

American Small Business Travelers Alliance

ASBTA NEWS...

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Taking a Small Business on Vacation Doesn't Have to Mean Bringing Along Excess "Baggage"

ASBTA Offers Small Businesses the Top 5 Rules for Making a Working Vacation Relaxing *and* Productive

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – DALLAS, TX – Although many small business owners will take "working" vacations this summer, the American Small Business Travelers Alliance has five simple rules small businesses can follow to achieve an effective work-vacation balance. The American Small Business Travelers Alliance (ASBTA) is a national alliance that provides valuable services and functions focused specifically on the travel needs and interests of small business owners.

"Working vacations are a grudging reality, if not an absolute necessity, for most small business owners," said Chuck Sharp, ASBTA President. "But the need to keep up with business while on vacation doesn't have to mean sacrificing fun and relaxation. By following a few simple rules, small business owners can enjoy their vacation time *and* keep an eye on business."

Rule #1 – Plan Ahead

Just as you carefully plan the best time of your business year to take time off, take the time to plan and research your destination ahead of time, paying particular attention to communication options and availability. If you plan to take your laptop on vacation, print out a listing of hotspots at your destination using

Google or Yahoo! maps. If flying, investigate the hotspot options at your home and destination airports since most now offer hotspots, often for free. And while most hotels offer dial-up or Ethernet Internet connections, research the Wi-Fi access options at your destination hotel. The increased flexibility of a wireless connection throughout the hotel just might allow you to grab a choice spot by the pool so you can quickly transition into relaxation mode when you're finished with work.

Rule #2 – Utilize the Latest Technology

Whether it's the longer battery life or built in Wi-Fi on your laptop, using VoIP for conference calls, or utilizing a GPS-enabled smart phone, having the latest technology while on a working vacation can greatly improve your productivity and get you back to enjoying your leisure activities as quickly as possible. Check out the Travel Technology section at the website of ASBTA's sister organization, The Small and Medium Business Technology Alliance (SMBTA) – www.smbta.com – for articles and tips on new technology.

Also keep in mind that technology providers are particularly aware of the business traveler's need to communicate while on vacation, so look for special promotions, particularly around typical vacation times like summer and early winter. For instance, now through September 5th, Intel is offering small business travelers who purchase an Intel Centrino Duo mobile technology notebook computer a free "Relax Pack" valued at \$400. The pack includes a backpack, 20 free sessions of unlimited access at AT&T Wi-Fi hot spots, \$100 in Marriott Bonus Bucks, a Marriott two-for-one bonus round of golf, a coupon to try the inflight internet service from Connexion by Boeing, and a Skype internet calling starter kit that's great for making long-distance conference calls as inexpensive as possible. See www.intel.com/go/relax for all the program details, including service availability.

Rule #3 – Delegate

Before you take off on vacation, identify a trusted employee who can field requests and calls while you're gone. Alert clients that this individual will be their point-of-contact in your absence, and identify him or her in your "out of office" voice mail greetings and automated e-mail responses. Most importantly, take time with this employee to identify his or her responsibilities and outline how and when he or she should contact you in both standard and emergency situations. Finally, make sure all other employees know to report to this individual in your absence. Once you've left for vacation, don't inadvertently take back the responsibility you've delegated – work within the parameters you've defined.

Rule #4 – Set Boundaries and Goals

Fully relaxing while on a working vacation requires a certain amount of discipline, so setting boundaries and goals for both business and leisure activities is essential. Define how much time will be needed for work activities while on vacation and define a daily limit. Ask your designated employee to limit contact, emergencies excepted, to certain times of the day or only to particular modes of communication. Just as you set boundaries for business, set goals for enjoyment, such as deciding that at least two days of the vacation will be only for leisure activities.

Rule #5 – Let Go

Even if you don't spend a lot of time actually working during your vacation, you can still limit your ability to enjoy and relax simply by thinking and worrying about what's happening at your business while you're gone. But if you've followed the first four rules and planned well, you'll have every reason to simply let go of any worries or concerns you might be tempted to take with you on vacation. With a little discipline, it's possible to banish work-related concerns from your mind and enjoy the experience at hand; otherwise, it's not a working vacation – just working.

“Small business owners are accustomed to dedicating themselves mind, body and spirit to their enterprises, but sometimes it’s necessary to gain the fresh and clear perspective that can only be obtained through rest and relaxation,” said Sharp. “We believe these five simple rules will help make it possible for small businesses to take a better kind of working vacation – one that leaves behind the figurative excess baggage that usually comes with the territory.”

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About ASBTA and SMBTA:

ASBTA is a national organization dedicated to serving and educating small business travelers by providing information regarding travel and mobile technology. The Small and Medium Technology Alliance (SMBTA) is part of ASBTA focused on helping businesses better utilize technology. If you're a small business owner and want to learn more or become a member for free, visit our sites – www.asbta.com and www.smbta.com. Members of the media can receive a free copy of survey results by contacting ASBTA by phone at 469-648-0190 or email at surveys@asbta.com.