



## Do You *Really* Need to Make That Business Trip?

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Many Los Angeles and Southern California business owners and entrepreneurs spend a lot of time and money travelling to meet with customers, prospects, vendors and others. In fact, travel is an accepted expense that's considered to be just a part of doing business for many companies — and a part of their jobs for most business owners and executives.

Unfortunately, the days of business travel being considered a “luxury” or “fun” are long gone for most owners and entrepreneurs. Air travel, in particular, has mostly become one giant headache, starting with the ordeal of getting through airport security. Then once you board the airplane, you can look forward to sitting in a tiny seat in a packed plane while the person in front of you reclines his seat back so far he's practically laying in your lap — and the person next to you talks so loud you know her life's story by the time you finally land.

But there is some good news. Advances in telecommunications technology have made it possible for owners and executives today to travel less than they had to in the past. In more and more situations, grueling, days-long trips across the country are being replaced by teleconference meetings or even just Skype or Facetime calls.

### Benefits of Virtual Meetings

There are tremendous potential benefits to conducting virtual meetings via teleconference, Skype or Facetime instead of travelling to meet face to face. The biggest are:

- **Cost savings** — Whether a business trip is across the country or somewhere not as far away, it's going to cost your company money. There are airfare or driving expenses, of course, as well as lodging, meals and other miscellaneous expenses. If an employee is travelling a long distance for a short period of time — say, a brief meeting with a client on the opposite coast — your company could end up spending thousands of dollars for what is essentially a one-hour meeting.
- **Time savings** — Again considering this hypothetical meeting on the opposite coast: An employee could easily spend two full days flying back and forth for the one-hour meeting — not exactly a very good use of his time.
- **Increased productivity** — How much productive work could the employee have gotten done in the office over these two days if he weren't flying back and forth across the country? Sure, he could have done some work on his laptop or smart phone while travelling. But this kind of work usually isn't nearly as productive or fruitful as the work he would have accomplished in the office, free from the myriad travel distractions.
- **Happier employees** — Finally, how happy do you think this jet-setting employee was after his little cross-country adventure? Not only is he probably exhausted, but he also spent two days away from his family for what turned out to be just one hour of face-to-face client time.

## **When In-Person Meetings Are Essential**

This isn't to suggest that all business trips can or should be replaced by virtual meetings. There are times when in-person meetings with clients, prospects and vendors are essential. This is especially true if you're trying to land a big new client who requests a face-to-face meeting — it would be penny-wise and pound-foolish to tell this client you'd rather do the meeting via Skype in order to save money.

What we are suggesting is that you not just reflexively plan a business trip every time you think you need to have a face-to-face meeting with someone who is located out of town. Instead, give some serious thought to whether or not the meeting can be just as successful if it's done virtually via a teleconference or Skype or Facetime call. Here are 4 questions to think about as you consider this:

1. Will you weaken your relationship with the client, prospect or vendor if you hold the meeting virtually? If so, you should probably make the trip.
2. Could you be putting a big new sale or the retention of a key customer at risk by not travelling for an in-person meeting? If so, book your plane ticket now.
3. Exactly how much is the trip going to cost? Based on this, do a cost-benefit analysis to decide whether or not making the trip makes financial sense.
4. Are there ways to reduce the cost of the trip? For example, is there flexibility in the schedule so you can shop for a lower airfare? Will a budget hotel suffice instead of something fancier? Also be sure your company has established guidelines in place that limit employees' meal and entertainment expenses while they're travelling.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

Many business owners and entrepreneurs spend a lot of time and money travelling. In fact, travel has come to be viewed as an accepted business expense and a part of the job for most owners and executives. But advances in technology have made it possible for owners and employees to travel less today than they had to in the past by replacing in-person meetings with teleconferences or Skype or Facetime calls. Instead of reflexively planning a business trip to meet with someone who is located out of town, give some serious thought to whether or not the meeting can be just as successful if it's done virtually.

## **About CFO Edge**

CFO Edge, LLC delivers enterprise-class financial and operational performance solutions to executives throughout Southern California. Based in Los Angeles, our formerly-seated chief financial officers engage on demand as part-time CFOs, single-project CFOs, and interim CFOs to help business leaders successfully resolve pressing challenges and realize their financial and operational goals. At CFO Edge, we are passionate about helping our clients create, grow and sustain value. For more information, visit [www.cfoedge.com](http://www.cfoedge.com) or call 800.276.1750 Ext 101.

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