

Recharge your battery ...take time off

Time away can
increase your
productivity

By Phil Sasso

As I write this, my family is planning to leave on vacation. We're going to spend a few days with family and friends, then a few days in a lakeside cottage. Nothing exotic, just a lazy, restful vacation.

Vacation.

To those of us who are self-employed, that often sounds like a foreign word. Perhaps you've heard others talk about it, but you probably rarely take much time off yourself. And if you do, you would never imagine taking the full five weeks some of our friends with "regular" full-time jobs get every year.

Time is money

Why not?

Too busy.

Can't afford the time away.

No one pays you to vacation.

The work's got to get done.

Someone's got to do collections.

I know how you feel. Before I met and married Beth, I rarely took vacation. I owned a business. I had obligations. In fact, sometimes I boasted to friends that I hadn't taken a vacation in years.

But just between you and me, something's wrong with that way of thinking. The reason we chose to leave the grind of a job working for someone else was to build a better life for us and our families. To be our own boss. To make more money. To have more time.

As it turns out, often we've traded a job working for someone else for a job working for the

worst boss imaginable. Ourselves.

We end up with no paid vacation, no sick days and even longer hours. We have less time for family and friends than ever before.

But let me urge you to make time to take time off. It has a lot of important benefits to you and your business. But just as importantly—perhaps more importantly—it has a tremendous impact on our relationships. I'm glad that Beth and my son P.J. have helped me put life in perspective.

Time off can be profitable

The long hours and stress are taking a toll on you and your performance. Really. You may feel like you are being effective and are a bundle of energy. But until you take a break, you'll never realize you're actually a bundle of nerves. Stress has a way of subtly taking over so we don't notice its effects.

Taking time off to recharge your batteries can do wonders for you and your sales. In his best-selling 1989 book, "The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People," author Stephen Covey's seventh habit, "Sharpen the Saw," is "preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have—you. It means having a balanced program for self-renewal." (It's a good book, at times a little dry, but makes some strong points about being effective and living by the Character Ethic.)

When Beth suggests we take a vacation, I often feel over-

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whelmed by the thought. I complain and drag my feet. But when I get back from vacation, I feel refreshed, more focused and better able to deal with the stress of the daily grind. I'm more productive and I'm definitely much more pleasant to be around. But next time she suggests it's time for vacation, I go back to grumbling and foot dragging.

Actually, it's when I'm on vacation that I find I often get some of my best break-through ideas on improving my business.

Time off can be meaningful

Another important reason to get away is that it reminds us that there's more to life than just work. It makes us a better business person, and, more importantly, a better person overall. Do we work to live or live to work? I'm not talking about having a passion for our jobs. That's

the kind of driving force that keeps you going when the going gets tough. I'm talking about having life balance. Do you own the business, or does the business own you?

Life's too short to spend it all working.

Today, as I write this, I was stunned to learn that former fellow *Professional Distributor* columnist Nik Satenstein passed away. Nik was 55 and full of life. He often challenged me with his perspective on life. The last time I talked to him, he told me how much he enjoyed studying his faith. I was going to call him when I got back from vacation just to catch up.

I remember several long phone conversations with Nik. He was a very open and giving guy. He invited me to dinner and a ride in one of his collector cars if I was ever in Chesterton County, Pa. I invited him out for some great Italian

food and tour of the Chicago skyline if he was ever in my town. But, sadly, I never got to meet Nik face-to-face. I thought there would always be another day for that; we both had busy work schedules.


Unfortunately, there isn't always another day to get around to it.

Finding time is hard

If you *wait* to find time for a vacation, you never will. Urgent things have a way of crowding out important things. Instead, *make* the time. Doesn't matter if it's just a few days or a full week. Take your schedule right now, call someone close and schedule some time off together.

You'll be glad you did.

The work will still be there when you get back. Collections will still be there. The bills will still be there. But a few days off can help put everything in perspective. ■



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