

A Day in the Life of a Female Traveling Motivational Speaker

by Terri Dunevant

I kept looking for the cameras for the reality TV show I found myself in; but all I saw were dozens of other people struggling to carry their one carry-on, one personal item, and winter coat while checking and double-checking their boarding passes with the sporadically changing gates on the departure monitors.

An experienced traveler

I consider myself an experienced traveler having visited dozens of major cities over the last few months both in the US and Canada. Some rules that guide my travel include always going to my gate first thing (to verify how far away it is, that it hasn't changed since last look, and that it is on time). But this time, "Ms. Know-it-all" decided she had enough time to stop at Mickey D's snack wrap and iced coffee. Before I knew it, it was departure time! What??? How did THAT happen? Insane, I had had enough time, didn't I? Well, many of my flights are delayed, I thought, maybe this one too; but alas, no, two minutes after departure time, the plane was not visible through the A gate windows. I burst into tears (and me a motivational speaker, for shame).

In the last 10 days there had been a total of 4 gigs from LA to VA and back to SLC; I was SO ready to be home with the most wonderful husband in the whole world, my smiling children, and beagle puppy that actually pees himself when I come back after being gone for a long time. But no, the agent handed me a boarding pass for the next flight out, 5 and ½ hours later! A quick look around verified my luck, this was not the kind of airport that had seats WITHOUT armrests; if I were to get a nap, it'd have to be on the floor.

*Oh, cr*p, here she comes!*

After thanking the agent for not charging me for missing my flight, I set out to find the nearest restroom to survey the damage of negative emotion on my face. Nope, a splash of cold water won't change the pink and puffy mask now evident around my face. The heck with it, everybody will just have to get over it (like even anyone would even look at me). Funny thing about airports, everyone has so much on their minds, where they're going, where they've been, how they best utilize their wait time.

As I exit the lavatory, I see that the gate for the later flight is back on the B concourse where I landed, not this one which I ran to; figures. On my way back, I see the woman whom I sat next to on my last flight; the one whom I gave lots of unsolicited expert flying advice to, the one to whom I gave my business card and asked she remember me if her company ever needed a motivational speaker! Oh, cr*p, here she comes! "Hi, what are you still doing here", she asked surprised. "Well, I missed my plane", I offered, adding, "I guess I thought we were on Central time here and messed up the time", fudging the truth having no real explanation what happened to my brain during the "Twilight Zone time" when I missed my flight. She reacted compassionately, but I was still compelled to explain my swollen face. She agreed that I was just tired and graciously suggested I eat lunch/dinner with her.

The invitation was above and beyond, but I really just needed to be alone and make-up for my stupid mistake by getting some work done. There were over 200 emails that needed attention in my inbox, I would whittle them down AFTER I found my new gate.

...tail between my legs

Nothing would catch my eye, neither massage chairs, ten minute manicure shops, nor clearance sale signs. Straight to the B gates for me...down the escalator, over 3 moving sidewalks, up the escalator, and to the end of the original concourse. I look at the reader board behind the counter at MY gate and it lists instead a different city than my home airport. So, I ask the agent and she explains that the gate has just changed to.....yep, you guessed it.....one on the A concourse from which I JUST came! THAT's when I started looking for the candid camera. Okay, so, I deserve it, I'll walk back again, head low, tail between my legs.

Back I go, the length of the concourse, down the escalator, over the 3 moving sidewalks, and up the escalator, back to the gate at which I had burst out in tears. At least the same agent wasn't there when I arrived. Okay, maybe now I can get some work done. What NO wireless hotspot? What kind of airport is this? Even in the coffee shop, there were only two bars with the popular pay-as-you-go service provider. As usual, the free wireless network connections weren't functioning; I don't know why they show up when they won't let you get on. I know, I'll ask the agent where I might get a good connection – she doesn't know. Okay, I'll try the airline Help Desk, but she also has no idea. As I rudely walk away (I can be a witch when continually frustrated and tired), the Help Desk agent offers that I might try sitting close to the windows and trying again to get online. Okay, worth a try, so I ask “are there any electrical outlets near the windows?” “No, they're all on the inside columns” she said happy with herself for knowing the answer to one of my questions. I just looked at her with what I'm sure was not a look I would be proud of. Next, I try the airport Information Desk. The man standing behind told me that the only place I could for sure get on without complication was.....wait for it.....no, you KNOW what I'm going to say.....back at the B gates!!!! “But, you can access the FREE internet network from there”, he adds when he sees the less than enthusiastic look in my eyes.

By this time the escalators feel as if they are moving at half-speed, the 3 moving sidewalks look a mile long, and the B concourse lengthens right before my eyes (like in the movies). But I'm almost there; I can do it; I'll be SO proud of myself for going to all this trouble to catch up on my work. I stand in front of the place where I was directed to go and exhale, phew! A lady from behind a wall says, “can I help you?” I quickly adjust, wasn't this free? No, wait, there's a fee schedule...“I'm just checking you prices I finally blurt”. \$5 per 30 minutes!!!! Hello! It turns out they have access to the Free Wireless Network, BUT it costs to use the room! Heck NO, I've been a victim for the last two hours walking back and forth from concourses A & B, I'm going to exercise what little control I have and say “no thank you!”

As I walk what I vow will be my last trip on the path between Concourse B and Concourse A, I realize I won't be able to “make-up” for the wasted time. What will I do with the couple of hours I have left at this point? Maybe I'll write about this; I mean, if anyone were watching me today, they'd be rolling in the aisles with laughter. Maybe that someone should be me? I wonder if anyone else ever goes through this kind of experience; they must; one thing I know, I'm not THAT special. I tend to experience fairly mainstream experiences when compared to others like me. So, to all you middle-aged, female motivational sales trainers, here's my story of the day. Hope it helps.