

In-House Corner: Working During Vacations/Holidays

This feature of our blog is where our in-house readers share tips, anecdotes and thoughts about things that come up in their daily practice. This particular batch of thoughts is about working during your vacation or over a holiday [Part 2 is coming soon; feel free to ping me and share your thoughts – they will be posted anonymously or with attribution, whichever you desire]: 1. "Sometimes it's good to work on the holidays. After a long career at a law firm, my father became an assistant county prosecutor (his idea of retirement). On holidays, he carried the office pager so colleagues with young kids could spend the day with their young kids – uninterrupted by calls from the police for legal advice. It was a much-appreciated gift to his colleagues and a model for his adult children." – Gigi Gilberte Doe

2. "Gotta get some perspective. Most matters can wait until the holiday is over." – Barbra Streisand Doe

3. "I used to work during every holiday and vacation. I got on the computer after everyone else went to bed at night and then in the morning while everyone else was sleeping in. I figured that these were hours when nobody would notice, so I wouldn't be robbing myself of quality vacation time with my family. A few years ago, my kids (then pre-teens) saw me looking up something on my iPad on Fathers Day. It wasn't even work related. My son came up to me and said, "I can't believe you have to work, even on Fathers Day!" My daughter chimed in very matter-of-factly, "Of course he has to work on Fathers Day. He even works every day when we're on vacation." I didn't realize what a warped perspective on work and adult life that my kids had gotten during all of those years when I thought I was sneaking in some work when nobody cared. I started to get emotional and told them that from that Fathers Day on, I wouldn't do that anymore. This ends now. And I lived up to that promise. I left the laptop at home over the next long vacation and nothing at work cratered because of it. So, the next time you are packing your laptop and documents to take with you on vacation, think about whether you'll really need them and what it may tell your family about your priorities. When you are writing that soft out-of-office email that says you'll be checking your emails and voicemails throughout the day while in Florida, write something that actually establishes firm boundaries. You may feel obligated to your clients over vacation. You may feel like vacation is a great time to catch up on all of those unread emails at the side of the pool while everyone else is in the water. Don't do that. Vacation exists for a reason. Take it. While you may be willing to sacrifice your personal rest and relaxation time, realize that you may be modeling behavior that will adversely impact your kids as they grow up. Of course, you want to teach your kids to work hard and be responsible. But also think about the seeds of outsized pressure and unreasonable expectations that you may be planting. Unhealthy behaviors are learned from an early age. Your kids are taking their cues from you on what constitutes "work-life balance." It's a deliberate choice to break workaholic habits that you have formed - habits that got you to where you are. It will feel unnatural and be (perversely) easier to revert back to what you've done your whole career. But at some point, you have to think about the subliminal impact of this type of sidestream smoke. You know you should do it for your own good, but you never do. Going forward, consider doing it for the wellbeing of your kids. They will notice. One day you will be proud of how they are able to balance their life and work." - Doug Chia

4. "Trust your team. They will have your back if you have their back when they go on vacation." – "Grinchy" Ed Doe

5. "I truly love my job and working with boards, executives, deals, crisis, breakthroughs, MNPI. You learn that you have to work night and weekends. I think it's part of the excitement. I just had to learn to differentiate between the issues that needed focus off-hours and those that could wait or were coming from crazy superiors

who could not tell the difference. So I have weaved my work and personal lives together to take account of this."
– Peggy Foran

6. "Do as I say, not as I do. Take the time. Arrange for someone(s) to cover you. In these pandemic times, we are all on the edge of burnout and we need to be better to ourselves." – Glinda "The Good One" Doe

7. "It's a huge problem if you never get a chance to truly "unplug." I think as lawyers we have been conditioned to always be incredibly responsive, but if you and your staff never get a real break, I think burnout will happen and the end result will be much worse than if you had just found a way to allow for true time off. At my company, we have started to try really hard to make it happen both during the holidays and when people are on PTO." – Angelina Jolie Doe

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