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Globalization has brought a significant shift in attitudes towards business travel. According to the inaugural American Express Business Travel Survey, the vast majority of U.S. respondents (91%) enjoy traveling for business. Close to two-thirds (62%) of respondents said one of the top professional aspects of business travel they like the most is spending face-to-face time with colleagues, customers, suppliers and prospects.

The new global research report from American Express also reveals the top logistical issues that can hamper productivity on the go. Over three quarters (77%) of survey respondents indicated that last-minute travel delays are the most common setback, followed by connectivity and technology issues (61%), and last-minute changes to business agendas and meeting locations (60%).

“Most U.S. business travelers feel that face-to-face meetings are essential to achieving their business objectives and thus it is important that business travel be a stress-free and seamless experience,” said Shane Berry, Senior Vice President, Global Client Group, Global Commercial Payments at American Express. “Supporting business travelers, by continuing to innovate premium travel services that encourage productivity, connectivity and relaxation, can have a lasting impact on executive well-being as well as increasing their company’s bottom line.”

The business of staying well

Close to seven-in-ten (67%) of respondents indicated that experiencing new countries and cultures is one of the three personal aspects of business travel they

enjoy the most – followed by developing a wider cultural skill-set (49%) and meeting

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The survey suggests that business travelers rely on premium travel services to help mitigate the nuances of travel that can have a negative impact on their wellbeing. When asked which three executive travel services are most important when traveling for business purposes, respondents indicated:

- Traveling in business class (58%);
- Access to hotel 'club floors' specifically for business travelers (47%);
- Access to airport lounges (46%).

Adapting to local customs

Specifically, when traveling for business outside the United States, survey respondents noted the importance of being aware of local business customs, with 86% reporting that being aware of these cultural differences helps them achieve their business objectives. Respondents cited how people should be addressed (46%), understanding the dress code (44%) and nuances in communication styles (39%) as the top three most important local customs to observe from a business perspective.

While under half (46%) of respondents admitted to making a cultural faux pas while traveling abroad for business purposes, the survey indicates that respondents may be learning from their mistakes. The majority of respondents (85%) acknowledged doing some level of research before traveling to a country they hadn't been to before for business, with nearly four-in-ten (39%) respondents stating they 'always' research local business customs, and just under a quarter (24%) stating they 'often' research business customs beforehand, while just over a fifth (22%) say they 'sometimes' research business customs.

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