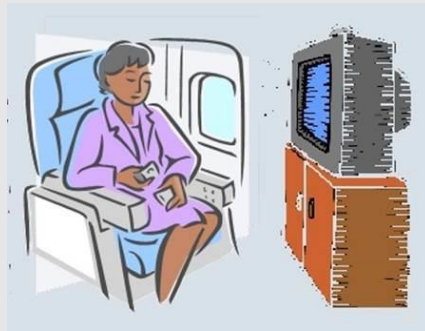




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David Danto, IMCCA Director of Emerging Technology



Real Travel vs. Virtual Travel Part 2 - Where Am I? Anywhere...

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A few weeks ago I posted an article called [Real Travel vs. Virtual Travel - Videoconferencing, Telepresence and the Airline Industry](#). In it I discussed some misconceptions about videoconferencing and travel savings, pointing out that the real benefits of effective collaboration are far richer and more complex. I've heard and read lots of comments from readers and I'm pleased that it has resonated with so many people. What I should have elaborated upon in the first list of real benefits was the disruptive change collaboration tools have begun to have on the global workforce.

I'm typing this blog from a chain hotel. It is an Embassy Suites somewhere in the middle of America. The thing about Embassies is that most of them are almost identical inside – rooms surrounding a big atrium with a pseudo tropical theme. Now I'm not making fun of the Embassy properties – Hilton makes sure they're consistently clean and reliable (if a bit non-spectacular) which is fine with most frequent business travelers who just want a clean, reliable place to sleep - but when you look around the property it strikes you that you could be anywhere. Orlando, Cleveland, LA, Seattle, the experiences are (for the most part) all the same. My morning today included a videoconference with a client, an audio conference with a manufacturer, work on a PowerPoint I'll be using in a webcast at the end of the month and writing this blog. Wherever I am, as long as there is decent internet connectivity, there really isn't anything I can't do because I'm not in my home office. Stop and think about that for a minute. Because of effective collaboration tools all of us can come to the realization that we really could be living and working anywhere – in an office or on the beach.

I'm from the northeast US - a suburb near New York. Why did I choose to live there? Yes, the schools are OK, the community is OK, the people are OK, the stores are OK – but those were really secondary requirements. The primary reason for my family and relatives to live in that area is because it is close to a large city economy – where we can find work and support ourselves. The area's many thriving industries have kept me employed for nearly 35 years. Today however, I did my job from the hotel nearest to the training seminar I attended. Last week I did my job near the client's office I had to visit, next week it will be from a different client's city. Charlotte, Irvine, Raleigh, Chicago, Denver – it doesn't matter. Where ever I have connectivity and collaboration I can be productive.

What does that mean to an employer? The world.

- Firms can hire the best and brightest people from anywhere. Any city, any region. My colleagues in the UK are as close to me as my colleagues from all over the US. Yes, this doesn't apply to many classes of jobs like retail stores or assembly lines or construction workers, but without those it still represents a heck of a lot of information workers that are now available to be in the hiring pool. It means more access to expertise and a more diversified workforce.
- Required business trips no longer mean a complete loss of other productivity. I don't have to "catch-up" as much when I get back to the office – I catch-up from wherever I am.

What does that mean to an employee? The world.

- Information workers can now live where the quality of life is the best for them. Climate, comfort, community, etc. can now move to being the primary criteria for choosing a place to live.
- Work – life balance is now much easier to achieve. Workers no longer have to sacrifice many hours a day commuting to an office. Their office is wherever they are. That time now becomes available for family or additional productivity.

As I mentioned last time, business travel *is* still a necessary evil. It however contrasts very well with the time, carbon emissions, and effort removed from the now unnecessary daily commute. Effective collaboration can enable us to travel only when we truly need to be somewhere else – not just to begin work in the first place. That in the long term will be much better for the planet and everyone on it. Unless of course you work in one of those airplanes we business travelers use. Then you're just going to have to suffer with the rest of us until your industry management gets a clue.

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This blog was written by [David Danto](#) and contains solely his own, personal opinions. David has over 30 years of experience providing problem solving leadership and innovation in media and unified communications technologies for various firms in the corporate, broadcasting and academic worlds including AT&T, Bloomberg LP, FNN, Morgan Stanley, NYU, Lehman Brothers and JP Morgan Chase. He recently joined [Dimension Data](#) as their Principal Consultant for the collaboration, multimedia, video and AV disciplines. He is also the [IMCCA's](#) Director of Emerging Technology. David can be reached at David.Danto@Dimensiondata.com or DDanto@imcca.org and his full bio and other blogs and articles can be seen at [Danto.info](#).