

Controlling Business Travel Costs

Sometimes when we are traveling on business, it is easy to let costs get out of control. But if you are working from a per diem or have other constraints on your travel budget, you should learn some cost cutting methods that you can put into effect that won't make your life miserable on the road.

These cost-cutting ideas are not just to stay out of trouble with the budget people back at the home office. Often businesses have a set budget for business travel and once it is gone, no further trips can be made during that budget year. So if you anticipate the need for more business trips in months ahead, it is prudent to keep an eye on costs as you go so you can conserve that limited budget to facilitate important trips yet to come.

Economizing on the road can be difficult because you are put right in the middle of the hospitality industry which, while good at making you feel comfortable and providing for your needs, hotels and restaurants are also good at running up your tab. But there are some easy ways to sidestep a lot of unnecessary spending so you can stretch your business travel budget.

* Eat before you go. Airport restaurants or snack bars are notoriously overpriced. So even if you are leaving early in the morning, have breakfast and get well satisfied before leaving home so you don't have to buy food en route.

* Wise packing. Think through your life in the hotel and on the road. You can buy travel sizes of almost everything you will need. Moreover, you can pack some light and easy to carry snacks such as trail mix, candy bars or nuts that can be used to tide you over during the trip until you can get a good meal. By being self-dependent during the trip, you save a lot by not using airport services.

* A hotel is just a bed, a shower and a TV. When booking your accommodations, think about where you should stay. If you don't need a luxury hotel, don't book one. If you are just staying the night in one place and then moving on, a clean, well run motel can take care of you just as well as the executive suite at the Hilton.

* Share that ride. If you are traveling as a party or you are meeting business partners at the destination, you can share cabs or rental vehicles and save business costs as well as conserve on burning fossil fuels unnecessarily.

* Markets and delis. You can even eat economically in a big town like New York or Orlando by using the same sense you have at home. By taking an early

trip to a nearby grocery, you can stock your room with fruits and travel foods and cut down on the amount of meals you have to eat out.

* Public transportation. If the town you re traveling to has safe and workable subways or other public transpiration, that can be much more efficient for you than renting a car. Washington DC for example has outstanding rail transport that you can use rather than rent a car.

By using some of the same good common sense you use at home to keep expenses under control for your home budget, you can not only live inexpensively on the road, you can actually live better. And by not allowing yourself to be overcharged for some very basic goods and services, you will feel better about your business outing and become known in your company as a smart traveler.

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