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Skilled Traveler? Good Coach

By MICHAEL T. LUONGO

Life on the road was getting to Rosalyn Haley. A computer software designer, she was putting in 12-hour days, four days a week, to visit clients. "I felt I needed another system, a more sane, reasonable approach to how to get the most of it without making me a basket case," she said.

Ms. Haley said she had always dismissed the idea of getting help, but decided that a second set of eyes on how she managed her life on the road might help. After watching an [Oprah Winfrey](#) show on life coaches, she did a computer search and found Diane Randall, who is based in Chicago.

Ms. Haley wanted to know how to make business trips less stressful and more enjoyable. Ms. Randall, who calls herself a "life acceleration coach," offered her a number of tips to make travel easier.

She urged her, for example, to use the Internet more for ticketing to avoid long lines at the airport. And she told Ms. Haley to join airline clubs, so that she would have a more restful place to wait if her flight were canceled or delayed. Ms. Haley said she once thought the clubs were a waste of money but found that "this could be a time when you plan out the week, so it's not all haphazard when you're getting there."

More business travelers appear to be catching the coaching bug.

Natalie Tucker Miller, president of the International Association of Coaches, said the group's membership had been growing. And while she does not have numbers specifically on travel coaches, she says she believes their numbers are increasing. "All kinds of specific needs for coaching are popping up, travel being one of the crucial areas," she said. "When people are away from their normal routine, it can invite all kinds of unexpected scenarios."

Fees for coaches range typically range from \$500 to \$2,000 or more a month for three to four one-hour sessions, in person or over the phone. E-mail messages, text messages and cellphones help coaches stay in touch.

Some coaches, though, travel every step of the way. Donna Karlin, who is based in Ottawa, calls herself the Shadow Coach, and is on planes and trains and in automobiles with her clients. Ms. Karlin spends as

much as 30 hours a week with them. She sometimes sits in on their sales presentations and speeches.

Her rates vary depending on whether she is traveling with clients, which can be \$900 to \$3,500 a day plus travel expenses, or \$275 an hour coaching by phone.

Mark L. Berlin, director general of the international legal programs section of the Department of Justice in Canada, is one of Ms. Karlin's clients and says that his office uses her service because "my life is travel, it's every aspect of my work." He is overseas about one week a month representing Canada.

Her trips with him in other countries taught him "the notions of culture and gender sensitivity which made me more conscious, an awareness I got, from our traveling together," he said. Mr. Berlin said he had also incorporated her advice about making the best use of downtime while traveling.

Public speaking is, of course, a major reason many executives travel. Joan Detz, author of "Can You Say a Few Words?" and other books, notes that despite the often-hecktic nature of travel, it does provide a lot of preparation time.

She said she coached clients to "think of flight as private time. It would be very unlikely for a senior executive to get four hours of uninterrupted time at the office." Ms. Detz, who is based in Philadelphia, said her fees ranged from \$2,000 to \$3,500 a month.

Anne Riccitelli, a spokeswoman for the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America, hired Ms. Detz after she was invited to give a commencement speech at her alma mater, the Community College of Rhode Island in Providence.

She said that Ms. Detz advised her to not overbook her schedule, and to avoid the temptation to schedule too much time with friends before the speech, which might have tired her out. "I think it made all the difference in the world," she said.

Many coaches remind clients that what happens back at the office is just as important as what happens on the road.

Ernest F. Oriente, a coach based in Park City, Utah, says he works with clients to make sure the systems they have in place at the office will continue to work smoothly when the boss is gone. Things like checklists and having all work done a day or two before a trip alleviates travel stress, he says.

He also recommends using apartments rather than hotels, and scheduling downtime to relieve some of the stresses of business trips. Travelers also need to ease back into work and not "go into hyperdrive on your first day back," he said.

Michael Bungay Stanier, a Toronto-based consultant who advises companies on organizational change, used Mr. Oriente's coaching. "Suddenly, I am out traveling a lot more," he said. Mr. Oriente's coaching

gave him better control of the office, he said, and was "weaning me away from the bottle, so I am not an overprotective parent of my business." He now travels about a week a month.

For those new to business travel, like Joan Runnheim of Hudson, Wis., an educational consultant, a coach can help before leaving on a trip. Ms. Miller, who is a coach as well as president of the coaches' trade association, had advised Ms. Runnheim on how to find the best price for trips and how to track expenses. "Now I know a lot more what to be aware of, what to ask for, what to expect from working with a coach," Ms. Runnheim said.

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