



Overcoming Travel Restrictions:

The untapped value of Inter-Office Collaboration & RLA Foundation

Some recent – seemingly divergent - developments in both the broader economy and inter-office communications have led to new thinking in travel. When a company targets a specific customer or a seminar or even a training event, they usually ask the question: “who should we send?” The reality with most of these large companies is that they should be asking: “who do we have out in that area right now?”

What if a company could know within moments the answer to that question? Although in the past it was difficult to figure out across departments who was travelling (marketing may have no interest in where supply-chain executives are traveling) new developments in communication make having this information instantly possible – and sharable. With applications such as “find my friend” and “findme” or Blackberry’s “Wizi SMS with Location” you can know instantly where everyone in the enterprise is by the GPS in their smartphone. In fact companies are starting to embrace this technology (recently Emerson issued iphones to their executives for just this purpose) not to check on employee’s movements, but to identify overlap in travel to reduce travel expenses. For example, when a company wants to attend a tradeshow in Atlanta but doesn’t have the budget to send a particular executive, they can identify other executives in the area and make an assignment, saving significant expense in travel.

But it’s not the technology that has us thinking about this question and how it relates to travel. It’s the potential for inter-office collaboration that has us excited. Travel restrictions are in place, it’s true, but as a salesperson you can use this principle to help your customers or prospects think differently about their travel issues. Rather than asking “can you make it to our event” you would be asking “who in the company is close and could make it?” The message you present can then be delivered to a representative of your target company and they don’t spend any additional money on travel.

RLA also has another great tool to assist companies with current travel restrictions. RLA Foundation provides travel assistance for OEMs and Retail companies who cannot attend RLA events because of internal budget or travel restrictions. 3PSPs contribute to the RLA Foundation not a specific company, so no ethics rules can be violated, and RLA Foundation in turn provides assistance to those companies who cannot afford to travel, in return for their involvement at the specific event. It’s very simple and can bring important targets to whichever event you choose, and because RLA Foundation manages the process it is anonymous and not considered a “gift” from a vendor. This tool can be easily modified for any situation, whether a small regional RLA seminar, or a large international RLA conference & Expo.

Overcoming the “no travel budget” objection is an important requirement for sales today. With some thought and a few good tools, it can be easier done than you think.