

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME OFF

We are nowadays slaves to technology more than ever before. With “blackberries” and other handheld devices a common sight, the traditional demarcation between working and leisure time is getting blurred.

Indeed, a recent survey by Moneypenny found that more than 90 percent of managers check their email while on holiday and more than 70% routinely take business calls.

Yet, if we all recognise the importance of genuine “downtime” in order to recharge our batteries and come back more productive, why do so many people make themselves available to their employer 24 hours a day, 365 days a year?

Psychologists believe that this is part of a deep-seated human desire to think of ourselves as indispensable and valued, as well as to show commitment to our employers.

And yet there *are* ways you can manage these pressures and lead a more balanced lifestyle:

- **Declare your unavailability.** If you know you do a good job at work, then you will be confident enough to tell others that your free time is sacrosanct. You do not have to agree to be on call unless your job genuinely requires it. If it feels awkward to tell your colleagues you are unreachable, just suggest that it is on the orders of your partner or family. Everyone deserves to guard their free time.
- **Keep a fixed time for work access.** If you must take work mobile devices on holiday with you, keep them switched off except for fixed times when you check them. The same applies to your email. That way you can control whether to respond only if matters are really urgent and require your personal input.
- **Resist temptation.** If you respond casually to one email or call while you are meant to be away, others are instantly conditioned to expect more from you. Don't give an inch and maintain your discipline!
- **Delegate before you go.** Prevention is the best strategy. Ensure that you prepare a clear handover plan before going away. Make others aware of everything needed and write down where they can find important information in your absence. By being ultra-meticulous about this you can rightly make them feel guilty if they still try to reach you.
- **Treat every holiday or short break as sacrosanct.** Assume that you may not get another break for a while. Treat every moment as precious and do not allow yourself to be diverted. Get “busy” having as much fun as possible.

Finally, be fully engaged during your short breaks and holidays. Part of the reason some people can't stop thinking about work is through boredom and lack of excitement. Make sure your holidays are action-packed and mentally stimulating – as well as positively relaxing - and you'll simply have no time to think about work!

**Disclaimer.** This article is for general information only. We cannot be held responsible for any actions you might take as a result of it. Please seek medical advice before making any significant change to your habits or lifestyle.