

Leavism: Remote employees, don't let your work hijack your holiday

 By [Anja van Beek](#)

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Leavism is a real trend, and a concerning one. As we are approaching summer holidays in the southern hemisphere, I can't help to think about employees not intentionally switching off from work during their well-deserved holiday - especially after such a different year like 2020.



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As we are approaching summer holidays in the southern hemisphere, I can't help to think about employees not intentionally switching off from work during their well-deserved holiday – especially after such a different year like 2020.

Many people have experienced prolonged stress in the past few months. Not all stress is bad, yet it is never intended to be experienced 24/7. Chronic stress without recovery depletes energy reserves, which lead to burnout. The importance of taking a proper break is vital – here are a few reminders of the advantages:

- Re-energised and a new perspective
- Increased productivity and thinking
- It makes you calmer – taking a break from the “survival mode living”
- A more resilient and healthier you

This all equals to having the energy and vitality needed to excel in your professional environment. After a year where we all have been behind our computer screen a lot more, we need to master this skill to switch-off from work.

Why is this so challenging?

In this world of interconnectivity, it is so easy (sometimes too easy!) to connect to our work. On the one hand, technology enables us to have the freedom required for remote/flexible working but on the other hand, we need to be mindful, “switch off” and stop wanting to check-in at work.

For some, it is especially difficult to switch-off if your colleagues or manager, in other areas of the world, continue to work while you are on your holiday. As an entrepreneur, I can relate to the temptation of having to “check-in” on work as it is easy to find good reasons to give in to this urge.

When you find it difficult, I encourage you to look at which belief or previous experience is driving your behaviour. It might be that you believe ‘a good employee is always available’ even during holidays OR your manager questions your loyalty when you are not available. These are examples of the different lenses through which we view the world. These beliefs and worries will drive your behaviour. You can choose a different response by consciously deciding what you want to do differently when you are on a break. Permit yourself to take a well-deserved holiday without interruptions.

Set easy boundaries for yourself to support you during the holiday period:

1. Consciously decide to be present – the whole time.
2. Don't spend hours on your laptop. If an idea or to-do item pops into your head, jot it down in a handy notebook or the notes app on your phone, then handle it later.
3. If you have to check-in on something, set a limit, for example, 15 minutes a day. See if there are no pending queries or emails that needed an urgent answer. It is also best to decide that you will “not sort out issues” but will acknowledge that you are aware of them and by when you can resolve this.

Here's how to prepare your holiday with your work in mind:

- Be proactive: Before your holiday, discuss and agree on a backup plan with your manager
- Do craft a helpful “Out of Office” reply
- Steer away from taunting hashtags like #SoGladImNotAtWork and #NeverGoingBack on social media
- If you are part of a team, agree upfront that, should there be a crisis, a WhatsApp or a phone call will be the way to go



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Leadership... and the burnout issue

In this age of burnout, leaders have an even bigger role to play managing burnout especially when their teams are going on leave.

Burnout is a condition that's now officially recognised by the professional health community. It relates to chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It can lead to a feeling of energy depletion and exhaustion. It can also lead to impatience and irritability, snapping at family, team members or at clients.

Leaders need to have a discussion with their teams to ensure they have done a proper handover of projects for them to make the best of their holiday break. You also need to set the example. If they start seeing emails coming through on their phones on non-business critical stuff, they too will feel obliged to respond.

High performers know when to rest

High performing individuals understand that there should be a balance between stress (energy expenditure) and recovery (energy renewal). They are aware that being in “survival mode” is a red flag for any individual. Think of an athlete who has a rest and recovery time during “off-season”. Any individual, especially high performers or “corporate athlete” need a proper break to replenish their energy. This is step one, the starting point. Secondly, they then create positive habits and boundaries to sustain these recovery periods throughout the year.

ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

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