



## ***FIVE REASONS PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO TAKE THEIR VACATIONS***

By Jennifer Newman & Darryl Grigg, Special to the Sun August 17, 2009

It's the middle of summer -- time for that vacation, right? But are you resisting taking a holiday? Sounds strange, but some people do.

Maybe they feel too busy or find vacations boring. Maybe they don't trust their replacement to do their job as well as they do. All valid reasons.

But dig deeply enough and the basic reason for putting off holidays is plain old fear, despite the benefits such as work-life balance, rejuvenation, perspective and connection with family that "downtime" offers.

So why do some fear holidays?

There are five reasons staff may be reluctant to go away:

### **1. THE GLOBAL RECESSION**

This is a major motivation right now to question whether you should go on vacation. It is common for employees to feel the need to continually prove their worth lest they find they don't have a job to come back to. Constantly striving to prove one's value at work can lead to burnout, making a holiday necessary, yet these employees fear relinquishing their position and returning from holidays to joblessness.

Others can ill-afford time away during hard economic times and have to work to make ends meet. Holidays are an expense they cannot afford. Working is the best option at this time for some.



## **2. FEAR OF BEING BORED**

Some employees wonder what they will do with the free time a holiday gives. Work has become central in their lives. Imagining a time without the structure it provides can be daunting. When work is everything and one has not nurtured other interests or hobbies, downtime can be scary. Even when imagining the kind of holiday to take, these folks can be stymied because they really don't know what they like to do.

Having spent so much time on the job, they have a paucity of sources of amusement to draw from. Trying to find out what they may be interested in is key and encouraging these employees to take a little time off may be the best way to wean people away from a dependence on work for their identity and purpose in life.

## **3. FEAR OF FAMILY TIME**

If the family environment is fraught with conflict, tension or stress, work often becomes a legitimate way to avoid what is wrong at home. Hence, the prospect of spending time with the family without an escape route can feel risky.

At the same time, holidays may be a source of dread because obligatory visits to relatives are part of the holiday package or receiving guests becomes a job during the vacation period. Being taxed by visitor or having strained family holidays can cause some staff to prefer to stay at work.

## **4. FEAR OF NOT BEING IMPORTANT**

Some staff derive their identity as being special, indispensable and needed from their work; the idea of not being there is frightening. They fear that being away might mean they aren't important. That's because they tend to feel wanted when the phone rings, they feel special when in high demand and enjoy the prestige of people seeking them for answers.

If all this stops (even for a little while) an emptiness sets in. These employees can feel bereft and lost. Rather than avoiding a break, these folks need to take time off to begin to analyze how work has become a way to bolster their flagging self-worth.



## 5. FEAR OF WORK NOT GETTING DONE

Many people feel that by taking holidays, their project won't progress, that the work won't be completed and momentum won't be maintained. They may call into work repeatedly, check their e-mails while away and stress about what's going on at the office.

For leaders, this fear suggests that when they are away, staff may make less effort. This signals the need to look at one's leadership style. Are you breeding dependence -- people can only move forward if they consult or get permission from the boss? Or, are people lacking ownership of their own job and as a result aren't self-motivated? A hard look at your leadership style or the department culture may be in order.

Being afraid of going on vacation may sound counter-intuitive, but it can be a real concern for those whose identities centre around their work, who have tensions at home or who are currently challenged by hard economic times.

Yet, it is crucial to take time for oneself and finding a way to take a break is important no matter what. Even if it's a few days to relax, the break is worth it.

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