

In order to maximize your productivity while working on vacation, it always helps to choose a dedicated work space. Visiting the same coffee shop each morning, or consistently using the kitchen table in your hotel room will help to simulate a more typical working environment. In turn, that simulation should go on to increase your productivity and get you back to enjoying yourself that much quicker.
If You Can’t Provide Good Feedback, Don’t Provide Any

When you are checking in with employees every so often, one of the worst things you could possibly do is to respond to their work with a two-word text message or a short and cryptic email. Complicated employee tasks may require complicated conversations; therefore, if you haven’t got the time or the will to walk your team members through detailed instructions or subtle mistakes, don’t bother trying at all. If feedback can wait until you’re back from vacation, don’t try to get to it before.

But either way, you’re only shooting yourself in the foot by locking yourself in the office all day. Do yourself a favor. Get out there and get a bit of sun. Your sanity and your business depend upon it.

Do you have any additional tips on how to take a working vacation, maybe something that’s worked for you? Please share in the comments below.

Nash Riggins
Staff Writer
@nashriggins

No two working vacations will be the same.

At the end of the day, no two businesses are alike. Bearing that in mind, no two working vacations will be the same, either. It’s crucial that you set some time aside beforehand in order to think about what it is you’d like to achieve by going on vacation, and what you’ll need to accomplish while you’re away.

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Nash Riggins
Staff Writer
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IS YOUR BUSINESS DIGITALLY READY TO REACH NEW CUSTOMERS?

Being digital is an equalizer that allows businesses to compete effectively. According to Boston Consulting Research, businesses who are digital ready grow 461% faster than digital laggards.

START YOUR FREE ASSESSMENT
Ah, the road warrior of the business world. The image is almost universal — a business person in the airport running along pulling their luggage, a laptop on one shoulder, a carry on, an overcoat of some kind, and the always present pastry and coffee. (Maybe you are this person!) But if Modobag has its way, the hectic scene will be a distant memory for the tens of thousands of business — as well as regular — travelers plodding through airports around the world.

So what is Modobag, you ask?

The Idea for Modobag

While traveling with the Chi-Town’s Finest Breakers, a dance troupe, Kevin O’Donnell noticed the kids were taking turns riding on his suitcase. And that’s when the light bulb went on. “We’re gonna put motors in these!” he exclaimed. And the rest, as they say, is history.

O’Donnell had studied Industrial Design at the University of Illinois and spent some time in the technology sector, so he called his friend, Boyd Bruner, a college buddy, competitive motorcyclist and designer, to make it happen.
Fast forward two years, and the Modobag is being demonstrated by people whizzing on the luggage with big smiles on their face.

The experience in the tech sector definitely came in handy when the bag was being designed, because it seamlessly integrates the functionalities today’s traveler needs.

The Modobag

The 150 Watt electric motor has a belt drive, high torque maintenance-free design capable of reaching speeds of 5 MPH for indoors and 8 MPH for outdoors. The entire unit is put together with a CAD-designed, lightweight aluminum chassis that can support riders that weigh up to 260 pounds. The range depends on the weight of the rider, but based on someone that is 180 lb., it can travel up to 8 miles.

The Modobag has a state-of-the-art lightweight lithium batteries with more than 4,000 full charge cycles, which can be charged to 80 percent in 15 minutes and fully charged in less than an hour. The lithium battery uses the latest patented nano-crystal technology, which makes it compliant with Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), United Nations (UN), and International Air Transportation Association (IATA) regulations.

Storage, Charging and Security

The bag has a dimension of 22” x 9” x 14” and weighs in at 19 lbs., with 2,000 cubic inches of interior storage space for your belongings. The side pockets have been designed to quickly put your laptop, tablet and smartphone in a protective casing for easy access.

Since you are going to be carrying these devices, the Modobag has two illuminated USB charging ports, so you won’t have to endure sitting on the floor next to an outlet in an airport if your device needs to be charged.

Security measures include GPRS-GSM real-time tracking with proximity features so you will know where your bag is at all times. The Modobag Mobile App, which is another tracking option, comes with one free year of service.

Michael Guta
Staff Writer
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5 Ways To Save Money with The Travel Benefits Portal

Do you want to win a new business? Do you need to travel to meet your customer?

