

Road warriors: don't be "that guy"

Last year I flew nearly 130 segments, spent the majority of my work-week in hotels and drove countless rental car miles. By most definitions I am a *road warrior.* Now that's a funny term: "road warrior." The words seems to imply some kind of soldier or militant deployed to the business battlefield. To some, it evokes images of a post-apocalyptic Mel Gibson battling to survive an onslaught of evil minions. Like all good soldiers, road warriors establish their battle plan (*itinerary*), pack the necessary provisions (*luggage*), suit up for battle (*blazer, slacks, suit, etc.*) and set out on their mission conquer the business world.

When you spend as much time in airports, rental car counters and hotels as I do, you run into a wide variety of road warriors. Some approach travel with optimism, positive energy, flexibility and armed with the realization that – like all things in life – your battle plan will change due to things beyond your control. I call these people road scholars (yes, I know it's a pun). Others, well…we've all seen them. They are angry, in a never-ending rush and their priorities are always far more important than yours; and boy will they let you know when they are not happy.

The other day I was in the airport and my flight was delayed due to storms in the midwest. Par for the

course and certainly no big deal. I watched the flight status monitors as the departure time was pushed back and back and eventually reached a two hour delay. Of course this dashed all hopes of making tight connecting flights. The air was thick with tension; this was an important flight for connecting travelers for both international and trans-national domestic destinations.

Finally, after two hours and fifteen minutes of passenger pacing and frustration, the inbound flight landed and passengers began exiting the plane. Hope springs eternal! The terminal was abuzz with a newfound energy that we may be able to make our rescheduled flights later that evening.

But then the unthinkable happened. The most dreaded words a traveler could hear: *mechanical issues.*

With the announcement of those two words, the gate agent seemed to deliver a collective punch in the stomach to everyone awaiting the delayed flight. This meant at least another 30 minute delay while the mechanics sort out some indeterminate problem.

Then, I caught something out the corner of my eye. A sharp-dressed road warrior approached the gate desk with fire in her eyes and a look of determination that seemed to say “this plane will be fixed even if I have to do it myself.” Despite the line of 8 passengers ahead of her, the gladiator approached the gate agent and proceeded to launch an assault of questions and passive-aggressive daggers.

Here are a few of my favorites…

> *“What the hell is going on here? This is ridiculous! I could have driven to Chicago faster than this.”*
>
> *“You keep pushing back the departure time. I’ve missed my connecting flight! What are you going to do about it?”*
>
> *“I’m Executive Platinum and spend more than $50,000 on this airline every year. I’m going to stop*

flying with you guys; you don't know how to run an airline."

"This same thing happened last week? Do you guys get paid to delay flights and miss our connections?"

No joke…this really happened…

This went on for a very uncomfortable 5 minutes before she gave up her futile campaign. The gate agent – imbued with Jedi powers – implored the traveler to calm down and reassured her that she was doing everything she could for those impacted by the delay. The traveler turned in a huff, grumbled something under her breath and retreated to her corner of the boarding lounge.

Now, I get it…there are some mission critical trips where you really need to make every connection and be on time in order for everything to work out just right. We've all been there but the fact is: you cannot control most of the factors that cause travel delays. There is no need to resort to travel rage and channel your inner Mad Max.

Just don't be *"that guy."*

Call it luck (or just plain statistical probability) but I often find myself in these situations. When I do, I usually ask myself:

- Is there anything I can do to change the outcome?
- Can I call my travel agency?
- Can I call the airline directly?
- Can I go to the airline club or travel desk and ask for help?
- Is there anything I can do right now – other than making someone else's life miserable – to change my current situation?

More often than not there is little, if anything, I can do and I find myself victim to the fickle finger of travel fate.

So, what do you do next? After all avenues are explored, what can you do? Start threatening the gate agent?

Here's my advice: take a deep breath, smile and turn to the person next to you and say:

> *"Could be worse…we could be under attack by Godzilla."*



No matter how bad your travel situation, you can always improve it by helping improve someone else's. The difference between a road warrior and a road scholar is a road scholar:

…understands the battles he or she should and should not fight,

…knows the things he or she can and cannot influence and

…takes action on the things he/she can change with an attitude that improves the environment of the people around him/her.

So, I implore my fellow travelers: don't be "that guy." Become a road scholar and fight the temptation to

enter the Thunderdome departure lounge as a road warrior.

justin greis

hi, i'm justin

(nice to meet you)



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