



“We find the BEST and SCREEN out the rest!”



Does Your Boss Forget You Have a Life?

It's 7:05 p.m. and for the third time this week, you are ordering dinner at the office. Not only have you worked late all week, but your boss asked you to come in every weekend for the past month, and you haven't left the building for lunch in ages. Let's face it, your boss has forgotten one very important thing about you -- that you do have a personal life.

It is not uncommon in corporate America to find employees who are overworked and not able to fully enjoy a life outside the office. In fact, the average middle income family now works four months more in total hours than they did in 1979, according to economists Barry Bluestone and Stephen Rose, and a Boston College survey found that 26 percent of Americans today take no vacation at all.

So what can you do to reclaim some of this time for your personal life? It can be tricky, but here are some steps you can and should take:

1. Identify the problem.

Is this a new phenomenon at your office? Is it just recently that your boss has asked you to put in the extra time, or is it something that has been going on for a while? Is it part of the company culture?

It's important to find out the reason behind the extra hours you have been logging. In some cases, there might actually be a reasonable need for the team to pitch in and give some extra time. Perhaps your company is going through a major change or your department has a multi-million-dollar proposal to complete. On the other hand, things at the office might be status quo, with no new added pressures or deadlines. You need to know what's chipping away at your personal life before you figure out how to address it.

2. Have an honest conversation with your boss.

Whether the extra time is out-of-the-ordinary or run-of-the-mill, you need to be proactive and speak to your boss about how you are feeling. Request a formal meeting to discuss the situation, as you would with any work issue. Write down your concerns and suggestions before the meeting, and make sure you have solid examples of the extra time you put in. You will probably learn a lot from your boss's response to your concerns. If it's a workload issue, be ready to suggest ways to get the work done during regular work hours. If your boss simply tells you that this is the way life is at your company, you will need to do some more thinking.

3. Consider what your job is worth.

If the necessity to put in extra time is because of a project that is on deadline, company changes that are taking place, or any other external factors, you might want to take one for the team. Most of us at one time or another will be called on to sacrifice for a job.

It's up to you to decide if the job is worth it. Were you happy with your company before you had to put in the extra time? Are you fulfilled enough in your company to ride out the storm? Is there a professional payoff, such as a raise or large bonus, waiting for you when the project is completed? If you are willing to stick around, you still need to be sure your concerns are documented and that you are tracking the business at the office. Don't let a short-term situation become long-term problem.

4. Take a close look at your priorities.

If your job has consistently eaten away at your personal life for a long period of time, you need to seriously consider what you want out of life and your career. While a career is important, there are millions of people who are able to find success without sacrificing their overall happiness. What is important to you right now? Do you have friends and family you are losing touch with because of your job? Or do you see this as a means to an end in your career?

Just For Laughs



DATES TO REMEMBER

April

- 1—Palm Sunday
- 3—1st Day of Passover
- 6—Good Friday
- 8—Easter Sunday



May

- 13—Mother's Day
- 28—Memorial Day



June

- 17—Father's Day
- 21—1st Day of Summer

[Does Your Boss Forget You Have a Life? \(Continued\)](#)

Only you can determine what sacrifices you want to make for your career. But remember, having a life outside the office is not only nice - it's also good for you and will make you a more productive employee in the end. If you decide that you cannot continue at your current pace, have another meeting with your boss and let him or her know where you stand. If your employer is a keeper, they will work to find a solution so they can retain a productive and happy employee -- you.

Contents courtesy of Kate Lorenz
CareerBuilder.com

Why Don't Americans Use Their Vacation Time?

It's so beautiful outside that spending the day in a windowless cube would be utter torture - so why not take the day off? If you're like many Americans, you're probably wasting a few vacation days anyway.

A new survey by online travel service Expedia.com found that 31 percent of U.S. workers don't always take all of their vacation days, and Americans give back an average of three vacation days each year.

"This year alone, the value of the vacation days that Americans are projected to give back is estimated at almost \$54 billion," says Kari Swartz, Expedia.com product manager for leisure travel.

Almost half of workers surveyed say they come back from vacation refreshed and rejuvenated, so why aren't they using all their time off? Some say they would rather get money back for their unused days. Others say planning ahead is too much of a hassle, and some busy workers say they just can't get away.

Americans also start out with fewer vacation days -- 12 on average -- than workers in any other country surveyed.

Here's a look at how workers in other nations fared:

France

The French take their vacations seriously. Working French adults get an average of 39 vacation days, and 45 percent plan to take at least one three- to four-week vacation.

Germany

Germans receive an average of 27 vacation days per year, and 56 percent say they use every one of them. And once Germans make their vacation plans, they stick to them: 78 percent of employed adults have not cancelled or postponed vacation plans due to work.

