

**Please note, this column was written pre Tourism Queensland's Vitamin Me launch which underscores the writer's sentiment and that of previous campaign, No Leave No Life.**

### **No Leave No Life**

In 2009 the Australian Government introduced its No Leave No Life campaign on the grounds that our nation's workforce had accrued a massive 129 million days of leave worth about \$33 billion or 300,000 years of holidays. Heck! The Government's objective? To introduce a campaign, based around the production of a television show, that would get Aussies off the couch – or rather, boost the number of people taking holidays and unlock the many billions – with lovely spin-offs like boosting the economy, easing the liability burden of employers and creating happier, healthier workplaces. Sweet!

In launching the second season last year, Australia's Minister of Tourism, Martin Ferguson AM MP said the campaign was proving effective in combatting the recent trend of Australian's holidaying overseas or not at all. After all, it made sense that they promote local attractions to the tourism industry's largest market, Australians – who contribute 75 per cent of our tourism expenditure each year.

“Since the launch of the campaign in March last year, Australia's overall leave stockpile has reduced from 123 million to 117 million days,” he said.

The simple fact is, many of us are just too darned stressed to take a break! Why are we so stressed at the thought of what will happen if we 'leave the building' ? I know this feeling very well. As a sole trader, the thought of going away is somewhat intoxicating but worrying to say the least. And then when I go away – for as little as a week – I go armed with phone, notebook, paperwork, the lot! Not very relaxing!

OK, so that is not ideal, but it is behaviour acted out on a fear that many of us face. Unless you have staff already employed, it is expensive to outsource your work in the short term – but on the flip side, offers peace of mind. After all, aren't holidays about spending valuable down time?

I could be called a hypocrite here, but my advice is to shut it all down – turn off the phone, leave the laptop behind and take a total break. What can happen in a week, huh? Time to indulge my optimism.

I love holidays for the simple fact that they give you enough space to take stock of your life and business included. Often, it is when you are away that the best ideas come. You have time to breathe, look around, take in your surroundings and voila, inspiration! Travelling away and seeing how others do things is – be it better or worse – is a great way to gain perspective on your business and perhaps look at ways you can improve. Often it is the attention to detail, value-adds and variations on a theme that enlighten us most.

It's the break that many of us need to see our businesses for what they are.

Depending on how long you have been operating, the holiday might be a time you decide to refresh your business look or brand – and what about the office? Could it do with a spring clean? Are we marketing effectively? When I get back, I am going to develop a new website, e-newsletter – even a facebook page – these are all decisions and changes a holiday can make.

How to switch off?

1. Plan your workload

Do as much work as you can before you go. Try to avoid taking jobs with deadlines during your break period – or just after.

2. Email auto-responder

If you want a total break, be sure to set up an auto-responder in your email package. It is up to you how much information you give that will determine whether or not you will be contacted during your holiday. Obviously, you want people to be able to contact you should an urgent matter arise, so it is often a good idea to provide your mobile number for unforeseen situations.

3. Tell clients in advance

Most people will understand your need for a break and won't be upset when they read your auto-responder, however it is always a good idea to notify in advance and if possible, take your holiday in the 'downtime' or even better, when they are going to be away themselves.

4. Use professional services

If you need to, re-route your calls to a virtual assistant – who can also be employed to check your business email.

5. Clear your desk

Try to do all the necessary paper work before you go – that means looking after such things as bills that are due, registrations, renewals and other important matters.

Go on, take a break!

ENDS