Globe-trotting attorneys offer their new-era strategies for efficient business travel

By Dawn Reiss
In this age of ever-changing rules and regulations, business travel can be more difficult than ever. The reality is that the more preparation and planning that go into a business trip, the more likely it will be a success. “As you get older, travel changes,” says Paul Justas Sarauskas, counsel at Mayer Brown in Chicago and a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. “When I was younger, it was exciting. It’s become more stressful and annoying because of security and everything else. These days I try to bring back the fun and take out the stress.”

That’s why Sarauskas makes a point to stay in a hotel near, but not where, a conference is being held and then wander. “I like the variety,” says Sarauskas, who uses Booking.com. “Some of my colleagues only stay at the Marriott or another chain hotel to get the points. I like the adventure, to change hotel brands from boutiques to huge chains and B&Bs to get a different feel each time. I find a place where I can walk to everything in the area. Then you can find a restaurant that calls your name. That’s part of the adventure.”

To make travel less stressful, he arrives at O’Hare International Airport in Chicago at least three hours in advance of any flight—domestic or international—so he doesn’t have to worry as much about getting stuck in city traffic. He does work at a bar or restaurant or at the gate. To make navigating the airport easier, he always checks a bag so he can bring a compact carry-on. Sarauskas doesn’t stress about delayed luggage, relying on credit to purchase anything he might need if his bag doesn’t arrive right away. His other suggestion: Arrive the day before an event or hearing takes place to get acclimated.

“I’m all about eliminating points of stress,” says Sarauskas, who lived in Italy for more than a decade and jokes about how his luggage was lost many times while living abroad but always found a day later.

**NAVIGATING AIRPORTS, BORDERS AND FLYING**

Besides getting TSA Precheck and Global Entry, some attorneys are turning to the expedited security program Clear, which uses biometric technology, scanning passengers’ eyes or fingerprints at a kiosk to allow them to bypass TSA ID checks and go straight to the usual physical screening. “Global Entry is the best thing in the world to help you,” says Randall Kessler, founding partner of Kessler & Solomiany in Atlanta, who gets the Clear service free as a Delta Medallion Million Mile flyer. “But Clear helps you cut to the front of the TSA Precheck lines and there’s never any wait.”

Ted Thomas, founder of the Thomas Law Offices, a personal injury law firm in Louisville, Kentucky, is also a big fan. He pays $179 a year and says Clear helps him save time in busy airports. More than 20 U.S. airports now have it, including New York’s JFK and LGA, and Washington, D.C.’s DCA and IAD. Users, who must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents, can start the process online but have to visit one of the company’s airport kiosks with a U.S. driver’s license, passport or other form of official identification.

Shawn Toor, an associate attorney who focuses on business and real estate transactions at Williams Kastner in Seattle, uses a Nexus pass to travel quickly across the Canadian border. It can also be used in dedicated Sentri lanes when going between Mexico and the U.S. “There’s a separate line at the border to go through TSA Precheck,” Toor says. “And I use it when I drive across the border too.”
To keep up with various changes in rules and regulations, Sarasukas suggests frequently reviewing updates from the U.S. Department of State. Zainab Hussain is an associate at the Foundry Law Group, a Seattle-based firm that specializes in data privacy and intellectual property. She was in Saudi Arabia, where her parents live, when the first travel ban was imposed by President Donald Trump. Although Hussain—who was born in India, grew up in Saudi Arabia and became a permanent U.S. resident in December—usually brings a laptop to conduct work, she’s going to think twice about it now since she’s worried about the job of losing laptops at security, given the electronics ban. Her plan is to put any important documents that she might need in the cloud instead of on her hard drive and to access them via Dropbox or OneDrive. She also makes sure any important documents that require a credit card, such as applications for a trademark or business license for a client, are done before she leaves on a trip so financial information isn’t compromised. When it comes time to get through security at customs, Sarasukas says it’s important to stay related even if some of the agents are overly aggressive. “Smile,” he says. “And make sure to have a business card handy.”

