

# Your Home Business Vacation Survival Guide

By Donna Schwartz Mills

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How to Survive a Business Vacation  
by Donna Schwartz Mills

Last Monday morning, I braced myself for a deluge of email. I had not switched on my computer for three days and just knew I would have a couple of hundred emails.

I was wrong. There were 486.

That afternoon, our postal carrier left a basket of mail that must have weighed a couple of pounds.

'I need a vacation,' I muttered to myself. But that was the problem. Monday was my first day back from one, and I vowed I would never take another.

I eventually came to my senses, but I still tend to think of time away from business with a mix of excitement and dread. After all, those who work outside the home usually have co-workers who can cover for them when they are away.

Yet, the Los Angeles Times reports that 40% of workers keep in touch with their employers while on vacation. 'But that can get in the way of the fun and stress reduction vacationers are seeking,' the Times notes.

It's worse for home based entrepreneurs, who tend to be one-person shops. Imagine the orders, customer service calls and income opportunities we miss by being away from our posts for a week.

But vacations are as necessary as lunch (you do take a break for lunch, don't you?) Vacations allow us to recharge our mental batteries, resulting in increased energy and creativity -- not to mention keeping burn-out at bay. The trick to taking the time you need and coming home smoothly

is in how you prepare your business for your absence. Here are some tips:

## 1. COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Two weeks before a vacation, Angela Strosnider of Virtual Office and Business Solutions announces it to her clients, relatives and others. 'I take the laptop and check for any emergency mails as well. Besides that I make an autorespond message to all emails about when I'll return,' she says.

You need to communicate with your customers when you get back as well, especially when email replies have been delayed for a few days due to your absence. 'People are understanding if you offer a reason for the long wait,' says Terri Seymour of <http://www.websuccesscentral.com>

## 2. GIVE YOURSELF A WINDOW TO CATCH UP

'I've always thought that I should extend my vacation by two days when telling others,' says Roberta Stubblefield of The Mom Team <http://RobertaS.themomteam.com> 'That way I can use the two days to catch up on everything with the answering machine on, then be ready to start out fresh.'

## 3. CONSIDER HIRING A BACKUP

A virtual assistant could be the answer to your vacation prayers, notes Kristie Lemauga, who happens to be the VA at <http://www.kksadministrative.com> Kristie suggests that by forwarding your email to a live person instead of using an autoresponder, your customers can have their needs handled in a personal manner. Kristie says that A VA can also 'process any orders, info requests, data entry, and unsubscribes while you are away, take phone calls for your business, prepare your calender for your return, and assist with administrative tasks ... so you can catch up in the areas that require your personal attention.'

## 4. MAKE A PLAYDATE FOR THE KIDS

As much as we love our children (and for many of us, they are the reason we are working at home in the first place), they can also be a distraction. You'll catch up faster upon your return if they're having fun outside the house. Terri Seymour arranges an overnight visit with their grandparents, but taking them to a playdate at the home of a trusted friend may give you all the time you need to focus on your work. (Just be sure your friend knows you'll return the favor soon!)

## 5. ENJOY YOUR TIME OFF!

Remember that you need your vacation! As Angela Strosnider says, 'Working at home is a 24/7 job just like any other when you add a house and family. Take a personal time-out with you and your loved ones, and you will feel much better about working so much later.'

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