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5 Steps To Do To Take The Summer Off From Your Job

Taking the summer off can be great when you're in transition in your career or between jobs, and it can also make you a better leader.



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Remember when you were back in school, and you had every summer off--the bell rings, and you run toward a summer full of fun and relaxation: The beach, camping, long days with nothing to do, laying in a hammock drinking lemonade.

What if you could recreate that as an adult? What would you do?

Imagine yourself in the hammock reading a book: What do you want to read? Would you swap 30 minutes on the treadmill for a hike? Would you take more time for higher-level thinking? You can get the time. You can even take a "semi-sabbatical" if that's easier for you and your schedule. Taking a summer sabbatical doesn't only have to be for professors and researchers--and I'm here to tell you that it's not too good to be true for anyone from mid-level to CEOs, because I've done it, and I'm here to coach you on how to take your own summer sabbatical from your job.

Business leaders have started to catch on to the benefits of flexible summers. Some companies I've worked with even have a sabbatical program that you can apply for in advance, and they adjust your pay so you can be paid full time while you're off to relieve the financial burden. European workers know this well, as the majority of European-based companies give their employees flexible summer schedules and vacation time.

Take these five steps to create a summer sabbatical for yourself:

Define the parameters. How much time do you need, and how do you want to take it? Be realistic in how much time you need to take off, and how much you can take off before catching up becomes unmanageable when you return. Next, decide if you want to take the time in one full stretch, or broken up into one-week periods through a three-month period, for example.

Define the purpose. Is your sabbatical a vacation, or a "working vacation" so you can continue to work independently on focused strategy away from your traditional working environment? Be honest with yourself on whether you're preventing burnout, or whether you're looking instead to shift your focus on one or two specific priorities that are work-related.

Communicate. As soon as you have defined the objectives mentioned above, start communicating with people you work with as early as possible to get as much lead-time as you can. This can help prevent any emergencies that may pop up during your sabbatical that would require your immediate attention, as well as give your team confidence that you have everything in order to make the break work.

Put milestones for achievements in place. To make sure you don't end up spending your entire break sitting on the beach, especially if you're taking a "working sabbatical," pencil some deadlines on your calendar. For example, if you've chosen to take a three-month sabbatical, give yourself the first month for pure relaxation, but around the two-month mark start working toward a goal that you've set for yourself.

Picture yourself as a kid again, heading out the doors on the last day of school. Be sure to preserve the time you created for yourself. Other people will try to impose themselves on your time, but promise yourself that you'll take the time you need.

Taking the summer off can be great when you're in transition in your career or between jobs, and it can also make you a better leader. People take the summer off from their jobs for different reasons, but the outcome of being more refreshed, motivated and productive when you return is the same.

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