If yes, you will need to start planning a trip. As a business owner, the first thing I would think when I need to travel, is about how I can make my experience effective while saving money. And, that is exactly how most small businesses would weigh their travel decisions.

Keeping this need in mind, Small Business Trends has worked closely with the Ignite Holiday team to bring you access to wholesale travel discounts with some of the lowest rates possible anywhere.

The travel benefit portal allows all Small Business Trends users to have:

Savings Over 60%

All deals are very exclusive and the saving are over 60% on hotels, cars, experiences and more. Every Dollar you spend through this portal allows you to save dollars.
Access to Many Offers

Every small business engaging with Small Business Trends has access to 150,000+ hotels in over 5,000 cities worldwide.

Simple Registration

Just register and get access to the world of travel benefits from Last Minute Travel (LMT) Club and TicketsAtWork. These are the gateways to best prices and values in hotels and vacation package deals. They also offer great deals on so much more too -- hotels, flights, rental cars, activities (Discounted Disney tickets? Discounted ski lift tickets? they got ‘em all!), cruises, vacation homes, vacation packages, and great travel deals --around the year and around the world.

Give a Gift of Travel Savings

Refer this page to your colleagues as a “special thank you” for running a small business so they can join in on the fun, the savings and pass it on to their colleagues too.

Reward Your Employees

Give them access to the travel benefits too. Help them save money on their travel.

Exciting? If yes, here is how to get started:


2. Create an account with invitation code: SMALLBIZTRENDS

3. Search, access and start saving today.

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Chaitra Vedullapalli
@cvedulla
Generate Leads and Sales All-In-One Place

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Get Started
A lot has changed in America since the 1960s but at least one of the fundamentals driving us all forward is still the same.

The importance of small business remains one of this country’s immovable bedrocks.

This year, the U.S. Small Business Administration will celebrate National Small Business Week from April 30 – May 6.

Small Business Trends is a supporting co-sponsor of National Small Business Week.

“In the U.S., small business is the backbone of the economy. They create two out of three new jobs and more than half of Americans own or work for small businesses,” says Stephen Morris, Online Media Coordinator for the SBA.

The President of the United States formally declares National Small Business Week. It started with President Lyndon Johnson in 1963 and will continue into 2017 when President Donald Trump issues a similar proclamation.
It’s not the only place, as Morris assures.

“While we definitely regard social media as an important way to reach small business owners, it’s not the only thing that we do,” he says. “We have a bottom-line mentality that should resonate with small business owners.”

The SBA has long been the main federal agency that deals with small business issues. It supplies advice and assistance on how to start and manage a small business. It also provides small business with access to loans and grants, and provides a path to government contracts.

“Today, our main goal is to educate and inform small business owners about the resources that are available to them,” Morris says.

History of the SBA

The SBA traces its roots back to 1932, The Great Depression and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). This is the grandparent of the modern version of the SBA. There were several other predecessors that took shape during WWII and the Korean War.
On July 30, 1953, Congress created the early version of the modern SBA through the Small Business Act.

The social conscious of the SBA was evident quickly. The Equal Opportunity Loan (EOL) Program was developed in 1964 to attack poverty by relaxing collateral and credit requirements.

Consider what President Johnson said back in 1965. Although the numbers have changed slightly, the impact of small businesses in America hasn’t thanks in part to the efforts of the SBA.

“Small businesses constitute more than 95 percent of all of the businesses in this country. They employ 40 percent of our entire labor force,” the President said. They provide a livelihood for more than 75 million American citizens. Local development companies financed by SBA have created nearly 8,000 new jobs.”
One of my tricks when I’m a little stumped is to imagine an animal in an office and let my brain wander. Incongruity is usually a pretty good kick in the ol’ brain.

Normally, though, I pick something like a cat or a dog or a bear — something more typically anthropomorphic. But for whatever reason, this day I chose a salmon. Yep, a salmon.

So right away I remembered that salmon swim upstream to spawn. You see it in like every other nature film. But how to address that in an office?

Is there some sort of manager salmon to keep track of their progress? Did someone check to see if it was the bears’ day off? Do they just call an Uber?

It took a bit, but just acknowledging the whole weird situation ended up working best. And now I can scratch “draw fish at work” off my to-do list.

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