



TAKING A SUMMER BREAK CAN ENHANCE YOUR CAREER

BY GRETA DAVIS

Summer invites visions of rest, relaxation, and vacation, which are more important to career success than you might think. According to *Forbes*, taking time to rest on a daily basis has been tied to reducing stress, boosting creativity, and increasing productivity, among other positive health outcomes. Similarly, taking vacations is associated with overall success at work. Yet it seems difficult for employees to unplug from technology and work demands to reap the benefits of daily rest habits.

Additionally, many U.S. workers are not taking their paid time off (PTO). A 2012 survey conducted by Talent Solutions Right Management found that 70% of workers were not using all of their PTO, and 9% did not use any vacation time. A more recent survey in 2019 by Glassdoor confirmed the trend and revealed that only 23% of U.S. workers used all their vacation. It appears most U.S. employees are giving up valuable vacation time.

What's getting in the way?

Our fast-paced society's push for bottom-line results contributes to a persistent belief that working long hours, pushing through, and overworking leads to success.

In reality, resting throughout the day gives the brain a needed break. Taking short naps can be restorative and has immediate impact on energy, attention, focus, and creativity.

People also bring a sense of arbitrary urgency to tasks and projects that may not necessarily be warranted. Checking work items off the list can have a satisfying feeling of accomplishment. But if they're hurried, it can lead to poor decision-making and taking action without considering unintended consequences. Taking time to assess what constitutes a truly urgent situation or task is the first step in avoiding the urgency trap.

Also, "taking time to sleep on it" is a colloquialism that rings true. Sleep and rest give needed time, distance, and perspective to more effectively evaluate how to respond to work situations.

People do not use their vacation time for a variety of reasons, including the belief that no one else can do their job, they will have too much work

when they return, and fears about job security.

Interestingly, a *Harvard Business Review* report, "The Data-Driven Case for Vacation," found that taking time off from work is actually related to greater success at work, lower stress, and an increase in reported happiness. The bottom line is that workers need their vacations.

The most effective vacations, in terms of improving well-being and productivity, are planned ahead, create opportunities for social connection, and allow distance from work.

Although resting and vacationing seem counterintuitive, summer invites us to reconsider their importance in enhancing personal well-being and work performance.



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