Top Ten Ways to Fly Smarter this Winter

With the winter weather stranding thousands of travelers and canceling many flights last year, please use these helpful hints when planning upcoming business travel:

1. **Book direct flights when possible.**
   - During an average travel month like September, approximately 20% of flights are delayed. If you take a connecting flight, there is a high probability of missing your connection when the snow starts falling. Direct flights are generally more expensive, but they can save you lots of time if your flights are disrupted.

2. **Fly on larger airplanes.**
   - When the snow is falling, airports reduce the number of flights that can take off and land. The first flights cancelled are the smaller 50 - 70 passenger regional jets with larger jets (Boeing & Airbus) all receiving highest priority.

3. **Avoid northern airports for connecting flights.**
   - Chicago or Dallas? Guess which city has more cancellations when the snow is falling....

4. **Pack smart and plan for lost luggage.**
   - When flights are delayed or cancelled due to weather, your luggage is the first casualty. Pack light, travel with a carry-on, and keep your medications and a change of clothes with you at all times.

5. **Don’t fly out of small airports during winter.**
   - A small airport might be served by only two airlines with regional jets and service 10 - 20 flights a day vs. a larger regional airport that will have numerous airlines and service 50 - 70 flights a day. When a flight cancellation occurs, having more options available to reach your final destination will be very helpful.

6. **Avoid early morning flights.**
   - The 6 am flights are usually piloted by the crew on the last arriving flight the night before. If late night flights are delayed at a regional airport, pilots and crew have to wait approximately ten hours before they are allowed to fly again.

7. **Plan your airport commute to take 2-3 times longer.**
   - When roads become slick and icy, the commute to the airport slows down tremendously. Give yourself plenty of time to get to the airport safely.

8. **Keep your devices charged.**
   - Charge your mobile phone and other devices the night before a flight and bring both a portable and car charger with you (handy in a rental car or taxi). Your mobile device allows you to receive text alerts, contact family/business, and call CTM at (866) 303-1019 if you need to make flight changes, hotel accommodations, rent a car, etc.

9. **Follow airlines and airports on social media.**
   - Many airports and airlines post immediate updates on their social media feeds, Twitter in particular. Start following them today! As a follower, you will receive airline alerts and flight updates sent directly to your mobile device. Follow BNA on Twitter @FlyNashville.

10. **Check the weather.**
    - Don’t wait until the weather hits to start adjusting travel plans. If a traveler can stay ahead of a major storm, contingency plans can be put into place. Storms can be predicted as early as 72 hours prior, so if the airport you’re flying into will likely be affected, try to modify your flight to leave earlier.
An orphaned trip is an unfinished airline reservation in the Concur online booking tool that is disrupted in the middle of the booking process. If a user experiences computer problems or steps away and their session times out, the reservation in process becomes “orphaned.” Until the user clicks the “Purchase Ticket” link, the reservation remains in process and is considered unfinished.

When this occurs, Concur sends out an orphaned trip/unfinished reservation email advising the traveler or travel assistant that they have an “Unfinished Reservation” which they need to complete or cancel. After four (4) hours, if no action is taken, the Concur auto cancellation notification process engages and the traveler and/or assistant is sent a cancellation notification email from Concur. This process occurs approximately six (6) hours from the creation of the unfinished reservation.

New Concur Interface to Debut in January

Concur Travel & Expense, Vanderbilt’s online booking tool and expense reporting system, plans to unveil a new look in January 2015. Concur made these changes to improve the user experience and modernize the application’s user interface.

“We believe these changes make Concur easier to use. The Disbursements team is already using (the new interface) and the transition has been seamless,” said Tony Grayson, Director of Disbursements. “The changes are intuitive.”

The improved user interface features “dashboards” that groups functions and tasks together at the top of the page and consolidates functions related to expenses on one screen. The new “work-to-zero” feature makes it easier for users and approvers to keep track of active items. Other improvements include:

- streamlined navigation
- easy-to-find actions, alerts and notifications
- improved matching of available expenses
- simpler viewing of receipts

Online training and Q&A sessions on the new Concur interface will be available in January within The Learning Exchange (keyword CONCUR). Quick reference guides will also be available on the Disbursements and Travel websites. If you have any questions, please contact the VU Travel and Expense teams: concurexpende@vanderbilt.edu or travel@vanderbilt.edu.

Hilton and Marriott to Drop Same Day Cancellation Policy

Two of the world’s largest hotel chains recently announced that hotel reservations will no longer be able to be cancelled on the same day as check-in without paying a penalty. Effective January 1, the new policy requires that a reservation has to be cancelled the day before a traveler’s scheduled arrival or a penalty of one night's stay will be charged to their credit card.

This universal cancellation policy will go into effect for all Hilton and Marriott reservations made after January 1, 2015. Cancellation policies at Hilton and Marriott vary so travelers should be sure to check with their specific hotel as some may have even more restrictive policies in place.

Even the most seasoned traveler, who plans ahead, runs the risk of incurring penalties caused by cancelled flights, changed appointments, and bad weather that prevents them from arriving at their reserved hotel on the intended day.