

Six Tips for Managing a Vacation Hangover



I have been talking to a number of business professionals who are all suffering from what I refer to as "vacation hangover." What's that you say? Let me illustrate for you.

You scrambled to get everything done before taking a much needed and deserved vacation. Like most people, you centered vacation around a key holiday like the 4th of July. You escaped to a location where there was no possibility of hooking into any of your electronic gadgets - cell phone, PDA, laptop - perhaps even a regular land-line telephone. Seriously. In fact, you enjoyed a relaxing vacation filled with long walks, boating, reading and of course, some great eating. You arrive back home completely unplugged and relaxed and ... WHAM! You are inundated with a backlog of voicemails, emails, and paper mail, both at home and in the office.

The usual, right? Wrong. This time something is different. What's the deal? You are feeling lethargic and unenergetic. In fact, you wonder to yourself, "Wow! How did I lose my edge in such a short period of time away?" You feel as if you can't complete one task let alone all of the tasks that are dropping on you like spent fireworks from a Disney World celebration.

The result: your stress is up, a headache ensues, and you know in your gut, no amount of Tylenol is going to take the edge off. Congratulations! You are now experiencing a vacation hangover. But don't fret. This is a sure sign that your vacation accomplished what it was supposed to

What to do? Simply follow these success tips.

1. **Set-up voicemail message** stating you are out of the office. Provide callers with an alternate contact person, and choose the option that does not accept voicemails during that period. This will help prevent a back-log of phone calls that need to be returned when you get back from vacation.
2. **Set-up an email response** stating when you are out, when you will be back, and when you will be responding to email. This will set expectations for work colleagues and customers that are emailing you and help prevent the need for them to email you repeatedly on the same topic or other topics when you are unable to respond.
3. **Schedule a day post-vacation for catch-up** and include that as part of your "vacation time out of the office." This allows you a day to ramp up and get caught up before people think you are actually back in your office.

4. **Create a task list**, prioritize tasks and complete the most critical items first. Remember that it took a week or more for everything to pile up and realistically, you won't be able to tackle everything on your first day back.

5. **Schedule breaks** into your day so that you can take a brief walk, enjoy a beverage or simply breathe. This will help to extend your vacation and provide short opportunities for you to regroup throughout the day. A good practice anytime!

These tips should help you re-immense yourself into the work environment. If these don't help, do what I do. Plan your next vacation. After all, it helps to have something to look forward to!

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