

Questions & Answers
TEMPORARY BUSINESS TRAVEL

Dorothy I. Riddle, Ph.D., CMC
Service-Growth Consultants Inc.
riddle@servicegrowth.com

The following ten questions and answers provide tips on how to manage business travel abroad.

1. Under what conditions can I travel freely to other markets?

You will need to visit your target market for at least business development purposes and possibly also for service delivery once you have a contract. This means that you will have to be able to get across the border, with the permission of an immigration officer. Immigration officers are responsible for blocking the entry of politically undesirable persons, law breakers, and undocumented workers who would take jobs away from citizens of the country. While these officers are trained to recognize and admit tourists, students, and documented workers, they are not necessarily trained to recognize business persons who have the right to enter temporarily under the new services trade agreements. They are particularly alert to detaining persons who they think are trying to immigrate and look for work without the proper authority.

It is critical that you emphasize the *temporary* nature of visit and the fact that you are and will remain employed in your own country. You want to use words like “looking for contracts” or “finding new customers” or “finalizing a business deal.”

2. How do I know if there are restrictions on foreign travel to specific markets?

The matter of temporary business entry is being seen increasingly as a non-tariff barrier to services trade. Under the GATS, an increasing number of countries are allowing business visitors to enter their market for purposes of attending trade conferences or doing business development without requiring a visa or work permit. However, these arrangements are usually on a bilateral basis. Check with your Trade Commissioner Service for more details.

Don't forget that some countries require an entrance visa even if you are only transiting through them. This is true of a number of airports in countries (like the United States) that serve as a hub for onward regional flights.

3. What about business travel to the U.S.?

If you are from Canada or Mexico, provisions for business travel to the U.S. are spelled out in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Chapter 16 on Temporary Entry for Business Persons. Basically, there are four categories of persons that can cross the border under NAFTA: business visitors, traders and investors, intra-company transferees, and professionals. Go to www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/nafta-alena/cross-en.asp in order to see the type of education and documentation that you need in order to cross the

border under this NAFTA provision. If you are from a non-NAFTA country, check with your government's international trade department.

4. How can I make my border crossings as easy as possible?

In order to facilitate your temporary business entry into foreign markets, be sure to carry the following information with you:

- Proof of citizenship
- Proper visas
- Proof of employment status in your own country
- Copies of post-secondary degrees and professional certifications
- Proof of meetings to be held and letters of invitation
- Proof of immunizations
- Extra visa photos
- Passport current for at least six months after the travel date

Before you start your trip, make sure that you know your rights in terms of market entry.

At the border, your demeanour is important. The following tips may be helpful:

- Act professionally.
- Be deferential.
- Answer only what is asked.
- Don't volunteer information.
- Remain calm and at ease.

5. How do I find out the national holidays in my target market?

Each market has its own schedule of holidays. Here are some sources of information:

- Your own embassy or high commission in the target market
- CIA World Fact Book (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook)
- A national website of your target market
- The target market embassy/consulate located in your country
- Earth Calendar (www.earthcalendar.net)

You can use www.worldjump.com to find national websites.

6. Are there any safety precautions I should take when travelling abroad?

Although travelling abroad is exciting, you may also be perceived as a rich stranger and therefore a target for potential acts of violence. You should take simple precautions, such as:

- Avoid wearing expensive accessories.
- Avoid carrying large sums of cash.
- Never leave your luggage unattended.

- Don't walk alone at night.
- Don't disclose your hotel room number.
- Carry emergency contact numbers with you.
- Know what to do if your passport is lost/stolen.
- Know what to do if you are arrested or robbed.

7. Does gender make a difference in doing business abroad?

Traditional biases and practices that discriminate against women still exist in most countries. In some instances, potential local partners or customers are simply not used to dealing with businesswomen in positions of authority. This may be true even if women are well represented in the political hierarchy. In other instances, there are cultural practices that make it difficult for women service exporters to network or acquire informal market information.

On the positive side, since there are fewer international businesswomen, a woman is likely to be remembered. In some instances, women find it easier to develop export business because they appear less threatening than their male colleagues.

8. What can I do as a businesswoman to overcome prejudices and limitations?

One of the most effective ways to avoid difficulties is to get male "sponsorship" through letters of introduction or meetings arranged by a male colleague. Your government trade officers may be helpful in this role.

It is also important to make sure that you are behaving like a business colleague rather than like a social colleague so that male counterparts are prompted to treat you as a business equal. Depending on the circumstances, you may wish to restrict the type of socializing you do after hours to large group functions so that no ambiguity arises.

For further information, see:

Roger Axtell et al, "Do's and Taboos around the World for Women in Business" (Wiley, 1997).

Sheila Hodge, "Success Strategies for Women in International Business"
www.speaking.com/articles_html/SheidaHodge,MBA_724.html

9. How can I find travel tips and tools?

The following websites will provide you with country specific information:

- [Help For World Travelers! - International Dialing Codes](#)
- [Intellicast.com - Local Weather Forecasts](#)
- [Roadpost – International Cellular, Satellite and Remote Internet Services](#)
- [time and date.com - The World Clock Time Zones](#)
- [The Internationalist - Travel Guides Maps and Books](#)
- [Walkabout Travel Gear - Worldwide Electricity Index and Adaptors](#)

10. How can I maximize my market development time?

Time is your most precious commodity and so you will want to plan wisely. Inevitably, export market development will involve travel. If appropriate, you can seek out some “portable” contracts that can be done while you are traveling during lengthy flights or in-transit wait times. This will allow you to be generating income while on the road.

A second tactic is thorough preparation ahead of time. For example, if you are going to a conference or trade event, review the attendee list and contact prospective customers ahead of time so that you have meetings pre-arranged. While you want to leave some flexibility in your schedule, you also want to make the most of the time you have.

Part of that preparation should be to examine your travel route for opportunities to add on business development. For example, if you have to transit regularly through a hub city, can you also develop business there? Similarly, when you are selecting new markets, try to make sure that your travel pattern will be efficient – not scattered all over the world!

When you are with people, be sure that you are prepared to take advantage of the time available. If it is only a brief encounter, your benefits message should help you determine if follow up is appropriate. Concentrate on the type of relationship building interactions that are difficult to do from a distance and leave routine information gathering to e-mail contact.