

AMERICANS TEND TO SKIP VACATIONS



A new study called "Vacation Deprivation" by Harris Interactive of 500 adults has found that many Americans are refusing to take time off. Workers cite fears of being replaced once they have been out of the office for a few days. Others say that they do not want the stress of having to catch up on work upon returning to the office.

Employers who are demanding more work out of their remaining headcount may not be able to stop someone from taking time off, but the employer may demand that all missed work be made up. **The fear of additional overtime upon returning from vacation makes time away from the office less attractive.** High unemployment keeps many in jobs they do not like and makes many afraid to leave even for a week. Employees fear that if the employer can do without them for a week, than the employer will get rid of the position altogether.

The fear of taking vacation was found even among those with paid time off, though the U.S. economy has caused employers to cut the average number of vacation days from 14 to 12. Nicole Williams, a career expert, said that there is also a sense of bravado that causes Americans to avoid taking all of the vacation they have available. Some trace this to the Protestant work ethic that considered idleness a prelude to sin while others see it as a sign of strength, measuring individuals' worth based on how hard they can work and the time since their last vacations.

Nicole Williams reviewed this study and developed several solutions for those who need to take a vacation but cannot be away from work too long. What are her recommendations?

1. Plan your vacation so that you are not there when you are needed most.

Plan your vacation for the lulls in your business. Pick the times when your company will not need you to work overtime. And talk to your supervisor well in advance so that work will be assigned to others. Then your company will not assign tasks to you when you want to be away.

2. Plan to make the most of your vacation.

Do as much work as possible before you leave. This will reduce the temptation to work while on vacation and the stress of the impending workload when you return. Find someone who can act as your representative when you are gone. If someone can sign off on forms for you or answer questions for others, you will not be stressed out by the prospect of a stack of forms or full voicemail box when you return. Set up an out of office reply so that others know that you are out of the office. Add your designated go-to person's contact information to the out of office reply so that others are not left hanging and waiting for your return. Leave your work devices at work, and let others know that you will be unavailable while on vacation.

3. Be a considerate coworker when you return to work.

If you have taken a vacation, do not brag about your exploits to your overworked coworkers. Do not complain about a trip when others are looking forward to their own vacations or stressed about the extra work they did while you were gone. Thank the coworkers who carried the load while you were gone, and remind them that you'll return the favor when they go on vacation.

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