

Vacation, Unplugged

Lydia Dishman, Fast Company 8/30/12



A vacation with one thumb on the iPhone at all times is no vacation at all - - and it can actually hurt your business. Here are practical steps to take to totally unplug and get the most of your time off.

When Carson Tate tells clients to follow their bliss, she's not invoking some new-age hooey. Instead, the managing partner of [Working Simply](#) believes that BLISS--behavioral learning and integration support systems--can help improve corporate agility, employee engagement, productivity and effectiveness. And who doesn't want to work smarter, not harder?

One facet to increasing productivity, she says, is taking time off--real time off, not a vacation spent with one thumb on the iPhone at all times.

"In the workplace, I think we are just assaulted by information, commitments, timelines, deadlines and what happens is our thinking is scattered and disconnected," she observes. "Think about when you have your eureka moments. Some of the best ideas come when you are in the shower with bubbles in your hair." Vacations not only offer a respite from the daily grind but the downtime offers opportunities to allow new concepts and strategies to marinate. "When you come back you are rested, you able to innovate, your passion is back," Tate says.

Even now, as more companies embrace the concept of "[unlimited vacation](#)," engaged and productive workers are scarce, she says. Citing a Gallup Daily survey that found 71% of American workers are "not engaged" or "actively

disengaged," Tate says people are just burned out.

Here are some tips for making it happen.

Get Over Yourself, and Prioritize Time Off

Brian Miller, COO and president of [AdviCoach](#) and The Entrepreneur's Source, agrees. For those who find it difficult to close the office door and swap work for R&R, Miller says the first step is to put vacation, time reserved for the family or partner and quiet time, on the calendar first. If you are part of the 57% percent of American workers who still have vacation days unused because you think the world will collapse without you, Miller has three words. "Get over it." He says even small business owners who wear many hats can and should unplug. "I have found that when entrepreneurs empower their staff, they are more productive when [their boss] is gone."

Think "What's the Worst That Could Happen?"

For executives in more high stakes workplaces, Tate suggests making a list of all the things that could possibly go wrong when they are not there. One client, a senior leader in an organization, dutifully wrote down such disastrous occurrences as a hostile takeover and an employee crisis. "As we looked at each of those scenarios on paper, I asked him: 'Is it true? Is it real? Can you handle it?'" Tate says, which helped him prepare and communicate expectations to his staff.

Do you have "FOMO" (fear of missing out)? You're not alone. Nearly 2/3 of people (62%) are afraid of missing something (a competitor's tweet, cat video, relationship status change...) if they don't keep an eye on their social networks, according to the State of Social Media study by MyLife.com. But once you're out of the office, Tate says, the next step is to unplug the technology and enjoy. "Ask yourself what are you missing by engaging [in social media] and not being by yourself or in a hobby you are passionate about," she says.

Call Me Virtually, Maybe

Mike Masin, owner of [@Stuff, LLC](#), says he finds it helpful to schedule projects he can't complete at least two weeks before he hits the road to start upon his return. That way, he says, "I can disconnect without worrying about open projects. My desk is clear when I start a vacation."

Though he hasn't traveled without devices himself, Masin offers, "I would

arrange for a trusted person to check my inboxes just so they can respond to urgent messages and advise people that I'm not available until [date].” Depending on needs and budget, a virtual receptionist such as callruby.com is an easy way do this professionally, he adds.

Just Do It

Instagramming photos of sunrise at the summit, delicious restaurant meals, or umbrella drinks notwithstanding, we turned to our readers to get their best tips for unplugging and making the most of vacation. Other than the obvious solution of leaving the laptop home and hiding the mobile phone in the bottom of your suitcase (ringer off, naturally), we got some pretty inspired responses.

What one thing makes you break your promise to unplug while you're on vacation? Tell us in the comments section below!

Here's a sampling of good advice we've got so far:

- **Before disconnecting:** go on a binge of your favorite websites; the satisfaction will carry you through. — Mauricio Godoy (@mauricioswg) [July 27, 2012](#)
- Leave the phone at home. Alternately, go to a place with no Internet access or cell service. They still exist! — Alex Howard (@digiphile) [July 27, 2012](#)
- Airplane Mode is your friend. It's not cold turkey, you save battery while you're away from plugs, and you can still use GPS — Anthony J. Garcia (@anthony_garcia) [July 27, 2012](#)
- when going away for a weekend, don't bring the charger. You'll be forced to conserve battery for only very important emails — Frank Gu (@ugknarf) [July 27, 2012](#)
- Travel to a place where absence of wireless reception and wi-fi makes it impossible to connect. Life miraculously continues. — Elena Sirpolaidis (@elenasirpo) [July 27, 2012](#)
- I turn off phone mail push notifications, play a sport: you can't use gadgets when you are sweaty and running — Seth (@ThisAddLife) [July 27, 2012](#)

- bring all those New Yorker magazines that have piled up and actually read them, not just look at the cartoons — Evan B (@itishowitis) July 25, 2012
- Deactivate Facebook during vacation and set a rule to shop locally. — Blair Knobel (@lbknobel) July 25, 2012
- heavy meditation is the only way i have found ... replacing one connection for a higher connection — gregorylent (@gregorylent) July 25, 2012

<http://www.fastcompany.com/1844006/vacation-unplugged>