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Treat Yourself

Career Development



I recently visited my office for the first time since mid-March. My everyday commute to this building

already seems like a fading memory from another time. I was there to collect a few items, including mail from mid-March that arrived after the work-from-home orders were given. I sat for a minute to reminisce about having a standing desk, a good chair, and a multi-monitor setup for my laptop, but mostly I thought about the general buzz of activity in the office, how invigorating it was, and how much I miss seeing everyone.

When I got home, I thumbed through the April 2020 issue of the Docket, which includes the column where I'd stated my intention to make more time to visit as many of our branches across the country as possible. That didn't exactly age well; I only wish I could count on this column to debut in a world where we could all move freely again.

Thinking back on business travel, I recall a colleague who viewed the company's expense policy as an opportunity to make money. That said, he wasn't cheating anyone, except perhaps himself. Our company paid a per diem, and his mission was to spend as little of that as possible and pocket the remainder. His signature move was to get a boxed children's meal from a major chain; he said it was priced as a loss-leader, contained all the calories he needed, and usually included a toy he could take home to the kids. He "had" to do this three times per trip (so now you know how many children he has).

I guess I can thank him for helping me learn the joy of occasionally dining alone. I love eating in places unique to the city I'm visiting, and happy to spend well past my allotment to experience something great. I figure that this is what I'd do for myself at home, so why wouldn't I take these opportunities when they're both harder to come by and partially subsidized?

I've never worked for a company that paid for an airport club membership, but I've maintained a personal one for several years. I use it for personal travel, certainly, but the bulk of my air travel has always been for work. At an airport club, I'm assured of more comfort, room, and quiet than the rest of the terminal, easy access to charging ports, and most food and drink is included. This means I can leave early for the airport, then take some time to settle in and catch up on the workday before I board. If I'm delayed, that takes a lot of the pain out. My employer benefits from this in the reduced hit to my productivity, and the occasional un-expensed meal because I chose the convenient and complimentary options there. But that's not the point: I don't do it for my company, I do it for myself.

Before I get too maudlin about missing business travel (*there's a risk* I didn't see coming), I want to put this in the context of my current everything-from-home reality. More specifically, I want to extol the virtues of my new KVM switch! If you're not familiar, those letters stand for keyboard, video, and mouse; this device allows me to share all my home-office peripherals between my personal PC and my work laptop, and I can switch back and forth between platforms by pressing one button instead of plugging in several different cords. I'm told these have been around for a while. I wish I had known about them years ago. It wasn't very expensive, and I imagine my company would've paid for it had I asked, but again that's not the point. I wasn't trying to make a business case for new technology; I just thought it might be neat to have.

Just as my work life is now almost exclusively online, so is my personal life. Family and friends are onscreen, and my local shops have pivoted to online ordering and delivery. I don't have to push personal items aside to make room for work ones, or vice versa. I would've enjoyed the KVM switch before the pandemic; I love it now.

There's a lot of talk about self-care lately, and understandably so; many of us have never experienced stressors like the ones we're currently facing. In good times and bad, we accept that

self-care is inherently a matter of personal responsibility. So, why deny ourselves opportunities for self-care solely because some of the benefits might also inure to the company we work for?

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