



Turning Waiting Time into Productive Time – Part 1

by Jocelyn 'Toolie' Garner

I think that we business travelers suffer from the idea that we have to have available a long block of time in order to “get something done” and feel like we’re being productive. The challenge for us is to organize ourselves a bit more and have handy a list of things to do that can fill up odd bits of time. I can’t say that I have perfected this skill, but I have some ideas of things you can do. Here is the first in a series of articles on the subject.

I’ve Got a Little List

If memory serves I’ve used at least 6 different methods in the last 15 years to organize myself and keep track of what I need to accomplish. Most recently, I have experimented with the Task and tracking features of both Outlook and Microsoft Project. I’ve even taken a class on using Outlook to organize oneself, and I still use many of those principles today. I do have the ability to “work from the end result” and imagine all the steps in between, and for that I use Project. For most people though, working in Project to track their “Things to Do” list is overkill; more overhead than accomplishment.

I confess that when I start working on a new guide or a new information product, I will often turn to one of these programs to help get things out of my brain and in front of my eyes. On more than one occasion I have been alarmed at the total number of tasks I have to do -- a discovery I made by entering them into one or both programs. Still, it’s more stressful to be walking around with your To-Do list in your head, for fear that you’ll forget something important.

Oddly enough, I still find that making lists on paper is the most satisfying approach for me. I keep with me at all times a small spiral-bound notebook that has a thick cardboard cover, and in those miscellaneous moments during travel, I will make list after list after list in that notebook. Even when I’m in town, I will sometimes take myself out to lunch if I’m feeling overwhelmed, and I’ll sit and make lists that help me concentrate when I get back to my home office. Plus, it’s a great feeling to be able to physically cross something off that list!

List-making is one useful thing that you can do while waiting in lines, sitting at the gate, during those minutes after they close the airplane door and you can’t use your electronics. Whether or not you write on paper and then transfer the items to your laptop, list-making can be a stress-relieving exercise. It feels good to be organized! Most of all you will then know WHAT to work on when you get to the hotel and you have more time to concentrate on larger tasks.

Jocelyn 'Toolie' Garner is better known as Toolie the Travel Guide™, an expert on Business Travel and the effective use of technology for turning travel time into “up-time.” Her travel guides, newsletters, CD training videos, and special reports help business travelers be productive on the road. Visit <http://www.tooliethetravelguide.com> for more information, and <http://www.tooliearticles.com> for more of Toolie’s content.