Vacation Time

Written by Steve Marr
Wednesday, 03 September 2003 01:00

Every summer, workers gear up for the annual rite of vacation. We all need to rest occasionally, and a change of scenery can help to recharge our batteries. Studies have shown that regular vacations improve long-term productivity and achievement. Sometimes, however, it seems the stress of preparing to leave and then coming back to a full plate of work can nullify the positive effects of the time off. But if you will plan effectively and establish clear guidelines for your colleagues to help you while you're away, you'll make life easier for everyone. As King Solomon wisely observed, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage" (Proverbs 21:5, NASB).

Establish a plan. To keep coworkers from having to scramble during your absence, establish a plan to serve your customers while you're away. Notify regular customers in advance and work out arrangements to cover their needs. If possible, assign an in-house contact person, especially if specific customer commitments will require follow-through during your absence. Leave detailed notes and instructions easily accessible to your colleagues who will need to follow up. The apostle Peter knew the importance of leaving a good road map. He wrote: "I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind" (2 Peter 1:15, NASB). Be wise. Emulate Peter's example.

Assign a troubleshooter. Determine who will be responsible for resolving problems while you're away. Typically, your boss, a staff member, or colleague will cover for you. Before you leave, make a list of outstanding issues. List items that may require attention in your absence, and specify those that should be held for your return. Clearly identify anything that would require your being contacted-but be careful to limit your involvement to rare, critical emergencies. Don't spoil your vacation for yourself and your family by allowing unnecessary interruptions.

Clear your desk. Leave your work area tidy so that your colleagues can find what they need. Always assume that someone will need to find a document, a file, or your phone directory while you're gone. Leave a password for others to access your computer-and remember to change it when you get back. If your work area is in good order, you needn't worry about others going through your desk. Follow the example of the prophet Daniel, who was found "faithful, and no negligence or corruption was found in him" (Daniel 6:4).

Vacation Time

Written by Steve Marr
Wednesday, 03 September 2003 01:00

Establish a filing system. Set out baskets, or other clearly labeled receptacles, to help others sort incoming information (i.e. one basket for incoming documents, another for orders, a third for correspondence requiring an answer, another for phone messages, and one for reading material to be handled later).

If you're a sole proprietor . . . or decide to shut down your business for vacation, place a sign on your door or send a note to your customers three weeks in advance to let everyone know when you will be away. Remind customers when you talk to them. If your customers might require emergency service, arrange with a friendly competitor to cover those situations, and you can later reciprocate. Notify customers of your backup arrangements. If necessary, set a schedule to check e-mail or phone messages. If you must respond, arrange to meet the need after you return. Most customers will appreciate the courtesy of a response.

Come back refreshed and ready. When you return from vacation, check in with your boss, staff, and colleagues. Identify issues that require immediate attention. Resolve any problems that arose with customers, production, service, or employees. Quickly scan through incoming paperwork to verify proper sorting. You would hate to find a rush order buried in your "read later" pile.

Plan well, enjoy your vacation, and return to a well-organized desk, department, and business.

Steve Marr, Your Christian Business Coach