

## EAGA Business Builder

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## Today's speaker was John Mead—John Thomas Jewelers



Mr. Mead is a gem expert; an authority on diamonds, sapphires and dozens of other precious stones, many of which some of us have never encountered. He is a master designer of rings, pendants and strings of ornamental jewels. But that all relates to his day job. John is also incredibly knowledgeable in a lot of other subjects that don't relate directly to shiny objects. For the presentation today, Mr. Mead chose to provide us with some valuable information regarding how to travel for free. John and his wife, Janelle, travel on a relatively regular basis. Probably 5 or 6 good trips a year.

Sometimes for business, but many times just for fun. Flights are primarily first class, and hotels are most often of the ocean front variety. John estimates that last year their travels had a value of about \$38,000 at 'normal' booking rates. To get those trips, the Mead family spent basically zero dollars (they only paid a few dollars for incidental fees). John took the time to provide extensive details for ways to accumulate, and use, points to pay for almost everything. It was not possible to capture all the specifics of his tips for re-presentation in this bulletin, but, hopefully, Mr. Mead will provide us with some written information after his hectic holiday activities (in his day job) have calmed down a bit. But until then, here are a few of the basics: It is better to convert, then use, the points as 'miles' instead of just offsetting costs with the 'cash back' option. Booking directly with the airlines and hotels is better than via the third parties. Not only is the point use more advantageous, but booking direct will put you in a position to receive preferential treatment in the event of a cancellation or other unforeseen issues. Booking one way flights (sometime with over and return flights being on different airlines) provides better options for maximizing point benefits than does booking round trip tickets. To accumulate points quicker, you and your spouse should each apply for individual cards that provide 'sign-up bonus points'. Don't list each other as additional users on the cards. Most of you can get a separate card (with the bonus points) under your business name as well. When using points, transfer them to the specific airline or hotel programs because the converted points can be more beneficially used that way. When applying the points/miles to specific travel, pay attention to conversion rates via different options. In John's examples there was one option that required 200,000 points for a flight, but a different option only required 54,000 points for the same seats on the same flights. It is obvious that things could get very tedious if someone were to try to do all the required research to make this all work, so John also provided us with a few internet based tools to assist with the process. AwardWallet.com has a useful blog that makes it worth the \$60 per year fee; Award Travel 101 is located on the Facebook platform; DoctorOfCredit.com provides good credit card point information; and DansDeals.com is good for getting information, but clicking on their various offers is usually not as beneficial as going directly to the airline, hotel or other offering entity's specific site. Some of the better credit cards for accumulating points would be AmEx Platinum (it has an annual fee), and the "Chase Trifecta" - Chase Business Ink; Chase Sapphire Reserve and Chase Freedom Unlimited. If you weren't at this meeting, you missed a very informative and thought provoking presentation. Whether or not you were in attendance...if you would like to hear more of the specifics about traveling for free, offer to take John to lunch and ask him for more details. You should pay for the lunch, but ask John which of your credit cards should be used to get the best point benefit.

- ◆ HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO DON DUKE!!! He turned a young 87 years old a couple of days ago.
- ◆ Last call for EAGA Holiday Party that will be held at Hotel Albuquerque on Saturday, December 10th. It starts with drinks in the Presidential Suite from 5 to 6pm; Cocktails at 6pm in the ball room; Dinner at 7 followed by dancing and door prizes. The event is free for members and their spouse/significant other. Guests may be invited at a cost of \$100 per guest. If you want to attend and haven't signed up yet, contact Mario right away. Please let Mario know immediately if you signed up and now find that you cannot attend.
- ◆ We will have elections for one board position on December 13th. Please make sure that you are on time for breakfast that day. The election will be held at the very beginning of the meeting. If you would like more information, or if you have any questions about the ballot, please contact Board Member Herman Mitchell.
- ◆ We need speakers for December 13th and December 20th. Please let Mario know if you can take one of those days.

## Badge Board Greeters

Dec 6<sup>th</sup> Scott Lardner—Rocky Mountain Stone  
 Dec 13<sup>th</sup> Larry Sonntag—New Mexico Business Coalition  
 Dec 20<sup>th</sup>  
 Dec 27<sup>th</sup> **THERE WILL NOT BE A MEETING—Christmas Holiday**  
 Jan 03<sup>rd</sup> **THERE WILL NOT BE A MEETING—New Year's Day Holiday**

## Upcoming Speakers

Dec 6<sup>th</sup> Laurence Saban—AED One-Stop Shop  
 Dec 13<sup>th</sup>  
 Dec 20<sup>th</sup>  
 Dec 27<sup>th</sup> **THERE WILL NOT BE A MEETING—Christmas Holiday**  
 Jan 03<sup>rd</sup> **THERE WILL NOT BE A MEETING—New Year's Day Holiday**