

Stop Delaying That Vacation

By Harprit Singh



A recent study by Harris Interactive found that a third of U.S. employees don't take all of their vacation days during the year. Maybe you've heard these excuses for not taking off floating around your office:

- "I'm just too busy to leave."
- "It's too stressful to plan a vacation, worry about work while I'm away, and then play catch up when I return."
- "I'd rather get paid for the days I forfeit."
- "I'm afraid the boss won't like it if I take so much time off."

Indeed, many employers may not look forward to their employees taking vacation because they too believe their employees are too busy to leave, and that it becomes too stressful to conduct business without them in the office. But taking a vacation doesn't have to mean employees (or employers) will lose their clients – or their head. The secret to striking the balance between enjoying a relaxing vacation and maintaining contact with the office lies with unified communications technology.

Vacation Challenges: Between tying up all the loose ends at the office and planning what to do with the time off, it's easy to see why so many employees opt to forgo vacation days. Top challenges and concerns facing employees when taking vacation include:

- In the event of an emergency, employees don't know how they would be able to tend to their work and clients when they aren't in the office.
- It can be difficult to ensure that an employee's absence doesn't disable the department or team, and disrupt workflow with co-workers, partners, suppliers, and customers.
- Employees may not trust a co-worker to adequately fill in for them, or know how to handle prickly situations and emergencies with their clients.
- Maintaining a client's trust, confidence, and satisfaction when placing them in the hands of co-workers can be a sticky situation, especially with new clients.
- Employees are concerned about their job security, and want to project a diligent, professional image to their employer, co-workers, and clients.
- Despite all these concerns, employees still want to take a break, and prevent personal burnout.

Taking Unified Communications on Vacation: Many employees and employers are not aware of a simple way to alleviate these stresses: unified communications services. By making unified communications part of vacation planning, teams can stay connected if and as needed, and spend less time worrying and more time relaxing.

Employees using unified communications can manage incoming calls to route to their cell phone, smartphone, PDA device, or even the phone number for their hotel room, and then reply as necessary. They can also receive voice mail messages as audio attachments in their e-mail, which they can retrieve on their handheld device along with their regular e-mail messages. Faxes can be received as an e-mail attachment.

In addition, the find me/follow me feature routes incoming calls through a phone number sequence the employee specifies – for example, from cell phone to hotel phone - until the employee is reached. Add to that the capability to screen calls by prompting callers to announce themselves, and one can have total control on which calls to take and which to send to voice mail. And because most unified communications services are Web-based, employees can take advantage of the service anywhere they have Internet access, including international destinations.

Unified Communications to the Rescue: With such a seamless transition from the office to an employee's vacation destination, employees and employers derive a number of important benefits. For example, employees can enjoy a stress-free vacation because, should they desire, they can stay connected to what is going on at work, maintain their workflow, and tend to any pressing work or emergencies remotely.

Also, taking a vacation requires much less planning. If you can forward your day number to the unified communications service, it'll eliminate the hassle of notifying employers, co-workers, and clients about a vacation destination number.

Moreover, if employees don't know the phone number of where they are staying before they leave, they can easily log into their account from any computer with Internet access to adjust the routing sequence, which takes effect immediately. Through it all, employees uphold their professional work image, and stay connected to their clients, co-workers, and other outside callers. Most importantly, employees get the break they need to prevent excessive stress and potential burnout. They come back refreshed and revived, all while having maintained their work responsibilities.

So take that vacation, and just remember to bring along unified communications with you!

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