



Toolie's Business Travel Newsletter

May 2005

In This Issue:

- Toolie's Monthly Travel Tip: Calculating Productivity on the Road
- Travel Guide Plans and a Subscriber Survey
- Toolie's Travel Plans

Toolie's Travel Plans

I just returned from a quick trip to Los Angeles over the weekend. For those of you in the US, I hope that your Memorial Day holiday was meaningful and restful, as was mine.

I will be home now working on my travel guides for the next 6 weeks. My next trip out of town is to the National Speakers Association National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Immediately after the convention, I will be taking photographs around Atlanta, and taking instruction in the effective use of audio for creating products and marketing on the Internet.

Next stop is Philadelphia, PA at the end of July for a Christian conference where I'm the official event photographer. I'm planning on attending the National Business Travel Association Convention in San Diego in August. The rest of the year's travel has not been confirmed, but I will have those city locations planned and reserved by the end of June. If I'm going to be in your city, please let me know. I'm always looking for YOUR recommendations for things to cover in my travel guide for that city.

This Month's Travel Tip: Calculating Productivity on the Road

What are the expectations for productivity? In my February 2005 newsletter, I began a discussion of the issue of productivity during travel. I gave you fodder for discussion with your manager (or if you're the business owner, a self-evaluation) of what work is expected of you while you're traveling. I have traveled now both as an employee and as a self-employed business owner, so I have some insights into both worlds. Let me paint some scenarios for your consideration.

This month, I'm going to discuss the issues faced by employees of a company who are expected to travel. Next month, I'll talk about the additional issues entrepreneurs with companies of 10 or fewer employees face.

My Boss Wants to Keep Me in the Office

If you find yourself being hassled by your boss because you're out of town again, working through the issues I raise below can help you improve your situation.

Our first question is "Exactly how often do you travel?"

- Once or twice per year
- 3 to 5 times a year
- 6 to 10 times a year
- Once per month
- Twice per month
- Three times per month

...and so on.

The next question is "What is the average duration of each trip?"

- Overnight
- Two to three days
- Five days (work week)
- 7 to 10 days (2 weekends plus the work week)
- 10 days to 2 weeks (typical for an international trip)
- 3 weeks or longer

Calculating the frequency of travel plus the duration of each trip results in a figure that I'd like to refer to as your "travel number." That calculation helps you justify to your boss that your business travel warrants the kind of travel tools that will allow you to be nearly as productive as you are when you're in the office.

Have you calculated how many city days you've been out of your office so far this year? If you haven't now would be a good time to do so. We're approaching the mid-point of the year, and the number of travel days you're gone is the first thing your boss will ask for if you need to convince him or her to give you the tools and software you need to be productive.

Laptop or No Laptop?

I'm going to make an assumption here: having a laptop means on-the-road productivity. There was a time when even the most frequent of travelers did their work on a desktop and used a laptop only for travel. In the last 5 years, however, laptops have caught up with desktops in terms of processing power, so many business travelers operate exclusively from their laptops. Working in the office is the same as working on the road...almost.

If you're a business traveler that does NOT use a laptop, it's getting to the point where you need to have one to stay productive. If you don't have one, and you think you need one to get your work done, having a sufficiently high "travel number" can help justify getting a laptop.

If you can't get a laptop due to travel policy or because your company lacks the financial resources to provide one, there are still alternative ways for you to connect to your desktop PC and get work done. Because most companies provide laptops for their business travelers, I'm going to go over alternatives next month when I speak to the entrepreneurs and small business owners.

"If I Had a Hammer"...Or a Laptop...

Well, the "hammer" you want is a good laptop with the right software loaded. Most companies provide at least the operating system, some document creation software (Microsoft Word or the equivalent), and an email client (such as Microsoft Outlook). Those programs are a good start, depending on what you do for a living. If all you have to do is write reports and emails, you're all set. Email isn't much good, though, unless you have some way to connect to send the emails. Here's where the fun begins.

Does your company have some way for you to access the company network from outside the building? As a user, are you set up for external access? Does the company provide dial-in phone numbers or some kind of static IP address for encrypted Virtual Private Network (VPN) access? These are all questions that must be addressed if you're expected to keep up with email.

