



Leslie Rose McDonald
President, Pathfinders CTS, Inc.

Another summer flying by, and you still haven't taken any time off. "I can't," you proclaim. "There is just too much to do!" While your co-workers witness your long days, intense and sometimes unpleasant demeanor, your family and friends are waiting on the sidelines to share some time with you the person, not you the successful business professional.

Those who do not take time off frequently think of themselves as indispensable. They may have an unconscious fear that the place will go down the tubes without them. This situation and way of thinking takes an otherwise healthy work ethic and shifts it into unhealthy overdrive.

We all know that taking time is good for mental and physical wellness. It is also good for energetic and creative recovery, and some say, renewal of the soul. Beyond these personal, benefits however, it is important to understand that when you take recreation and renewal time, your business situation benefits as well.

For instance, when you do not take time off, you are depriving another person of a growth opportunity. Taking a vacation is a great way to build the skills and confidence of others, and for you or your manager to evaluate this person's potential. It also helps to protect the business from having too much knowledge in one person's head. This is a liability that businesses large and small do not pay enough attention to.

Taking your well-deserved vacation, therefore, is an opportune time for cross-training to a peer or delegating responsibility to an associate. Don't worry if there are not perfect plans in place or instructions to leave behind. Smart and responsible people are very resourceful in getting to the end result. They may not do things exactly as you would have done them, and that's all right. Perhaps accepting that fact (letting go) can be a growth area for you as well!

When you do not take time off, you are limiting your own perspective and creative possibilities. Having a singular focus towards getting everything done forces you to do more yourself, and to rely on ways of doing things as you have always done them – your automatic pilot. And while it may have worked for you in the past, over-reliance on one way of thinking or doing things will become a liability as situations and circumstances around you continue to change.

Taking your much needed time off and disconnecting from work is a renewal strategy that frequently offers unexpected rewards and benefits. Many people share that once they get themselves away from the grind and allow themselves to mentally disconnect from work, they have renewed energy, perspectives and insights. It is not uncommon to return from vacation with new ideas or solutions to difficult situations that they had been wrestling with or had been mentally stuck about.

Remember, the people you work with want to grow, and they want to see you take the time that you need to maintain your balance. If you cannot disconnect entirely while away, then make yourself available for only a limited time each day for immediate questions and issues. Otherwise, turn off your cell phone and play.

Accept this challenge to totally wean yourself from work for even a short time, such as a long weekend. Recognize the benefits that you, your family, and your co-workers will reap when you do!

Adapted from the author's column, previously published in the Syracuse Post Standard