

How to Succeed in Business Travel

**The migratory business-
person's guide to the mastery
of turbulent taxi rides,
"airplane jamming" and finding
the eleven o'clock news**

BY LAWRENCE SAVELL

You already have your backlit, 386-processed, hard-driven, memory-laden, Windows-running laptop. You have your battery-operated, laser-quality printer. You have your palm-sized cellular phone.

But it takes more than that to master the art of business travel.

As someone who has totally forgotten what it's like to wash with a normal-sized bar of soap, and who has enough "frequent flyer" mileage for a first-class seat on the next Space Shuttle, I have distilled my ordeals into a few simple rules for success in business travel. Perhaps you can save yourself the tribulations I went through in learning these dictates.

1 PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

The advance notice (if any) for a business trip can vary greatly. You should, therefore, anticipate last-minute excursions by always keeping a change of critical garments in your office. If not, you can look forward to shampooing your only shirt and underwear later that evening in some hotel bathroom sink. Although you can somewhat accelerate the drying process by suspending

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the drenched items below a ceiling heat lamp (if one is provided), be aware that such efforts will be only marginally successful at best. Of course, donning still-damp garments the next morning will guarantee you will remain awake, if not invigorated, by your refreshing attire.

If you actually know about your trip some time in advance, you will be allowed the pleasure of packing. This activity, for which years of doing jigsaw puzzles or living in a studio apartment is an important (but not necessarily sufficient) prerequisite, calls for great skill and foresight. While you should carry sufficient garments to cover eventualities such as wayward airplane meals and schizophrenic inseams, the goal is to avoid appearing as if you were headed for summer camp. Try, therefore, to employ articles with multiple applications, such as a tie that can serve as a belt for a bathrobe or, turned inside out, can help shine a well-traveled shoe.

2 **DON'T GET TAKEN FOR A RIDE**

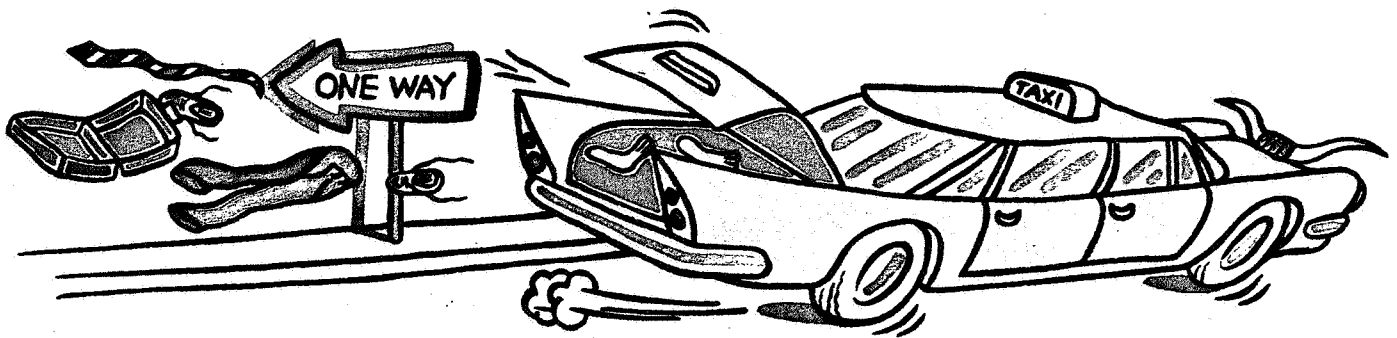
Bear in mind that the most dangerous leg of your trip is the cab ride to the airport. The operator will invariably be a harried, recent immigrant to this country who, in his native land, was probably a race car driver. You should therefore avoid all

dining at least two hours before heading out to the airport.

You may alternatively consider a private car service, engaged via telephone with rides charged to a company account. Be aware that while such establishments virtually guarantee that a vehicle will arrive, such arrival may be less than imminent. Moreover, drivers are notorious for underestimating how long it will take them to reach the pickup address. Their optimism varies proportionately with the extent of the estimate; an ETA as long as 15 minutes indicates that, if you are calling from Manhattan, the driver is probably just outside Philadelphia.