Netherlands

Workers in the Netherlands receive an average of 25 vacation days a year, but they can't find time to use them all. More Dutch workers (42 percent) return vacation days than any other country surveyed, including the United States, giving back about two days on average.

Great Britain

British workers have the longest work week in Europe and with 23 vacation days, the shortest vacations. As a result, they report feeling overworked: Three-quarters say their weekends or days off are too short and 40 percent would sacrifice a day's pay for an extra day off.

Canada

Canadians receive an average of 20 days of vacation - easily beating out their neighbors to the south, and more than half do use all of their days. Still, workers in Canada return an average of three days each year - as many as Americans do.

Making the most of your time off

Even when Americans do get away, they're still feeling chained to their email, according to CareerBuilder.com's annual vacation survey. One-third of workers surveyed say they will be checking in with the office while on vacation.

Here are some tips to help workers fully use and enjoy their time away from the office:

- Start early. Give plenty of notice for vacation dates.
- Schedule vacations before large projects begin or after they are completed.
- If required, cross-train other workers to help out in your absence.
- Alert co-workers to your absence by giving an alternative contact via voice mail or automated response on e-mail. If people know you are not checking in for a week or two, they are inclined to seek help with someone else while you are gone.
- If your job is mission-critical, leave a number for emergency use only.

Set an example: Supervisors should lead the way by taking scheduled vacations without workplace interruptions.

Contents Courtesy of Laura Morsch
CareerBuilder.com

Five Ways to Get the Most from Your Vacation

Remember what it was like to be in school, when you had every summer off and got to spend your days playing and goofing off for week after week? Wouldn't it be great to be able to do that as an adult? Sadly, we Americans not only don't use our summers for rest and relaxation, we hardly use any vacation time at all. According to a 2004 Expedia.com survey, 63 percent of Americans work more than 40 hours per week and we hand back more than \$21 billion dollars in unused vacation days to employers each year.

Expedia.com's survey found that Americans took less vacation time in 2004 than in 2003, and even felt guilty about taking time off. However, those who did take time off certainly reaped the benefits. Eighty-four percent of survey respondents reported feeling rested, rejuvenated and reconnected with family and friends after a vacation. Additionally, 80 percent reported having a more positive outlook about their jobs when they take time away from the workplace.

If you are one of the many Americans who could use a more positive outlook about your job, the time has come to take some time away. And what better time to do that than now! To make the most of your vacation time, here are some strategies to follow.

1. Get Away. Yes, you can certainly have a nice vacation at home, but staying home for your time off will often tempt you to do chores around the house, other run-of-the-mill activities or even check in at work. Do you really need to re-organize your sock drawer on a perfect July day? Can't your home-office reorganization wait for another week? While not everyone can afford a week-long vacation in the Caribbean, you can at least have a nice weekend getaway to help recharge your batteries. Just make sure you get out of your typical surroundings and treat yourself to a nice break.

2. Turn Off the Cell Phone. It might sound crazy, but yes, you can live without your cell phone for a week. Remember the old days when you didn't even have one? Sometimes it is hard to come to the realization that the world in the office goes on without you, but it is true, business will not come to a crashing halt if you are unreachable for a week. Just make sure you leave a voice mail message directing callers to someone at work who can handle your responsibilities when you are gone.

3. Leave the Laptop at Home. No, turning off your cell phone does not mean that you can spend the whole week attached to your laptop checking email. In order to truly get away and re-energize, you need to check out electronically, too. But before you turn off your computer, turn on your out-of-office function to let others know why you are not responding. As difficult as it is to stay away from email for a week, it will be well worth it to clear your mind.

4. Get Reacquainted with Pleasure Reading. One of the best things about taking a vacation is catching up on your pleasure reading. Pick out a couple of those novels that have been sitting on your bookshelf collecting dust and lose yourself in a good story. This doesn't mean spending a week reading business how-to books or reports from work. Your brain probably needs as much - or more - rest than your body, so give it a break and make yourself remember how much fun reading used to be.

5. Do Some Good. If you can't get away on an exotic vacation, use your vacation time for a project that benefits others but still gets you away from the workplace. Take on some volunteer work in your community where you really have to get your hands dirty and get involved. One vice president of communications uses a week of summer vacation to help run a summer cub scout camp. She loves the outdoors and likes being involved with her son and other children for hiking, crafts and outdoor games. You could also turn your whole vacation into a volunteer opportunity by traveling with a volunteer group. While this strategy is not exactly resting, it will make you feel great about yourself and still enable you to get your mind off of your business in the office.

Remember, vacation is not a dirty word. In fact, it is something that more Americans need to learn to embrace. Just think of how great and excited you felt when you started another new school year! Give yourself the opportunity to rest and catch up on your "me time," and your performance at work will be all the better for it.

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