

Productive to the Max

Productivity

Performance

Profitability

Travel

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Have you ever been on one of those trips from hell? You know the kind where you wish you had stayed at home. The last minute packing is a nightmare because you can't figure out what to take. You neglect to prebook the taxi on the morning of a rainstorm. You forget to book your seat so end up at the back of the plane squished beside a family of screaming kids while you watch the parade of people passing by to go to the washroom behind you? You did specify the type of vehicle you desired so you ended up in a VW Beetle for a family of four? Instead of ending up in such situations, take some time to organize and preplan for your conference, trip or vacation so that you begin and return in a state of peace and comfort. You owe it to yourself (and the others that travel with you) to anticipate all your needs.

Don't be a pack rat

We all pack too much. We try to prepare for all contingencies and end up taking home clothing we have never worn. Like all pack rats, we do not make room for future purchases and our bags and boxes full of pineapples, Mexican hats and other memorable items share space with us on the return trip. We lug overweight baggage, pay extra and have to check everything. The following tips will assist you in eliminating extra packing:

- Create a standardized list for all the items you need.
- Keep a separate prepacked kit containing toiletries, medication and a change of clothes to keep with you at all times in case your luggage gets lost.
- Lay everything out you think you need and eliminate half of it.
- Pick only two colors for your clothing. Add oomph with colorful accessories.
- If you intend to shop while you travel, take an empty suitcase or one of the folding cases available in luggage stores.
- Place a copy of your itinerary and contact information in each piece of your luggage. Leave a copy behind in a safe location.
- Don't ask for trouble by packing anything that will attract the attention of security agents. Leave that cute stapler in the shape of a grenade at home.

- Don't wear shoes with steel shanks or jewellery or accessories that will cause you to "beep" when you go through security.
- Buy something to quickly identify your bag.

Never pack valuables in checked bags.

Start planning early

There are many opportunities to save time when you are traveling

1. Start your plans and obtain the proper documents early. This applies to reservations, research and important papers such as passports and tickets. Be sure your passport has sufficient validity time remaining for the requirements of your destination (some countries require an additional 3 months).
2. Be aware of up-to-date travel restrictions.
3. Leave yourself more time. Nothing is worse than a last minute rush, frayed nerves and bad tempers to start you off on the wrong foot for a business trip or a personal vacation.
4. Preprint your boarding pass the night before from your computer or check in online. Request seat selection when you book.
5. Think ahead at all times
 - a. When you arrive at your destination see if you can check in for your flight the next day.
 - b. Research activities at your destination before you arrive.
 - c. Obtain tickets for events and attractions before you go.
 - d. Plan your activities in advance and set up a mini schedule.
6. If you have an administrative assistant, ask that person to summarize the key events of the day in the office and email them to you or arrange to call the office at a set time each day to retrieve information.
7. Use the travel time to catch up on work, listen to recorded tapes or just rest for the busy time ahead.
8. Do not leave the airport until you have reported a missing bag and obtained the proper forms.
9. Assume that nothing about laptop life is easy or predictable. Carry the proper cords, hardware and software to complete your tasks.
10. Since many airlines no longer offer food, take extra snacks with you.

Travel in comfortable clothing and low-heeled shoes. Remember that if you don those stilettos, for sure your flight will be moved to the farthest terminal and you will have to walk for miles.

Avoid the “what are we going to do now” syndrome

Many people spend a good portion of their vacations standing around trying to decide, “What are we going to do now?” Loosely plan your itinerary allowing for fluctuations and changes in mood. Like organizing anything else, it is important to create a structure for your activities.

Researching the web and other sources will enable you to determine what attractions are available during your visit. Prepay the tickets (cheaper many times) and avoid the incessant line-ups that last-minute decisions warrant. Allow each participant to choose a day or time-slot for their specific requests and encourage everyone to participate. Share child-care so that everyone has some time to themselves. Dad can take the kids for one day and. Mom the next. Respect the privacy and space provided on the other person’s “day off”.

If you are on a business trip where time is limited, it is more important that you have specific information as to timing and location for the attractions.

For most people, vacations are few and far between. It would be a shame to waste that precious time in unplanned and unrewarding pursuits.

MaxTip of the Month

Do you have trouble keeping track of those pesky expense receipts? Why not provide yourself with a plastic sleeve or a small binder. Include your itinerary, contact information, confirmation codes and a place for receipts and ticket stubs. Index your expense receipts in the same format that they are listed on your expense form. This makes it very simple to complete your form and get reimbursed.