

The Enjoyable Transition to Deliberate & Intentional Business Travel

I never thought I'd miss business travel. Not taking a business trip for over a year has been as big of a change to my routine as working from home. With clients all over the country, plus law firm leadership responsibilities, I used to travel a lot, and probably flew somewhere almost once a week. That was the trade-off for living in Denver and I was okay with that—Denver is a great place to live! — but it did wear me down. Kids' sporting events that I missed, uncomfortable hotel beds, yet one more steak dinner with a client . . . The break from business travel has been great. More time with family, healthier eating, time to exercise. And even more time to work. Much less stress from cutting it too close at the airport, forgetting to pack something, finding my Uber, changing flights at the last minute to accommodate a client's—or my own—schedule change, and that predictably unreliable in-flight Wi-Fi. I have wondered whether business travel would return. At least in the relative near term, I suspect my travel will involve an occasional visit for some sort of important event, around which I will then schedule as many meetings in that particular city as possible. I think the days of flying to San Francisco and back for a one-hour meeting to discuss IPO prep for a deal that is two years away are over. I suspect in-person pitches for large opportunities will continue. And my firm leadership position will continue to involve connecting in person with my team, as those casual encounters are so key to close collaboration and the firm culture that we treasure. Same with clients. I am an extrovert and love connecting with clients and colleagues, but I plan to be more deliberate and intentional in my business travel. Last week, I left home for my first business trip since March 2020. I planned to spend a few days near Scranton, Pennsylvania, to visit my parents, whom I have not seen since before the pandemic. I would then travel on to New York City for a couple of days. I scheduled two dinners, a breakfast, and various other meetings in New York. I was mindful of my efficiency. Deliberate and intentional. I was certainly a bit rusty on the packing side. My prepacked toiletries were no longer prepacked—and I have barely worn any business attire over the last year. Wow, I have lots of sport coats. Lots of dusty sport coats. The airport felt familiar but for the masks. I quickly remembered how much work I actually get done on planes. No distractions, no calls. For some reason, even when the inflight Wi-Fi is actually working, I don't feel the need to respond immediately to every email the way I do when my feet are on the ground. I don't think there is a better place to read a less-than-riveting MD&A from a Form 10-Q than on a plane. I'll be honest. It was kind of nice to be back on the road. I then woke up in Scranton with the sniffles. A common cold (I took a COVID-19 test to be sure: negative). Haven't had one of those since 2019, but due to COVID protocols and sensitivities I couldn't—and wouldn't—attend a client dinner while sneezing. So I am stranded in Scranton. Home of Joe Biden and Michael Scott, but they are both out of town. So much for deliberate and intentional. I think I'll wait another year for my next trip. . . .

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