



Top tips for a sunnier time

MAKE A CHECKLIST - People are often unaware of ways to manage demands. For a successful break, managers must first make an appointment with themselves and set up a holiday checklist of imminent key deadlines. Measuring the tasks ahead helps you gain perspective.

ENSURE YOUR PASSPORT IS UP TO DATE - You may believe you can't go away this year. But stress demands serious attention. (see panel)

Many people can take lifestyle actions to increase their capacity to tolerate pressure. However, most significantly, many have no one with whom to discuss their concerns.

The best decision in the face of such systemic problems is not to defer the holiday. Go away and enhance your coping capacity. You'll come back refreshed for the long-term issues ahead.

SLIM DOWN – Especially before a vacation, you must manage what is on your plate and not be persuaded to have a bit more to eat. Time is limited and time-management only possible if you are not trying to absorb something extra when you are already over loaded.

OFFLOAD EXCESS BAGGAGE- If projects must be initiated now, new clients seen and other tasks started before you pack your socks, then give someone else these bags to take with them. This is an opportunity to delegate. Maybe no one can do the job as well as you; but how do you know until you try? Even if your skills are unique (which is rare,) perhaps you reached this position because someone else gave you the space to develop. So, take the chance to let others grow and learn.

DON'T FORGET YOUR TOOTHBRUSH – You may truly believe your presence is crucial to the smooth running of the department. That could be a confidence issue you need to explore with someone in a position to listen. Are you carrying just the essentials with you or packing unnecessary items too?

Keys for a less-stressed summer break:

🚩 **Plan ahead** – clear the decks over the days before you go, rather than taking on new projects and clients.

🚩 **Delegate** – make sure the right people are in place and give them the information to do the job. They may be only 80-90% as good as you, but trust them to learn.

🚩 **Escalate** - if you are really the only person who can take certain decisions, consider the options and make choices now. Communicate. Leave!

🚩 **Defer** – are you sure that deadline isn't arbitrary?

🚩 **Dump** – maybe they won't call again unless they really need you.

CHECK THE ITINERARY- There may be times when no one else knows the route. But the company's journey is likely to have many landmarks that can be foreseen. Standard regulatory checks and processes can be worked through and signed off in advance. A real lack of capacity in the team to take the wheel can't be addressed now – it's a medium-term job to tackle when you are back.

DELAYS – Most of these can be anticipated. Decision-trees will deal with them most effectively (if A happens, do this; if B, do that.) Arbitrary deadlines may even be moveable. Communicate the alternatives to someone you trust and leave them to act accordingly.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SUFFER THE HEAT - Buy yourself some sun block in the form of a secretary or a colleague who can screen potential calls. Only that person should have your number and a clear escalation process should be created. No one should phone for advice except for:

- Something that cannot be deferred
- Something that (really) cannot be delegated
- Adverse events
- A clear crisis

LIFE'S A BEACH – but it takes discipline, planning, organisation and determination to get there. And you have to give yourself permission to look after yourself.

CANCELLATION POLICY - If you have thought hard, checked your results with a mentor or friend and find you really can't take a holiday – well, don't! Defer time off, but not indefinitely. Make that next appointment away a priority. Make the changes to ensure your visa gets stamped. And use it before the expiry date.

For details of how LeaderShape can support senior executives dealing with stress please contact Danielle Grant, e-mail: dgrant@leadershape.biz