

## OCTOBER, 2009

*This quarterly newsletter features topics related to managing change and improving our work environments. If there are topics you would like to see covered or feedback you have about this newsletter, please submit your ideas and feedback to the following link: <http://www.anneoffner.com/contact.htm>*

I remember the days when I could leave my home at 7:00am for a flight that left at 8:00am. I'd get to the airport at 7:20, park my car, get on the parking shuttle, and make it to the gate by 7:45. My favorite flight was to Atlanta because the flight attendants usually had a nice first class upgrade available. No problem.

Yes, it was easier to fly back then.



**Business Travel.** I enjoy it. Maybe I'm crazy but I think of it as an adventure. Actually I think of most things as an adventure and so this is really just the air extension.

Prior to lift-off, the adventure now begins at home, in my suitcase. I sort out liquids in plastic bottles that will not only meet the airline requirements but will fit nicely into one plastic zip-lock sandwich bag. Next, I consider how much I can pack into a carry-on bag so I won't have to pay an extra fee to the airlines. That's an adventure in itself. Finally, I choose the shoes I'll wear to the

airport – something that can be easily slipped off and on while juggling my bags, Blackberry, boarding pass, ID, and simultaneously greeting the TSA guards with an appropriate degree of deference.

Yes, the adventure is much longer these days. I generally leave my home at least 90 minutes prior to the scheduled flight departure. I find my anxiety level is kept to a minimum if I can get through security at least 30 minutes before the plane is scheduled to board. This leaves plenty of time to buy a movie-theater-priced bottle of water and then either fire up my laptop or sit and watch people.

Actually the people-watching begins in the security line. Usually a less-than-frequent traveler has his tube of toothpaste or water bottle confiscated or sorts through his bags to pull out liquids or untie his shoes as an impatient, over-prepared traveler stealthily moves in front of him to walk through security. In line we of course stare blankly ahead amused but unwilling to really show it.



**Food.** Let's just say I've had my share of Subway sandwiches on these trips. Sharing food can be a bonding experience.

Actually Subway sandwiches are not a bad way to learn about your colleagues. It's sort of like finding out the details of their secret life. Some like vegetables, some won't touch them. Others only eat white bread while some only eat salad. And some have a really hard time deciding what they want on their sandwich (and stall the line while others grimace at them). And of course food is a great way to discuss issues and learn more about colleagues outside of the day-to-day rush to get things accomplished. When a group of adventurous clients were in town last year I introduced them to Modesto, a Spanish Tapas restaurant<sup>i</sup>. We shared paella, a Spanish rice dish, and a variety of other dishes and got to know one other better in the process. Sharing food can be a symbol of collaboration and that type of good will can go a long way when projects become challenging.



At this point I feel obligated to state that **no**, business trips are not full of free time and fun. It is difficult to be away from loved ones and I definitely work longer hours on the road than I would during a normal work day.

But it's worth it to see things I would not see at home. For example, in Estes Park, CO last year I woke up early in the morning, walked into town, and found wild Elk greeting me in front of the local coffee house<sup>ii</sup>. While in Chicago a couple of years ago I had an extra hour I did not expect and was able to see the Chicago symphony rehearse at Millennium Park<sup>iii</sup>. In Washington, D.C., I was fortunate enough to meet with members of our US Navy and get a rudimentary understanding of what happens in a seaport. And, way back at the start of my career when I traveled a lot for a

bread manufacturing company, a group of executives and operations guys used to invite me to join them to run around a Kmart parking lot that was next to our hotel. This helped us start the day out with a good dose of exercise, fresh air, and camaraderie.



**So, the point is...** if you have to travel for business, appreciate the "little extras". If you have employees who travel, turn the "little extras" into rewards. Being invited by an executive to run around a Kmart parking lot somewhere in the Southeast Region of the US was a reward for me as a young professional. For your employees, look for rewards that will delight or motivate them during a business trip. Whether it's an unexpected free-hour, a golf-outing, a Subway sandwich, or a nice dinner will be up to you, your budget considerations, and your employee's needs. As I've mentioned in my blog, Daniel Pink reminds us that monetary rewards don't necessarily lead to high performance <http://anneoffner.com/blog/> .

It's often the non-monetary rewards that motivate us to perform at a higher level.

We can change our own mindset and take charge of our own motivation as well by finding ways to delight ourselves on business trips. I believe that having an Elk greet me in the morning starts my day off like no other day of the year. I'm certain that watching a security guard keep a straight face while explaining to the last person on earth to learn that 3.0 oz liquids are the TSA limit will make you at least chuckle<sup>iv</sup>. And I'm positive that taking a moment to really appreciate one small aspect of the trip will make it at least

momentarily easier to be away from loved ones. In fact, pull out your cell phone, take a picture, and email what you're seeing back home!

If you have business travels in front of you, find the adventure. It may just help you stay sane when the hours get long or the challenges confront you.

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**This newsletter is edited by Larry Offner of West Palm Beach, Florida.**

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<sup>i</sup> If you like tapas, try Modesto: <http://www.saucemagazine.com/modesto/>

<sup>ii</sup> Just in case you don't believe me about the Elk: <http://www.estes-park.com/go/elkbugling.html>

<sup>iii</sup> If you're in Chicago, explore Millennium Park: <http://www.millenniumpark.org/artandarchitecture/>

<sup>iv</sup> Just in case you're curious to know the TSA limits: <http://www.tsa.gov/311/311-carry-ons.shtm>