



INVESTING IN YOUR VACATION

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Why do so many of us not use our vacation days? Salespeople talk about “leaving money on the table.” Well, employees leave vacation on the table. And the cost to us is significant.

In fact, Americans leave 429 million vacation hours on this proverbial table, according to a report from Forbes. And USA Today reports that, according to their study, over 30% of employees do not use all of their vacation days.

When we discuss investing, we talk about putting money aside in order to make a profit. We discuss putting money into stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and so forth. People also discuss investing in your career, like investing in an education or in a certification. Maybe we should talk about another investment that could pay dividends in your career, which is, of course, the place where you make your money. Is investing in vacation a good idea, or just hokey, happy talk?

Reasons That People Skip Vacations

Why do employees avoid vacation? There are several reasons people give for missing out on vacation days:

- “I’m afraid that I’ll be fired.” This is the idea that your boss expects constant work and looks down on those “snivelers” who dare to take a break.

- “A hard worker should keep his nose to the grindstone and perform.” This is related to the other reasons, and it also involves some allegiance to the idea that hard work is the key, over-arching purpose of life.
- “I don’t want my colleague to impress the boss more while I’m away.” People worry about not getting that promotion if they take time away from the office.

These reasons are largely self-imposed. As noted below, most managers understand the benefits of vacation to their employees, not only for employee morale but also for his or her performance on the job. Your boss is not Ebenezer Scrooge, despite what you might think.

Study Results

Research studies support the idea of taking your vacations. A University of Pittsburgh study found that leisure activities, including vacations, contributed to less depression and more positive emotions, along with lower blood pressure and smaller waistlines. These results are not surprising, since vacation reduces stress. As reported elsewhere, 80% of workers feel stressed on the job, and 70% of doctor visits are due to stress-related conditions.

According to Forbes, not using vacation time is bad for business. Most managers recognize the benefits

of taking time off from work because their employees will be more productive, have better workplace morale, and are more likely to stay. Importantly, the health benefits of vacation result in employees missing fewer days for illness and less time for medical appointments.

Benefits

So, based on the studies and the interviews of managers and executives, what are these benefits of taking a vacation? There are, of course, personal benefits to going on vacation or taking a “staycation,” where you stay at home during your time off. You can enjoy your life more and become closer to your partner, your kids, and your friends. You become physically healthier, too.

However, taking time off can provide substantial benefits for you in your job or career. To summarize, taking your vacations can:

- Reduce stress, which helps in so many ways.
- Increase productivity at work, after you return. Taking a break from work and doing what some have called a “digital detox” refreshes you.
- Increase creativity, for those times when a better approach or new idea is needed.
- Improve your relationships with other workers, so that you’re more positive about projects and less likely to be irritable or say things that you regret later.

Of course, things that help you at work also help your company. And many employers know this, from their experience with other workers and managers who take vacations and then perform better. So, vacations are not only beneficial to you, but they also benefit your company.

Conclusion

As one executive put it, according to Forbes, “We seem to be wired to put the pedal to the metal, but there are also undeniable benefits to tapping the breaks.”

Using your vacation time, and using it wisely, helps you to become a better employee, which can only

help your company. And most managers understand this. Being a better employee will result, naturally, in a higher salary or a better job.

Investing in vacation, therefore, is both an investment in your own well-being and in your career and salary. Remember to invest in your vacation, just as you invest in your retirement, your education, or your house.