

# **MEG Fitness**

Create a New Future, Create a New You!

## Vacations: Time off for Balance, Health and Productivity

If you own your own business, you may often put off taking any real time off to just relax and unwind and rejuvenate. You imagine 'someday' being able to take a vacation, but the thought of doing it now only creates more stress. How can you go away when there is so much to do? If you take time off, you may lose a great opportunity! It makes no sense, does it: You started your own business for more freedom, yet here you are, feeling like you can't afford to get away. However, if you take time off, you just may CREATE new opportunities because you will come back relaxed and renewed, and, according to research, even healthier.

How can you take time off and feel good about it? This article will give you some tips on how to really live your dream of business ownership and freedom all at the same time.

#### The health connection

I don't need to tell you that you feel great when you're on vacation! Granted, the stress level BEFORE that vacation may be high, but often there is some time that you can really say you feel that 'ahh' feeling, at least once. You know; you're lying in the pool in your vacation home rental, listening to wind in the trees and the waves hitting the shore just below you. And when you get that feeling, you wish it would last even longer. My favorite explanation of the benefit of a vacation is from Dr. Mel Borins, author of the book *Go Away Just for the Health of It*; He says that every trip is a break from the 'treadmill of daily life'.

But is it just all in your head? There actually have been multiple studies that have investigated the affects of taking vacation on our health. In the year 2000, researchers published their findings in the medical journal Psychosomatic Medicine, after following over 12,000 men in the MRFIT (Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial) study for nine years. They found that the men who took vacations in most years were 20% less likely to die of any cause than those who did not take vacations. They also found that the vacationers were 30% less likely to die of heart disease.

For women, the impact of vacations is even more dramatic. Research conducted by the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation followed 1500 women to find out the results of vacations in their lives. Results were published in a 2005 issue of the Wisconsin Medical Journal (WMJ). They found that women who took vacations only once in every 2 years suffered more depression and tension than women who vacationed twice or more per year. Their conclusion was that personal psychological benefits gained from these regular vacations lead to a more rewarding quality of life and improved work performance.

#### **American vacation habits**

If you live in the US, you may know very few people who really take 'serious' time off. Experts say that it actually takes the body and mind 2 weeks to relax and get out of that stressed, busy, hyped-up mode we are in when we are working and striving to succeed in our career. But Americans only average 13 days off a year! Italians take an average 42 days off a year and the French 37 days a year. Wow; more than a month! What would you do with a whole month off?? Hm; I'm dreaming already, myself.

### Make it happen

One big issue that small business owners have, especially when they are in the early years of growing their businesses is spending the time and money to actually go away! But imagine all that stress you're living with right now, too! Mental health professionals have pointed out that productivity and creativity actually suffer when we are working at our highest stress levels. This alone is one good reason to get away. If I were to tell you that your business would be more profitable if you took a vacation, my guess is that you would start planning it, now!

The issue of being afraid to spend the money is another very real concern for new business owners. However, not all vacations need to be first class and expensive. However, no matter what your budget, there are several tips to help you actually make a vacation happen and to get the most out of that escape.

- 1. Plan your vacation, now, for at least six months from now. You'll be much more likely to take it if you start planning far ahead of time. The planning will help your excitement grow, plus you'll have time to save for that trip, too. Additionally, you can benefit from lower travel rates and fares if you plan early and can watch prices.
- 2. Pick out something you would really like to do, not something you feel committed to do. This is your time for renewal and rebirth. The point is to get away from stressors and make it all about you for a change!
- 3. Consider the slowest time for your business and plan your vacation for that period of time. This kills two birds with one stone, actually. You don't have to stress about business slowing down and you can get away without feeling you're missing new opportunities.
- 4. Put the vacation on your calendar. Once you've committed, it starts to feel more real and you are more likely to do the planning and organizing to make it happen. Scheduled vacations are less likely to be canceled than ones that are just talked about.
- 5. As mentioned above, don't let financial concerns keep you home. In your planning phase, be realistic about what you can afford. Shop around and consider different options that fit into your budget. The fact that you are planning ahead of time means you can even set up a separate 'vacation fund' account. Be sure to save up for the time you are gone, too, if your income is dependent on your physical presence.
- 6. Use that vacation time to do something different. Don't take time off for painting the house or remodeling or visiting family as an obligation. Do something different each year! When my daughter was growing up, we never believed we could go far for our vacation, so we always went to the same location, which was only a few hours away by car. However, after she was out of the house, and we started talking about our next trip, we analyzed how much we spent and started looking at other options that cost the same amount. Since then, on the same budget each time, we have been to Hawaii two times, to Jamaica and to Mexico. Our next trip will be Costa Rica! My point is, do not feel that your budget will always limit you. With online travel resources, there are incredible deals for all budgets, today

#### In the meantime

Vacations force us to relax and open our minds up to fresh inspiration. As a business owner, this is the life-blood of your success. Many successful entrepreneurs actually credit their vacation time for the creation of new ideas for their next big success.

But in the meantime, you still need some downtime in the course of the day and week. Although the emphasis of this article is on REAL vacations, life is what you are living right now and can't be put on hold. You have to enjoy each day. Again, you have started your business so you can enjoy life more. This means having, or taking, the time to sit back and smell the roses along the way. So what are you doing each day to really enjoy those roses? Taking some time to spend researching where your next ideal vacation will be is one way of 'getting away from it all', actually. But that's just one idea. When was the last time you called up a friend in the middle of the week to meet for lunch or a game of tennis? Are you taking time for yourself to exercise, mediate or practice self-care? Do you always feel you must be productive? I am challenging you today to spend some 'quiet time' each day doing either nothing, or at least nothing that fits in your category of being 'productive'. Too much productivity leads to staleness and actually decreased productivity.

And, after all, we want you healthy enough to TAKE that great yearly vacation!

.

Marjorie Geiser is a nutritionist, registered dietitian, certified personal trainer, life coach, and MBA student. Marjorie has been the owner of a successful small business, MEG Fitness, since 1996, and now helps other professionals start up or grow their own business through MEG Enterprises.com. To learn more about the services Margie offers, go to her website at <a href="https://www.meg-enterprises.com">www.meg-enterprises.com</a> or email her at margie@meg-enterprises.com.