How to Front-load Tasks When You’re Out-of-Office



Having a good work ethic and pursuing a worthwhile career are both important benchmarks in life. However, it’s also important to make sure you have a life outside of the office. A good work-life balance helps to ensure longevity. You can better manage stress and fatigue if you’re not always on the clock, both mentally and physically.

Whether your goal is to cash in on more paid time off or simply leave work at work, front-loading your tasks can help you accomplish your goals. Front-loading refers to the process of getting ahead on your work before leaving the office. This way, you won’t have unfinished projects left on your desk to worry about or a massive backlog of tasks waiting for you to return.

Learning how to front-load tasks doesn’t require you to attend

some lengthy seminar or pay for an expensive training guide. Front-loading tasks is more about how you choose to organize your time and efforts. Here are some simple yet clear examples of how you can begin to front-load your tasks right away:

Set Uninterrupted Focus Time on Your Shared Calendar

When you know you're going to be spending an extended period of time out-of-office, leverage your calendar to get stuff done. This is especially effective if you're using a shared online calendar with the rest of your team. Using this platform, you can block off certain stretches of time where you won't be bothered, and you can focus entirely on getting stuff done.

Let's say you just want one hour of uninterrupted work time to get your last stack of papers completed before the weekend. Create an event in your online calendar that designates that hour for personal work. Anyone who can see your schedule here will know that you won't be available for those 60 minutes. During this block, you can focus all of your time and attention on front-loading the tasks you need.

This is a practice you can follow throughout the workweek, not just when you have a big trip coming up. Time blocking is a proven technique used to increase your drive and focus during a short period of time. This can help you leave the office early to make it to a child's piano recital or meet your sales quota by the end of the month.

Set an Out-of-Office Reply

A common email reply you may have received in the past is an out-of-office message. This automated reply is set up when someone knows they're not able to be contacted and wants to let people know when they plan to return. While this is a

convenient setting to flip on when you're on vacation, it can also help when working toward front-loading your tasks.

What setting an out-of-office reply will do is prevent your task list from getting any bigger in the moments leading up to your actual time off. You won't be worrying about emails getting sent to you at 4:59 PM on a Friday or little questions being asked while you're trying to enjoy the California beach.

Your out-of-office reply doesn't need to be an essay explaining every detail of why you're unavailable and detailing your itinerary while you're away. Just be sure to hit the most important points, like when you'll be back and who can be contacted for urgent matters. When you return from taking time off, you can take care of what remains left to be done.

Complete Tasks in Order of Priority

Your out-of-office reminder and other measures you put into place to enjoy your time off shouldn't come at the complete expense of your job and business. There will always be something to do, and it's true that some tasks can be left on the backburner for a while. However, some tasks are vital for business operations. These tasks should be high on your priority list when front-loading before your time off.

Write down all of the pressing items on your to-do list and order them from most important to trivial at best. Your goal should be to knock out as many items from the top of this ordered list as possible before leaving the office for your next stretch. With these high-profile tasks out of the way, you won't feel guilty about the time you'll soon be taking off or worried about the office while you're away.

You may have been wanting to tidy up your office for some time. At the end of the day, should this be the highest priority on your list? Finishing up paperwork for a new client

or ensuring that a shipment of products leaves the warehouse on time should probably be taken care of first. You'll be able to make these types of decisions when you have a proper list.

Delegate Tasks While You're Out

For those tasks that are lower on the totem pole, you can feel better leaving them behind. If you still want to see them accomplished before you get back, you can delegate them to other members of your team. You can do this if you're in a managerial position or if you have a close friend in the organization who is willing to cover for you while you're away. Just be sure you're willing and able to do the same for them down the road.

These tasks can be as simple as answering the phone when your clients call while you're out of town. This ensures that someone stays in contact with them and informs them of your trip if they were unaware of your departure. Covering invoices, responding to certain emails, and even taking over a meeting are other options you can discuss.

If you're a regular floor member, try talking to your supervisor about how your workload can be delegated while you're away. Present a solution that works not only for you, but for any of your team members needing some time off. The purpose of a team is to support each other and enable these types of breaks.

Work Extra Hours

No one wants to be told to work more, but there's actually some merit to the suggestion here. There are ways you can front-load your schedule by only shifting your time. With some simple schedule adjustments, everything else can fall into its proper place.

If you have the flexibility, try frontloading your hours to the beginning of the week. Working ten or more hours on Monday means you can, in theory, get enough done to take off a couple of hours early on Friday. The more you get done in the early hours of the week, the sooner you can close up shop.

If you have a long trip coming up and don’t want to fall behind, consider clocking in a few extra hours before your trip. This helps ensure you’re wrapping up your most important projects before you leave. With those boxes checked off, you can take your time off in peace. This may even be a system you try to implement all the time. Some people would rather work four 10-hour shifts and get an extra day off than clock in five days a week.

Try front-loading your tasks on a regular workweek to see how you like it. Mess around with your execution until you find a system that works well for you. When you need to front-load for a major absence, you’ll know exactly what you need to do to be successful both before and after your respite.

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