

The Airplane as Your Office

Business travel very often involves long hours in flight to the city where your work will be done. For most business people, this is lost productivity time that can be torture if you cannot get work done in flight. How often have you said to yourself or to a coworker, "That's all right, I will just work on that on the airplane." That is a noble intent but circumstances inside an airplane cabin, especially in coach, can make the fulfillment of that commitment hard to accomplish.

Like anything else, if you are going to redeem the time while you are in the air, you should come prepared with an agenda of work you can get done in that setting and with your expectations well in check before you even check in. Let's face it, the cabin of a domestic airplane is not designed for business productivity. You may have a myriad of distractions from crying babies to a talkative neighbor. The airline personnel have quite an agenda of items to interrupt your time with and then there is the turbulence and the narrow seats that dictate that whatever you are going to get done is going have to be done in a place of very little space availability.

To expect that you will have the seat next to you to spread out your work or that this will be the flight of perfect peace and quiet is to set yourself up for frustration and disappointment. So to be prepared to achieve some level of productivity on an airplane, be aware of these limitations and design your work so you can use that time within those constraints, not in spite of them.

A basic necessity to use to realize some level of concentration in flight is a good set of ear plugs or an earphone and an ipod. You can use that device to pipe music to your mind that can be conducive to concentration and thought. Now earphones sufficient to block out the kind of distractions you will encounter on an airplane will have to be pretty sophisticated. So don't cut corners on this purchase. It will pay you back over and over as you use them to block out surface noise in airplane cabin.

The best way to walk off of that airplane with a sense of accomplishment is to set your goals before you board and make them goals you can attain. You cannot expect to be able to open up your laptop and work peacefully in coach. It is very possible you will be able to do that but you may find turbulence, an active population around you or other factors may make such work very difficult to do. So to be sure, prepare a project to work on using your laptop but don't be disappointed if it turns out to be too difficult to attempt. And above all avoid having a deadline you have to hit using the time during your flight to make up for lost time on your deadlines. That will only make the flight

frustrating and result in an angry and worn out business traveler.

The best form of work you can assign to yourself is analysis or reading. If you have a document or some documents to review, the confines of an airplane seat accommodate that work just fine. Business reading is easily the best form of work to do in flight. Using those head phones to block out the world, you can lay back with a book, a business magazine or a report and take your time to study it or read lengthy blocks of that material during a long flight. In a two to three hour flight, you can read entire chapters of a business book and come off the flight with a tremendous amount of food for thought to take into your businesses meetings at your destination.

It is possible to redeem the time in the air by accomplishing some solid work. But the key to getting success at that goal is to be realistic about what can be done in an airplane seat and tailoring your expectations and goals accordingly. If you do that, you will be happy with how you used the time and the flight will go by much more quickly as well.

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