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In-House Corner: Working During Vacations/Holidays - Part 2

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. We received so much feedback on the [first blog about about working during your vacation or over a holiday](#) that we now have this Part 2 [feel free to ping me and share your thoughts – they will be posted anonymously or with attribution, whichever you desire]: 1. "It's simply inevitable, especially if you support tax or do any M&A. Eventually you get used to it, although it would be nice to once in a while start the year feeling refreshed heading into the reporting season!" - Kristin Chenoweth Doe

2. "One personal annoyance is that often the "lawyers" are never considered when factoring in whether or not someone is being interrupted on their vacation. For example, I recently (and despite my 'out of office' notice) was on a family vacation, yet got dragged into a meeting where the other members were specifically called out for 'thanks for making themselves available to attend' even though it was Thanksgiving week. When I noted after the call to the meeting organizer that he neglected to note me in the same way, he said, "well, you're a lawyer so you're expected to be available." This is a consistent theme since I started practicing 20+ years ago, but I think that sometimes the attitudes towards our profession can be border-line offensive. On a funny anecdote, I had a counter-party recently decide to tell a brutally offensive lawyer joke (literally the punch line was making fun of killing lawyers). I smiled and said that I had heard it differently and then retold the same joke but inserted his profession. Watching the rigid appearance of a strained smile on his face showed that the point was made. Didn't hear another 'lawyer joke' from him for the rest of our multiple interactions." – Billy Bob Thornton Doe

3. "I've really gotten used to always being 'on.' When you start out as a young lawyer, you think, "When I'm senior enough, I won't have to work so late or work so hard," because you don't usually see the partners up sending emails at 2 or 3 am. As you become a more senior lawyer, whether at a firm or in-house, you sadly realize that the need to be available only intensifies as you progress in your career. Corporate general counsels don't go offline when they leave the office - calls and emails from the CEO, CFO, directors, and business leaders come at all hours and on any day. The company continues to operate and critical issues arise even if the GC is out 'on vacation.' If you aspire to those greater ranks, you just get used to it. You may even take pride in being able to 'be of service.' We truly are a client service industry, after all." – Candace Jackson

4. "Both of these have happened to me in the past couple of months. No good story here but a reminder for myself that I won't ever get the moments I miss with family (or friends) back, so it's imperative to draw boundaries even where it feels impossible. I'm working to become more creative in leveraging teams and outside counsel to do that." - Nancy Kerrigan Doe

5. "My thought is that it is probably inevitable that you will be working over your vacation or holiday. As you become more senior, you will become more responsible for things and be in the 'middle' of more. With that said, I would set a specific time (or times) of day where you open and handle messages and issues. Perhaps it is first thing in the morning before you start your day. Maybe it's at lunchtime or early evening. Or it can be a combination of things. This way, people know that they will be able to reach you at some point in the day and not necessarily bother you at random times during the day." - Catherine the Great Doe

6. "Holidays and vacations have a magnetic pull that attract deadlines. I fought it early in my career, but at this point, I welcome the occasional work over holidays or vacations. Maybe the grass is greener somewhere, but from my perspective the only realistic alternative is to work for a sleepy company where rarely anything exciting happens. I think that would be far worse from a personal and career growth standpoint than the occasional interruption. Of course, there are times when everyone should be able to put down the phone and unplug, and certainly not every holiday and vacation should be filled with work. It is also hugely important as a manager to

recognize that just because you are thinking about something when you have a free moment during a holiday, your team may not be. So if the email or call can wait, then wait. If you want to send it anyway and it is not urgent, make that clear. Your team will appreciate that you understand your time is not more important than theirs." - Jeff Zanotti

7. "I don't know what to say about this. As a law firm associate in the early aughts, I never had a break. Being from a marginalized group, I felt like I needed to be a workaholic to be valued or seen at all. During this time, I also gave birth to my two children. I survived those years, but I wouldn't recommend it. Eventually I went in-house where I have more control over my team's workload. We use lean principles to optimize the team's talents and prevent burnout. We focus on business outcomes not volumes of work or "butts in seats." Our mindset is: how do we get to the best business outcome while eliminating the human struggle? Eliminating the type of waste that seems endemic to how legal work is traditionally done (e.g., over production, defects, waiting, non-utilized resources and excess processing), has been a game-changer for us." - Lucille Ball Doe

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