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## By the Hour or the Day, an Office of One's Own

By AMY GUNDERSON

AS a consultant to companies that want to expand their international reach, Albert Jones often finds himself far from his base in Chicago. But when he goes to meetings in places like Britain, Bahrain or Indonesia, he does not rely on a hotel conference center, a cramped hotel room or even a cafe to be his makeshift office. Instead, before each trip, he arranges to work in spaces run by the Regus Group, which has a network of 950 locations, consisting of meeting rooms and individual offices, which can be secured for an hour, a day or longer in cities as small as Frisco, Tex., and as far-flung as Abu Dhabi.

"Wherever I have business," Mr. Jones said in early March as he prepared for another trip to the Middle East and Europe, "I have an office."

Not having an office is a problem faced by most business travelers who might have a two-hour gap between meetings or a presentation that needs a test run. There is work to be done but nowhere to do it. A hotel business center lacks privacy, and a conference room is too expensive to book for an hour. A guest room can be impractical for a group gathering, and a coffee shop is most likely overflowing with children in strollers, chatty teenagers and telecommuters with their laptop computers.

Another company that rents long-term and short-term office space to small businesses and sole proprietors is Synergy Workplaces. It rents offices in 10 locations, including Boston and Beverly Hills, Calif., for \$10 an hour, or \$75 a day. That encompasses Internet access, phone calling, a copier and unlimited coffee.

Regus Group is by far the largest service for renting satellite office spaces. "We cater to the mobile worker," said Guillermo Rotman, president of Regus Group Americas, "the guy that is in every city." He said that though hotel business centers had improved, not every business traveler could count on such amenities. As he said, "Not everyone is staying at the Four Seasons."

The company's meeting rooms and offices are located in 400 cities, including New York, Dallas and Chicago, as well as smaller markets like Tempe, Ariz., and Naperville, Ill.; there are also locations throughout Europe, Asia and South America. Travelers can buy an executive club membership for \$300 a year, which gives them free access to any Regus business lounge, which is a common area in each of its locations, provided with coffee, Internet access and a computer workstation. The membership also offers private office rentals starting at \$15 an hour, or \$75 a day, depending on the city, or a meeting room with videoconferencing equipment for a half or full day. (Nonmembers pay higher fees.) Regus has partnerships with several airline lounges, including American Airlines and Delta Air Lines, allowing those members to have access to all Regus business lounges.

Many business travelers work on the fly, however, and do not book office venues in advance. Laura Kozelouzek, the president and chief executive of Synergy Workplaces, noted that most of its foot traffic came from hotel referrals. These are the travelers huddled around a table in a cafe trying to conduct a meeting, often just steps away from real office space without knowing it. "I see them with their knees up to the table, and I just want to say to them, 'Go upstairs,'" she said.

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