

Amid Recession, Owners Rethink Vacation

By Kerri Salls

In June 2005, business was hopping and the economy was strong. Every business owner I spoke to was at a loss for how to take a vacation. They wanted to, they could afford it, but. . .

Fast forward to today, business is much quieter and the economy much softer. And still, business owners are talking about not taking vacations.

In an article in the Houston Chronicle earlier this month, Joyce M. Rosenberg pointed to a marketing firm in Wisconsin as an example that small business owners don't think they can take the time off:

'Pam Kassner has already canceled two vacations this year. She just didn't feel comfortable taking time off with business so uncertain.

Kassner, owner of the marketing firm Super Pear Strategies in Pewaukee, Wis., was supposed to go to Florida in February but had recently lost a big client. A second trip in April was also shelved.

"I was just starting to feel anxious, that it just didn't feel like the right time to go away," Kassner said.'

In June 2005, when I wrote an article about how to take a vacation, business was booming and the economy was strong. Business owners wanted to take a vacation, but. . . So, in that article, I showed them what to do in their business so they could take a vacation.

Fast forward to today, business is much quieter and the economy much softer. And still, business owners are talking about not taking vacations.

There are always going to be excuses, exceptions and surprises that will preempt time away from business. But before you slash that vacation from your schedule or drop it from your personal budget, think about the value of that vacation to you and your business. Or think about the cost to you (and your family) of not taking that vacation.

I learned the hard way when my boys were young and I had a thriving business serving technology startups. I made the mistake of letting business supersede my family to the point that I worked through vacations for two years straight.

Do you work to live or live to work? If you are the latter, read no further. If you are the former, like me, you may want to find a way/make a way to take that summer vacation.

Here are some of the reasons I prize vacations as a valuable use of time and money not to be sacrificed lightly:

- A break from routine - to do new things, go somewhere different
- Time to read fiction instead of ezines, blogs, newspapers and magazines
- Chance to be with family/loved ones for more than a quick meal. Enjoy each other's company uninterrupted without the daily grind
- Do some of the things you absolutely love that you can't do at a desk or on the phone. (for me that's snow and water sports)
- Travel to places you can't get to on a long weekend
- Distance yourself from a problem, client, or staff - to regain equilibrium and clearer focus
- Rest - more sleep, less stress, relaxation
- Let pleasurable pursuits consume you guilt-free
- No watch, no clock, no schedule
- Only responsible for self - no one else, nothing is 'due'
- Sleep more deeply, from all the exercise and fresh air
- Break some bad habits in time management and prioritization
- Come back refreshed, motivated to tackle anything in the business
- Come back with clear solutions to the work problems you left behind
- Come back with great new ideas of what to do next (grow the business, create a new product, add a promotion, etc)
- Resume work at a much higher level of productivity, motivation and inspiration
- The team you left behind gets to decompress without you
- Increase the team's confidence that your business can afford to keep them, because you could afford to take vacations as planned. And they can too.
- In your absence, the team you left behind gets to shoulder more responsibility (and maybe you don't ever need to take back some of those tasks).

None of this happens if you don't take a vacation. If you haven't already scheduled your vacations for this year - "waiting to see how business will do", don't wait anymore, do it now. Those vacation plans could be just the motivator to ensure business is strong and you stay focused to achieve your goals.