Shawn Toor uses a Nexus pass to speed travel across the border, and it can be used in dedicated Sentri lanes.

Zainab Hussain plans to leave her laptop behind and put important documents she might need in the cloud.

Kessler also uses the Hertz Platinum program, which will send a representative to meet him at the terminal and give him a ride back to the airport once he drops off his rental. To keep working while he’s in-flight, Kesler pays $29.95 a month for PhoneTag, a voicemail-to-text service that immediately transcribes a voicemail, which helps Kessler respond via email while he’s midflight. Through a credit card, he also has a complimentary subscription to GoGo, an in-flight internet provider that charges a flat monthly fee, which allows him to maximize work time. Kessler also uses the Hertz Platinum program, which will send a representative to meet him at the terminal and give him a ride back to the airport once he drops off his rental. To keep working while he’s in-flight, Kesler pays $29.95 a month for PhoneTag, a voicemail-to-text service that immediately transcribes a voicemail, which helps Kessler respond via email while he’s midflight. Through a credit card, he also has a complimentary subscription to GoGo, an in-flight internet provider that charges a flat monthly fee, which allows him to maximize work time.

Packaging, Luggage & Complications

John Quick, a partner at Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman in Coral Gables, Florida, who handles everything from bankruptcy and collections to civil oversight of law enforcement, jokes that he first learned how to pack during his first job as a professional folder at J.C. Penney.

If it’s a short trip, Quick saves time and aggravation by folding. He recommends a lightweight suitcase with four wheels since he’s had other experience with luggage stolen or lost. “I once lost my suitcase during a conference in New Orleans, and it was such a nutty experience that I didn’t think it was possible to have a worse travel story,” he says. “It was even worse than the one I told you about.”

Quick’s worst travel experience was walking into court wearing a crease. Quick’s other go-to item: a hanging toiletry bag and mustard spilled it all over Quick. “There was nothing to save time, Kessler says, he arranges his flights so he can go back to the airport in minutes. To save time, Kessler says, he arranges his flights so he can go back to the airport in minutes. To save time, Kessler says, he arranges his flights so he can go back to the airport in minutes. To save time, Kessler says, he arranges his flights so he can go back to the airport in minutes. To save time, Kessler says, he arranges his flights so he can go back to the airport in minutes. To save time, Kessler says, he arranges his flights so he can go back to the airport in minutes.
two toiletty bags ready to go, along with a “what to pack” list on her iPad to make sure she doesn’t forget anything. She keeps her hotel slip-ins in her briefcase to help her feel more relaxed on the plane. Stern always brings a couple of Bounce dryer sheets in her suitcase and briefcase to keep her clothing from looking wrinkled. She also suggests running the shower for a few minutes to add moisture to the hotel room to sleep better in the evening.

For Stella Lellos, a partner at Rivkin Radler in Uniondale, New York, one of the hardest things to do was travel with a breast pump. “If you aren’t traveling with a baby, you have to figure out a way to store the milk,” she says. “And that all depends on how long you are traveling.”

Lellos was in London when she it was time to pump, so she had to find a place in that period of time and they had no idea what I was talking about.” After speaking with the hotel Executive, which required Lellos showing the hotel staff what an empty bottle looked like, she was able to track down her missing milk. “The hotel went crazy and it was embarrassing,” she says.

Having this policy works because the firm is largely transactional and doesn’t focus on litigation. Bend, says, and he’s managed long-term employee retention by striking a happier, healthier balance with flex time. “We get a monthly report from the bookkeeper of their expenses and net revenue,” says Bend, who uses Clio as his cloud-based management software. “To me it’s more important how many billable hours they have than where they are working.”

