

On the Road Again

Look into the future with us to this imaginary setting. The scenario facing Myra was a familiar one. She had completed and transmitted all of her sales reports and was ready to head out “on the road again.” Once a month, she followed up on her webcam calls with personal visits to the primary contacts on each of her key accounts. Webcam calls had improved customer service and made it easier to handle some of the day-to-day details of her job, but the personal touch of regular meetings with her clients was what kept them coming back. Although a routine trip, it would be hectic. She had scheduled 15 sales calls in three cities on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday followed by some well-deserved rest and relaxation in the Miami area.

Setting the itinerary for the business portion of her trip would be easy, as she had called on these clients many times in the past. Technology took a lot of hassle out of the business travel experience. Her profile information was stored in relevant service provider databases, taking the guesswork out of scheduling business travel and making reservations. Everything from the preferred color and style of rental cars to the room types and locations of favorite hotels and restaurants was stored in these databases and used to schedule and meet personal preferences. Even her hotel rooms were configured to make her feel at home and take some of the stress out of her travels. CRM databases knew the type of linens she likes, the music she likes, her preferred room temperature, and what amenities should be placed in the bathroom. Scheduling programs were also used to recommend optimum client scheduling and to map out the most efficient routing along with approximate travel times for each sales call or business meeting.

Although she relied on the travel planning databases for the business portion of this trip, leisure decisions were a different story. Like many business travelers, Myra took advantage of her time away from “home” to combine business and pleasure on some occasions. On this trip, she decided to have some fun and do a little exploring. Once again, the technology to plan and dream about a fun-filled weekend was as close as her fingertips. After giving her smart phone a simple voice command, she was taken on a virtual tour of Miami. She was instantly transported to the sights, sounds, and smells of the city on a virtual reality site maintained by the city’s convention and visitors’ bureau. One particular restaurant looked very appealing and the on-line reviews were all outstanding. Just like she had encountered at many popular restaurants, reservations were mandatory, along with a nonrefundable non-changeable payment for her entire meal in advance.

There were so many things to do and see that the choices would be difficult. However, the opportunity to sample before selecting made the decisions a little bit easier. The Bayside Marketplace and the Miami Metrozoo were definitely on her list of things to do, along with a round of golf and a little Sun and scuba diving off Miami Beach. After quick virtual tours through a couple of boutique hotels in the heart of Miami, she selected the perfect spot to unwind. Life on the road was still hectic, but it was a lot more fun than it used to be.

Only one more decision to make and then she could pack her bags. The final stop on her business trip would be Atlanta, and she still had to get to Miami and back to Atlanta for her flight home. Which would be more fun: the peace and quiet of a train ride with speeds of over 300 miles per hour or a shuttle flight in one of the new wide-body jets with 1,000 other weekend travelers? Technology was definitely changing, but the planning, adventure, and fun of traveling were still the same.