



Tips for Travelling to Workshops and Conferences

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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So often I meet up in elevators as people are hauling their luggage to the hotel desk during a coffee break or stating that they need to miss sessions of their meeting or workshop because they have commitments at home. I always feel badly for them because they are not able to fully focus on or enjoy the event that they are at.

Over the years I have probably been at hundreds of conferences and organizational events outside of my city. I have learned a few things that help me to derive full value from my registration fee and time commitment as follows:

1. Arrive the afternoon before the event begins - This will give you adequate time to get from the airport to the hotel before rush-hour traffic begins. You don't usually have line-ups in the hotel lobby so check in is quick. You have plenty of time to relax or spend some time touring a new city if you wish.
2. Move into the hotel - I spend about half an hour unpacking. This means that my clothes are hung on hangers in the closet and my cosmetics are laid out in the bathroom. I read information provided by the hotel, so I am familiar with amenities and dining on site. I also ensure that my computer and the internet hook up work (or call maintenance to help with this).
3. Be a few minutes early for registration - You will be able to meet people, review the book and table resource tables and find a seat in the meeting rooms before the crowd arrives. This will also allow you time to review documents in the welcome package provided at registration.
4. Write notes that you will use - I mark a big star beside the names of books, people or ideas that I want to check out after the sessions. It is therefore very easy to follow-up with additional learning.
5. Ensure that you are on time and stay to the end of all the sessions - You have paid a significant price in registration, time, travel and accommodations so need to get your money's worth.
6. Don't play yourself out socializing in the evenings - Take time to have a good meal and go to bed so that you will be rested for the next day.
7. Stay at the hotel until the evening after the event - This is allowed you time to review your notes, do your "homework", re-pack and get to the airport without feeling rushed.
8. Don't book clients for the following day - It is seldom that I have to cancelled appointments, but this happens most frequently because of flight cancellations or delays. Having that one extra day allows me to get home, do laundry and settle back in before heading to the office.

Attending meetings or taking training should not be a marathon. If you follow these tips you will soon find that you get full value out of your professional development opportunity but, at the same time, balance this with good self-care practices.