

6 Steps for Taking a Painless Vacation



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Summer is over. Did you take a vacation as planned? I didn't think so. Taking a vacation is very important; please don't argue with me on this. I know we've been through this before, and I've heard all of the excuses from "I don't have time" to "Who is going to take care of (fill in the blank here) when I am gone?"

But here's the deal: The world will not stop spinning just because you decided to take a vacation. Actually I am on vacation right now; I am writing this column as I look out at the ocean from my balcony here in Hilton Head Island, so I practice what I preach, folks.

If you want to take a painless vacation, I have some suggestions for you. Every year when I go on vacation I have a pre-vacation ritual that helps eliminate things like phone calls, text messages and any other stuff that can wait until I get back. So give this list a try next time you go on vacation. I hope it helps ease the pain.

1. Set up your employees.

I make sure that I have meetings with everyone prior to my vacation. I go over any loose ends like jobs that are still open, complaints that need to be addressed and employee issues.



2. Close any loose ends.

If I am directly involved in anything that needs fixing, I make sure that it is taken care of before I leave. I don't want any loose ends creeping up on me when I'm gone. For example, if we promised to fix a broken sprinkler head that was hit by our mowers, I make sure it's done before I go. I don't need discuss the issue with Mr. Broken Sprinkler Head while I'm sitting on the beach.

3. Inform your top clients.

I do not tell every client that I am going on vacation but I do have a handful of clients who expect me to be available for them at pretty much any time. I'm sure you have a few of these as well. I have about a half dozen customers who I email to inform them of exactly which dates I will be gone on vacation and unavailable. I give them a backup number to call and a backup email address to use as well (see No. 4).

4. Have a go-to person.

Your go-to person is the next in line at your company. For me, it's my vice president of operations; it's his number and email that I use in No. 3. I have a meeting with him before I leave and let him know that if any of the people on my top client list calls him that he needs to take care of them as I would.

5. Set up an autoresponse email.

This one is obvious but I wanted to mention it anyway. I make sure that my auto response email contains the same info I mentioned above.

6. Set up your voicemail.

Again, I hate to be Captain Obvious here, but if you don't set up your voicemail telling people you are on vacation then don't be upset when they call you while you're having an island cocktail.

So there you have it; go ahead and take that vacation. I promise that it'll be OK.