To manage all the travel, Bend has all his attorneys sign up through a Google calendar to run a virtual law firm that meets in person once a week at various locations in San Francisco, ranging from the club lounge in his building to a Bank of America conference room. For teleconferencing, he uses UberConference because it sends an email update after each call. When another attorney, Alex King, asked to move from the Bay Area to Sonoma, Bend says he saw it as an opportunity to pursue winery clients. "I labeled it, called the concierge, and they took it away," she says. "I called when I was checking out, received milk at the airport, and that was dropped off in a call early. Once a month, he also schedules something fun on the calendar such as a barbecue or happy hour for everyone to mingle and stay connected.

While Bend is traveling on vacation, he prioritizes his work by focusing on billable client tasks instead of those that are administrative. That makes him more productive because of his laser focus on working only two hours a day to balance it with downtime.

“When I’m traveling I always have my out-of-office message on,” says Bend, who likes to travel with a Rimowa suitcase that weighs only 4.19 pounds. “It’s important to block out time to do the work and enjoy the travel. Then when I respond to clients they are more appreciative that I’m working while I’m traveling.”

But attorneys who frequently travel or work remotely need to take precautions to protect communications and client data. There are steps that can and should be taken when utilizing public internet access. Based on recommendations from her school’s IT staff, Lori Nelson, alumni relations director for the University of Utah’s S.J. Quinney College of Law, has instituted a number of cyber-security measures while traveling. When using Wi-Fi, Nelson makes sure she’s connected to her school’s virtual private network to send and receive data.

Nelson says. (For more, see “21st-Century Standards,” page 24.)

Laura Premi, a partner at Cypress in Los Angeles, says she recently approached her firm about spending a year working abroad via Remote Year, a company that brings together 50 or more professionals who work in 12 different cities around the world. The application process includes a $5,000 down payment and $2,500 monthly installments, which includes private accommodations, travel between destinations, workspaces and Wi-Fi.

Premi says she approached the senior partners and other partners at the firm and explained that traveling abroad had been a lifelong passion of hers. “I’m lucky to be at a firm that focuses on being innovative,” says Premi, who began traveling in April with a rotation among Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, Colombia, Peru, Portugal and Croatia, among other destinations. “Of course they had questions about the logistics, but they were really happy to facilitate my desire to see the world and thought it could be beneficial to my clients to learn firsthand how other companies are using technologies to work remotely.”

To manage the logistics, Premi has committed to being available at least four hours a day during the Pacific time zone, even if it’s sometimes 5-9 p.m. in LA because of the drastic time difference.

She dropped her U.S. carrier plan and transferred her cellphone number over to Google Voice so it can be forwarded to a Skype number since she will have Wi-Fi in all of her locations. Premi also plans to purchase local SIM cards in each country that will make her accessible to her colleagues via a VOIP app on her cellphone.

Before she left, Premi made sure her laptop was encrypted with LastPass as a password manager and will remain in the cloud. She also purchased a second iPad to attach to her laptop so she can have an additional work screen through the app Duet Display.

“A lot of work can be done by computer and phone since technology allows you to work anywhere,” Premi says. “I can’t make court appearances or take depositions in person, but my firm’s approach is going to do it on my behalf and I’m going to use video technology to make it feel like I’m in the office when I’m not.”

Laura Premi
advises nursing attorneys that if a meeting starts running long and you need to go pump, just excuse yourself.

Stella Lellos
advises traveling attorneys to bring toiletry bags ready to go. For more see video tips from savvy lawyer travelers at ABAJournal.com/magazine.

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Liz Espin Stern
duplicates her favorite travel pajamas—one for summer, one for winter—with two toiletry bags ready to go.

Laura Premi
is spending a year working abroad. “I’m lucky to be at a firm that focuses on being innovative.”

Doug Bend
commits to billable tasks to stay more productive on the road.

Tad Thomas
travels at least three days every week. He avoids airport snarls by flying out over the weekend.

Dawn Reiss
is a Chicago-based freelance writer. For travel stories, she has gone dog sledding in Alaska, followed the Italian coffee trail in Turin and ate a cricket while on assignment in Cambodia.