What about sending and receiving documents? If you're expected to connect to the Internet and send 2 to 5 megabyte files, sending them over dialup from your hotel is going to rack up quite a phone bill, especially if the hotel charges for phone call durations over a certain number of minutes (anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes). So the next question becomes, what is the travel policy say about where you stay? Are you allowed to book hotels with high-speed Internet access? The answer to that question directly affects how much you spend on your lodging; in fact, it may eliminate altogether hotels that do not provide high-speed Internet access. If you're operating on a per diem (limited to a specific amount you can spend per day), you might be squeezed between the allowable expenditure and the expectation that you remain productive while traveling.

What about other software you need for your work? Is there company-specific software that you must use? Is it configured for external access? Does it fit on the hard drive? Does it run on the operating system on your laptop? If it doesn't, is there some kind of shell or terminal program you can use to access that software? Answering no to one or more of these questions may mean that your on-the-road productivity could be hampered.

So, having calculated your "travel number," your next task is to do an inventory of the software you use on the job. If the laptop issued to you does not include all of it, you either need to negotiate to get it licensed and installed on your laptop. If that's not possible, you must set the expectation with your boss that the work requiring the software will not be done while you're out of the office.

Email: Here, There, and Everywhere

I remember vividly when I got my first Hotmail account. It was January 1998, and the existence of free, HTTP-based email accounts was relatively new. What a concept! If I could get a browser connection to the Internet, I could read my email from any machine. Seven years later, using an Internet browser to access your email is very common. Even companies with no other external access may provide email over the Internet. Most independent Internet Service Providers (ISPs) also provide web access to email for their subscribers, including Earthlink, AOL, and many others.

I have a slightly different approach to email than most people. Even when I was working for Microsoft, I always downloaded my email to my local hard drive, rather than leaving it on the corporate server. At Microsoft, we were heavily dependent on our email communications to conduct business swiftly, and I never wanted to rely on someone

else to protect my emails. That meant that I had to make sure that I got my email files backed up, but I was willing to do so. The good thing was that it also meant that I always had access to my emails even if the corporate server went down. When I got my first laptop, I switched my email to that machine so that I could have those files with me all the time.

Even now as an entrepreneur, I do the same thing. I download all my emails from my ISP into my Outlook client and they're sent directly to a physical file known as a Personal Store (.PST) file. Those files get backed up every night from my laptop to my desktop machine. I use the Outlook Rules feature to direct my certain emails to the appropriate subfolders until I can read them, and I regularly clean out emails I no longer need.

If you're not already keeping your emails on your hard drive, I encourage you to do so, provided that you back them up regularly. One of the most flexible tasks you can take care of during short periods of free time is email. You can spend as little or as much time on it as you have available, and if the emails are on your hard drive, you can deal with them whether you're connected or not. Having emails on your hard drive also means that your original emails and the subsequent responses are all in ONE place, instead of being strewn across corporate servers, ISP servers, or multiple machines.

Next month I'll discuss issues that more often affect entrepreneurs and small business owners, but are still applicable to corporate travelers.

[Travel Guide Plans and a Subscriber Survey](#)

I'm pleased to announce that I will be signing a contract with Cadmus Professional Communications to handle the distribution of my travel guides through their ArticleWorks product.

As you may recall, the primary method of distribution of my travel guides will be through copy-protected Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files that are downloadable to your computer immediately after purchase from my website. If you prefer, you will be able to order a physical book that is produced from exactly the same PDF file, thanks to the Cadmus ArticleWorks system. This print-on-demand (POD) option is something that I had planned to provide six to twelve months from now, but Cadmus is making it possible for me to provide POD service at the same time that I release the electronic guides, and that's going to make it possible for me to immediately begin serving the Meetings Industry with my travel guides. I'm very excited about pursuing those opportunities right away.

Cadmus is also testing their copy protection abilities on personal digital assistants (PDA) such as Pocket PC and Palm devices, so that ultimately I could offer my guides on those units. I would like to hear back from you, my subscribers, as to whether you'd buy a PDA-based travel guide along with the PDF file for laptop and/or a physical book. Towards that end, I'd like your participation in a brief survey that will help me plan my guides accordingly. I'll send a link to the online survey for you in a separate email.

Here is the link to my site: <http://www.tooliethetravelguide.com>. I love to hear from my subscribers anytime!

Very "Toolie" yours,

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