

TECHNOLOGY CORNER

Travel Tips for the Computerized Road Warrior

The “traveling office” sounds glamorous, but just what is it? A desk, chair and credenza on rollers? A delivery truck decked out with electronic office equipment? A minivan with a cellular phone and a portable computer?

When I think of the traveling office, I think of flying all over the country and being able to get my work done with few restrictions. With the right hardware and software specific to the tasks at hand, I can be productive almost round the clock.

There are many things to consider when choosing the hardware to match your productivity needs:

- The size of the hard drive to store programs and data files.
- The speed of the processor for quick response and performance.
- The amount of RAM.
- Ports to connect to other devices like a full-size monitor, standard size keyboard, 10-key pad, printer, local area network and modem line.
- A display that won't strain eyes.
- Appropriate software.

I usually travel with a set of overhead transparencies and a screwdriver in case of equipment failure. I also bring data disks with backups of all my important files, a couple of blank disks, and LapLink software and cable. (LapLink is a software program that allows me to copy files from one computer to the other without bothering with floppy disks.)

How do I navigate through airports with a portable computer, LCD panel, and maybe even some luggage? Most airports rent luggage carts for \$1 to \$2 and I'm always on the lookout for them. Of course, a suitcase on wheels can work just as well. When possible, I use elevators and the “moving

sidewalks” or trams between terminals. Sometimes my connection is too close for comfort and I know I'll pass out if I have to run with all this stuff. Fortunately, the airlines employ drivers with electric carts for travelers who are elderly, physically challenged or making close connections.

On my flight home, I compose thank you letters, complete my expense report or work on my next presentation, avoiding loose ends when I get back to the office.

But there is more involved than just the tools. Here are some good habits that are also important:

- At Airport Security, don't walk through the metal detector with diskettes in your pocket. The magnetic field will erase your data. You can let your PC, diskettes, film, and other magnetic media go through the X-ray machine; it won't harm them. You can also usually hand your diskettes to the security guard to avoid both the metal detector and the X-ray machine.
- Be sure your battery is charged. Airport Security may ask you to turn on your system and prove that it is what it appears to be.
- Check with your airline before flight time to find out its policy on using electronic devices while aloft. While the FAA has no regulations regarding electronic devices, most airlines restrict the use of these devices during take-off and landing to guard against possible interference with electronic navigation equipment.
- Take an extra charged battery for extended productivity.
- Take a battery recharge adapter to charge your computer's batteries while you sleep.
- Plug in whenever you can to conserve or recharge your batteries while waiting to board your flight. In the gate areas of all airport terminals

are electric outlets that the janitorial crews use.

- Ask for a room with a data line when making hotel reservations so that you can use your modem.
- Protect yourself from theft. Never leave your computer unattended. A portable computer is just that—portable. Always stow it under the seat in front of you, not in the overhead compartment. Take it to the lavatory with you when you go. If you must leave your equipment in your rental car, lock it in the trunk before you reach your destination. (You never know who's watching you.) If you leave your hotel room and can't take your system with you, either lock it in the in-room safe or check it with hotel security.
- Guard against equipment failure with special service programs. Most portable PC manufacturers have service programs that offer 48-hour (or 24-hour for a small fee) repair or replacement if your portable goes down, whether at home or on the road. Many of them also offer extended warranties for up to three years at a nominal charge.

Follow these travel tips and you can (to paraphrase an old song) “pack up your PC in an old kit bag and smile, smile, smile.”

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