

Do you need virtual assistance?

By Nick Easen for CNN

(CNN) --For executive travelers these days its not about SOHO (small office, home office), its about YOMO -- your office, moveable office.

Business trips are sadly more about preparation than poolside pina coladas and if you need to clinch that deal you often need support on the move.

This is why overseas business help or virtual assistance is a booming sector, especially with the steep rise in global travel from smaller operators who do not have the support of a myriad of global corporate offices.

"The virtual assistance industry is growing rapidly and it is becoming quite competitive particularly in English speaking countries like the U.S., the UK, Canada and Australia," says Carolyn Moncel of Motion Temps.

Moncel, like many in the virtual assistance sector, caters specifically to the global smaller business traveler, where the bottom line is the most important factor.

With travel budgets slashed and overseas corporate tabs under scrutiny, virtual assistance is proving a cheaper alternative for traveling executives rather than utilizing emergency, bilingual administrative support available through local staffing agencies.

For many who use these assistance services, it proves much cheaper for someone in the destination country to make arrangements in the local language rather than someone ringing from overseas.

The kind of assistance that executives ask for on their travels is also highly variable.

"A company may need us to man their trade show booth, or transcribe notes at a meeting or edit and run the PowerPoint presentation during a seminar," says Paris-based Moncel.

However, in some cases it's just about reassurance and knowing that someone is there to assist you if you don't speak the language or know the local business etiquette.

"Generally service requests are pretty normal: wake up calls and reminder services for traveling executives and also fast French translations for letters," she adds.

These days there are even organizations that offer directories of overseas virtual assistants such as the International Association of Virtual Office Assistants (www.iavoa.com) and the International Virtual Assistants Association (www.ivaa.org).

Or if you feel confident on your own traveling overseas, but want to polish up on business protocol, practices, customs, negotiating, communication and appropriate entertainment overseas, there is the International Business Reports for Corporate Intranets (www.worldbiz.com/library.html).

It is a subscription-based service encompassing the world's major business conducting nations.