



THE “DREAM” VACATION

YES, YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE BACK FROM THEIR VACATIONS – IF THEY WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO GET AWAY, THAT IS – BUT ARE THEY REALLY RECHARGED? HOW REALISTIC IS YOUR COMPANY’S LEAVE POLICY WHEN, OFTEN, PEOPLE CAN’T EVEN ENJOY THEIR TIME OFF DUE TO SKELETAL TEAMS AND UNREALISTIC EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS. HANAN NAGI, FOUNDER AND CEO OF HNI TRAINING & COACHING, EXPLAINS WHY, IN THE LONG RUN, SUCH A CORPORATE CULTURE COULD BE DAMAGING FOR BOTH YOU AND YOUR EMPLOYEES.



Lisa was so excited; it is only a couple of days left to her so-longed-for holiday.

She was having a meeting now with her direct manager to discuss her handover since it is a three-week vacation, making sure work keeps going smoothly. Lisa walked out of the meeting confused and worried.

She has been with the company for almost a year and has been working really hard, trying to

prove herself and make a difference. Work has been so demanding that she had to work longer hours, promising her family that it is temporary and that she will make it up to them. This vacation is what they have been waiting for – finally time with no Blackberry, laptop or constant stress. Yet, Lisa’s manager didn’t really discuss a proper handover.

She assumed that since Lisa is a hard-working manager, she is supposed to be contactable “in case of an emergency”. Lisa thought to herself, well, fair enough, at the end of the day, that project is my baby; I want to make sure everything goes well in my absence, so if it is a must, I don’t mind taking a couple of urgent calls during my vacation. But she was still puzzled. What about all the work that is not going to be

handed over to someone else to take care of? Is her boss going to do that?

Three weeks later, Lisa walks in the office, feeling guilty that she had to take much more than a “couple of urgent phone calls” during her vacation, which her family was of course not so thrilled about, but not only that, she has been very stressed out about the project – it didn’t seem like there had been any progress.

Lisa was right; after a quick “welcome back” from her manager, she is now certain that the three weeks vacation she took were not really a vacation, they were a “project is on hold until Lisa is back” period! Now she is left with a sense of guilt, not as relaxed as she was hoping to be after her one and only vacation this year, and all stressed out about doing her pending work plus the work of another colleague who has just left on vacation, as that work is essential to the completion of this project. A week later, she is so stressed and overworked, that she really needs another vacation.

The real problem

Through my line of work in coaching and training, I meet so many executives who either desperately need stress management training, work-life balance or, as advised by their line managers, need to learn more about time management and tasks prioritisation.

Sometimes, yes, it is about the employee – some managers struggle with delegation skills, need for control and difficulty letting go. Also, workaholism and an addiction to achieving can be a roadblock. At times these issues can be sorted out with the help of some coaching, but at other times, none of that will help because the problem is with the employer.

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their level of productivity drops; and those who manage to keep both the pressure and the productivity up, end up with personal problems related to health, marriage, children, wellness, and so on.

What can you do about it?

Some organisations have adopted the “leave encashment” policy as a happy medium to reward those who hardly take any time off as they are doing the job of many people, as is the case since many organisations are now leaner than before. Of course, there are pros and cons to this policy such as misuse by some employees and the fact that productivity levels will drop anyway after a certain point, no matter if you get cash; but on the other hand, when there is no budget for additional recruitment or difficulty finding the right people due to demographic or business reasons, leave encashment helps.

My advice to business owners and managers is that before you send your team to another time management course or ask them to get on with it, do fairly assess the work-load and objectives you have set for your employees, no matter what their level of seniority.

Are those goals smart? Is the work-load bearable? If not, what

current resources can you use to help out? What objectives or targets can be rescheduled or stretched over a longer period? Can you hire help? And if not, who from the existing team can be trained on the job to assist and be able to hold the fort, so that another team member can recharge their battery and come back ready to give their best.

If you are a professional suffering from work overload, my advice is, involve your manager, keep a diary and get them to review your schedule and workload to decide on priorities in light of the

existing resources.

Another thing to keep in mind is that if you are indispensable in your current job role, you’ll be stuck doing the same thing forever. Choose a successor and get your boss to help you groom them to assist you and, when you move up the ladder, they take your place. This also helps build your management skills for a bigger role in the organisation.

Of course, a great way to give your successor hands-on practice is to take off on a holiday! ■

ABOUT:

Hanan Nagi is an international trainer, executive coach, personal development expert, writer and an inspirational speaker. She is also the producer and presenter of the coaching and human development TV show “Develop your Life” on DM.TV. With more than 16 years experience in the corporate world in various industries, Nagi now helps organisations achieve their goals through their people, using custom coaching and training programs.

She has been recognised by HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for her contribution to excellence and achievement in the people’s development field when she won the Dubai Government Excellence Award. For more information visit www.hni.ae or contact info@hni.ae.