3 **HAVE AN AIRPORT GAME PLAN**

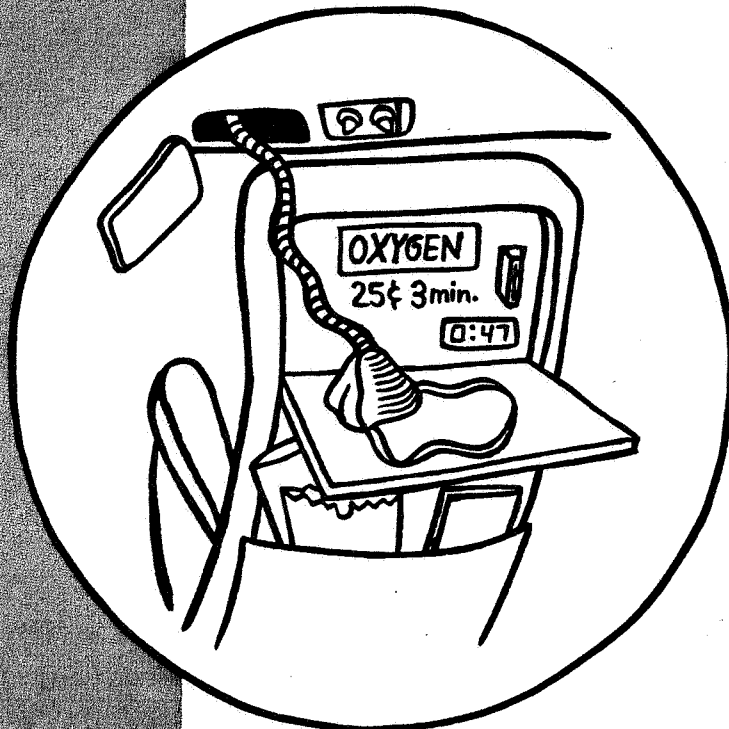
Arrival at the airport terminal merely means that you have reached the geographic halfway point of your trek to the airplane. Most airports, recognizing this problem, thoughtfully provide a mandatory ten-minute rest area, marked by a sign reading "For Your Protection: X-Ray/Metal Detector Screening." These scanning devices in-



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corporate the latest technology available, sensitive enough to detect key rings and money clips that could be lethal weapons in the hands of a determined terrorist, yet powerful enough to obliterate films that could easily have contained stolen government secrets.

Once aboard the airplane, you are expected to join in the ritual of "jamming," an exercise with origins in the roller derby arena, in which passengers engorge the overhead storage bins with as much freight masquerading as carry-on baggage as possible. Given this eventuality, you should make every effort to be among the first to board the aircraft, regardless of whether the gate personnel have called your assigned row.



Keep in mind that even if you are successful in checking your opposition away from the gate, you still may face scrutiny of your boarding pass. In such an event, the standard practice is to mangle the document into illegibility and convincingly whine to the attendant that you mistook the two-inch "36" for a "2."

KNOW THE AERIAL OFFICE'S LIMITS

4 Once in the air, you may feel some compulsion to do business while traveling. Such urges should be immediately suppressed, as they are doomed to failure. Federal regulations require airlines to frustrate any efforts to make travel time productive. For example, once the flight attendants have sealed all exits, they will create an atmosphere of calm by informing the passengers that the air might be sucked out of the airplane or that the craft might crash into an unspecified body of water. If you are a budget-conscious business traveler, you will hear a similar greeting on the so-called "no-frills" carriers with a minor variation: the attendants will advise that oxygen masks will appear in the event of a sudden change in cabin pressure, and "please deposit 25 cents for the first three minutes. . ."

Some airlines have attempted further distraction, such as by placing a video camera in the cockpit to convey the pilot's view of takeoff and landing to the passengers. Unfortunately, this generally results in the televising of the back of two bald heads with empty space out the windshield; indeed, the appearance of local landmarks (e.g., the World Trade Center) should cause you some concern.

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5 EXPECT STRANGE CITY CONFUSION

If, like most business travelers, you arrive at your destination at night, you should not be surprised to find that the bed in your hotel room has already been turned down by a person or persons unknown. You should also be careful not to lie down without first removing the assortment of chocolate candies resting on or near your pillow, traditionally furnished by the hotel dentist.

Although most rooms contain a television, it will be virtually impossible to locate a familiar program at its normal time. Local news broadcasts are particularly difficult to find; there are cities where the eleven o'clock news comes on at ten, or where it is not even shown at all. Despite such frustration, you should restrain the urge to order one of the "in-room" movies available, to avoid the embarrassment of submitting for reimbursement a hotel receipt bearing a charge for

viewing "Wanda Whips Wall Street."

In the morning, refreshed by several hours of sleep on a mattress as springy as the floor of a racquetball court, you should anticipate being awakened by a telephone ring coming from an unaccustomed direction. Should you successfully locate the device, you will invariably be told by a sadistically jovial voice (either human or, increasingly, electronic) "Good morning. This is your wake-up call," presumably to avoid your mistaking it for one of the many other calls made to your hotel room at 6:00 a.m. To pass the hours waiting for Room Service to deliver your overpriced granola, you can attempt to maintain consciousness by turning on the television and watching the eleven o'clock news.

6 DEVELOP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Probably the most important key to success as a business traveler is to view the experience as a positive one. Such an attitude can be fostered in a variety of ways. Avoid renting videotapes of movies such as "Airport '75" and "The Towering Inferno," or watching reruns of "The Fugitive." Appreciate how much trouble goes into preparing foods in cubed shape. And bask in the knowledge that someday you and those like you in airports, airplanes, and hotel rooms scattered across the country will be recognized by future anthropologists as hardy specimens of *Australopithecus Samsonitus*, the perennially-endangered species of migratory businesspersons. ■

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