

# SURVIVING SUMMER



## RECLAIMING VACATIONS RESOURCE GUIDE

**Vacations: They are vital to our well-being and productivity. They form vivid childhood memories. They strengthen family bonds. They broaden perspective. What's not to love? Well, for busy knowledge workers, it seems the answer is plenty.**

In today's frenetic workplace, it appears that our only options are to work throughout our vacation, generating the very stress and frustration it was supposed to eliminate, or come back to such an avalanche of work that after one day back, it's like the vacation never happened. No wonder so many of us decide it's not worth the price.

Rather than resign yourself to this new reality, challenge it. Whether you're planning a big trip, a weekend getaway, or a stay-cation, this resource guide will help you:

- ✓ **Decide on a vacation style that works best for you.**
- ✓ **Set yourself up for success before you go.**
- ✓ **Enjoy your vacation on your own terms.**
- ✓ **Get back up to speed quickly and smoothly when you get back.**



**662 MILLION  
UNUSED VACATION DAYS LEFT  
BY AMERICAN WORKERS IN 2016**

Source: [The State of American Vacation 2017](#), [Project:Time Off](#)



**42% OF EMPLOYEES FEEL  
OBLIGATED TO CHECK THEIR  
EMAIL DURING VACATION**

Source: [Randstad](#)



*Stop Meeting Like This* was founded to address the alarming misuse of time, energy, and talent in most workplaces today. We work side-by-side with forward-thinking organizations to create healthy collaboration cultures, revolutionize work practices, and design operating models that drive sustainable business performance and employee well-being.

# WHAT KIND OF VACATIONER ARE YOU?

Do you generally take longer vacations (5+ work days) or shorter weekend getaways?



**LONGER (5+ WORK DAYS)**



**SHORTER (WEEKEND GETAWAYS)**

Is it more relaxing for you to “go dark” or to keep an eye on work while you’re out?

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**GO DARK**



**KEEP AN EYE ON WORK**



**GO DARK**



**KEEP AN EYE ON WORK**

**PEACE OUT**

**SUCCESS STRATEGY:**  
Focus on making sure you’re not “critical path” on projects or decisions before you go, contract with your teams to cover you, and set up email business rules so you don’t come back to thousands of emails.

**DOING IT MY WAY**

**SUCCESS STRATEGY:**  
Set firm limits for when and how you’ll stay connected. If you plan to check email in the mornings, set a deadline for yourself and when you hit it, shut down the computer. If you absolutely must take a call, make it just one.

**BE RIGHT BACK**

**SUCCESS STRATEGY:**  
Protect the entire time given it’s fairly short. Don’t fall into the trap of intending to go offline at 10am Friday, only to find yourself still “wrapping up” in the hotel room at 6pm.

**PLAYING HOOKY**

**SUCCESS STRATEGY:**  
Determine what 2-3 things warrant your attention, for example, an unexpected crisis or a particular client. Ask that you be alerted via text when those events occur and let everything else wait.

# YOUR RECLAIMING VACATIONS TIMELINE



6 MONTHS BEFORE

**Pick a time:** consider your business cycles. For example, fiscal year end might be hectic while the week of July 4th might be particularly slow.

**Book your vacation:** Making that commitment to yourself and your friends or family makes it far more likely it will happen than if you wait until the last minute.

**Put it in your calendar and mark it busy:** This will help ensure important meetings like team offsites don't get scheduled on top of your time off.

**Notify your team:** Let everyone know when you'll be out and ask them to do the same. If you have a lot of interdependencies, create a team vacation calendar so you can proactively manage coverage as a team.



1 MONTH BEFORE

**Look at your workload** to see where you can complete a deliverable or hit a major milestone before you go so that you don't lose momentum.

**Identify a re-entry buddy**—a colleague, manager, or admin who can help you easily jump back in.

**Contract with the family and friends with whom you're going on vacation:** What do they need from you? What days or events are sacred? What is a daily rhythm that will serve everyone?

**Contract with your manager and team:** Can they reach you? When? How? Under what circumstances? What do they need from you ahead of time to minimize their dependency on you while you're gone?



1-2 WEEKS BEFORE

**Schedule a meeting** with your re-entry buddy for the first day or two that you're back.

**Ask key members** of your team to write you a "While you were out" summary memo that captures the highlights of activities and progress that occurred during your vacation.

**Make a plan** to keep work moving in your absence. See the checklist on the right.

**Ask your colleagues** to minimize the noise by:

- Limiting the number of emails on which you are CC'd.
- Removing you from collaboration threads or channels.

## PLANNING NOTES

VACATION DATES:

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MY RELEVANT MILESTONES:

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MY RE-ENTRY BUDDY:

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## PLANNING CHECKLIST

- What can wait until I get back?
- Do I need to assign a proxy for any meetings?
- What do I need to delegate?
- What guidance does my team need now to so they can keep going while I'm gone?
- Are there important decisions that need to be made? Do I need to provide input ahead of time or to name a proxy?



1 DAY BEFORE

**Set your Out of Office notification:**

- Try one of the Out of Office scripts on the right.
- Remember that you can set different messages for internal and external senders.

**Change your voicemail** message to match content of your Out of Office notification.

**Set email business rules** to automatically process your inbox. For example:

- Automatically forward emails from key people to a colleague who is covering for you.
- Route any emails for which you are on the CC line to a low priority folder to review upon re-entry.
- Color code emails for which you're the only person on the TO line as your top priority emails to read upon re-entry (or while you're out if that's what you've determined works best for you).



VACATION



- ✓ Stick to your game plan.
- ✓ If you've decided to check in occasionally, set a timer and stop when it goes off.
- ✓ Avoid looking at your device out of habit.
- ✓ Avoid responding to things you shouldn't—you will confuse people with mixed messages about whether or not you're really working.



RE-ENTRY

**Consider** coming back one day earlier than your calendar indicates so that you can quietly get caught up.

**Meet** with your re-entry partner.

**Read** and respond to high priority emails.

**Scan** your knowledge management sites or collaboration threads/channels.



**OUT OF OFFICE SCRIPTS**

**“PLEASE EMAIL ME AGAIN WHEN I RETURN”**

I'll be out of the office on vacation from *(insert dates)*.

While I'm out, I'll not be checking email or voicemail, and will purge all messages upon my return.

If this requires my attention, please resend on *(insert date)*. If this is urgent, please contact *(insert email address)*

**“PLEASE WAIT OR TEXT ME IF IT IS URGENT”**

I'll be out of the office on vacation from *(insert dates)*.

While I'm out, I'll not be checking email or voicemail. I will read and respond when I get back.

If this is urgent, please text me at *(phone number)* or contact *(insert email address)*.

**“I'LL CHECK EMAIL OCCASIONALLY...”**

I'll be out of the office on vacation from *(insert dates)*.

While I'm out, I'll be checking email and voicemail occasionally and will respond when I can.

If this is urgent, please text me at *(insert phone number)*