You Can Take a Vacation and Still Get Stuff Done

Getting off the grid and checking in on work don’t have to be mutually exclusive.

August 9, 2019 7 min read

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Traveling is a big part of the entrepreneurial journey. For starters, it’s good for business. Despite how convenient technology has made it to communicate with others, nothing tops those face-to-face interactions. Additionally, we all need time away to reduce stress and anxiety. For better health, I’ve personally found a business owner should take at least four weeks of vacation time.

The thing is, we can’t completely go off the grid for an extended period, and you can work without jeopardizing the trip. Here are nine ways that make this possible.

1. Put your priorities front and center.

Listed priorities are even more vital than usual when you know that you have an upcoming trip. That way you make sure to work on the most critical stuff before leaving. Anything that isn’t urgent and essential can be postponed until you return. Moreover, it prevents you from increasing your workload before your departure. You should be getting as much off your plate instead of adding to it.

As an added perk, when you only have to focus on a handful of

priorities, it’s still possible that you can attend to them while traveling, allowing you to get work done without sacrificing your entire vacation – and providing peace of mind.

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2. Pass the baton.

Another action you should take before getting out of Dodge is handing off responsibilities to others. Put someone in charge of putting out any fires and delegate tasks for your team to work on while you’re gone. If you have the time, schedule one-on-one meetings with these individuals to run through their responsibilities and appropriate resources. You don’t want to have anyone frantically trying to contact you when they’re lost or confused. Also, let your high-profile clients and customers know who they need to contact in your absence with any questions or concerns.

3. Plan around Wi-Fi.

You don’t want to assume that it will always be available when you need it. I was recently on a trip that involved having to be on a ferry for two hours. The website said that there was Wi-Fi, but when I got one it wasn’t working. I was still able to get some work done, but not as much as I had planned.

Download a Wi-Fi finder so that you know where you can get online and then plan accordingly. Personally, I don’t like to spend the money on in-flight Wi-Fi because it can be spotty. However, I’m still able to use Word documents, access my calendar and get caught up on reading while in the air. I’ve found that not being connected during a flight is the best time for distraction-free work.

4. Turn a business trip into a vacation.

Traveling, either for business or pleasure, requires a lot of planning upfront. It’s also hectic, stressful and pulls you away from other activities. I’ve found that one way to reduce this is by turning my frequent business trips into little vacations. There are a lot of ways to go about this. For example, you could use any downtime to explore your new location. If meeting with a client or remote team member, ask if there are any local restaurants or landmarks they want to show you. You could also bring your family, and you may want to consider extending your stay for a couple of days so that you can play after all of your work is done.

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5. Use downtime to your advantage.

Let’s say that your family tags along. If you’re like me, you get up before everyone else. Rising early is a great time to check your inbox, do a little work or read. If you have children who take naps, use that time to call the office, write a blog post or map out your calendar for the rest of the month. No matter how busy your agenda, there’s always some downtime when on vacation. Make the most of it, even if it’s just 30 minutes here or there.

6. Set an out-of-office message.

Leading email providers like Outlook and Gmail allow you to craft an out-of-office message. Because this is a widely used feature, I’m sure that you already know how it works. It’s merely an auto-response message others receive when emailing you or attempting to schedule a meeting while you’re gone.

When writing your out-of-office message, the key is to include the following elements:

- Give the exact dates you'll be unavailable and when you will return.
- List the names and contact information of the people who can be of assistance during your absence.
- You don't have to give the reason why you're away if that's sharing too much personal information, but if the team knows that you're attending a wedding, they'll be less likely to contact you.

7. Don't overextend yourself.

If you only have four days off, then don't plan a vacation to Europe. You're going to be spending most of your time traveling. As a result, you won't be able to get the most out of the trip and you'll have a serious case of jet lag when you return. Instead, stay a little bit closer to home so that you can squeeze in as much vacation as possible.

Also, be flexible and don't plan every minute of your holiday. I know that there are a million things you want to experience, but always being on the go is going to leave you exhausted. Besides, as my grandfather used to tell me: If you see and do everything in a new destination, you won't have a reason to return.

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8. Choose your lodging wisely.

During my earlier years as an entrepreneur, I was on a limited budget. That meant when I traveled, I went cheap with my lodging. Guess where I was staying? Nowhere near where I had to be. Although it cost more to stay closer to the city center, it cut back on traveling to and from the hotel. That

was good on my wallet and reduced wasted time commuting.

Also, you want to see if the hotel or Airbnb has the amenities you need to stay productive. Most hotels have working lounges, conference rooms and fitness centers. If you need to work undisturbed, meet with investors or make time for some excercise, you have everything you need in one central location.

9. Unplug and relax.

Finally, don’t forget to actually unplug and relax. After all, what was the point of going on vacation if you’re working the entire time? The best vacations are the ones where you give yourself a break to recharge. It takes a little self-discipline, but don’t get anxious if you turn your phone off. It’s alright that you didn’t get as much work completed, and you shouldn’t feel guilty if you slept in and had some fun.

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