

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

July 15, 2009

This Week's Message:

Take A Day Off.

Paths Forward

- **Need Career Coaching?**
- **Tired of boring meetings??**

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Take A Day Off.

In informal discussions I've been having lately with folks at a few different companies, the topic of summer vacations has arisen. It seems that some employees are foregoing their annual vacations for a number of reasons. Some are ratcheting back their budgets due to the uncertain economic climate. Others feel it is unwise to be absent for a week or two and possibly look "unessential" and, thus, risk seeing their name on any upcoming list for a layoff.

I have written before about the wisdom of and reasons for using one's vacation time as well as the benefits to both employer and employee of doing so. (Go to www.drpaulpowers.com, click on LifeMap Archive, open

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6/27/06, *Get Outta Town!* to learn more. In an amusing aside I'll mention that at least a couple of times a year either during the summer or ski season I am told that this edition of LifeMap has been printed out and posted anonymously on bulletin boards near the coffee machine at work or the office kitchen.) I won't go into all that is written on the topic but let it suffice to say that there is plenty of research to show that using vacation time benefits productivity, lowers stress and thus lowers sick days and company health costs.

If times were better and there were more jobs available and fewer people hunting for them I'd say to use your vacation time to the fullest. But in an economic turndown I well understand the tendency to play it safe to boost one's visibility in the interest of ensuring one's employment. How can we balance what seem to be two competing points of view?

My suggestion is not to completely forego taking some time off. After all, you've worked for it and you deserve it. However, you may find it wiser to take a day or two off here and there rather than a week or two all at one time. You will need to do some planning to get the benefits of taking a needed break from work. Here are some ideas to try.

Paths Forward

- **Consider Timing.** Grabbing an occasional Friday or Monday for yourself may seem like the obvious option and often it is. However there are two other issues to consider. Is either of these days particularly hectic where you work? If so, another day would be a better choice. How about your boss's schedule? Consider taking a day off when he or she is not around so that it won't affect your visibility. (I have been offered a counterpoint to my last suggestion by one reader who suggested that filling in for your boss when he or she is absent is itself a good way to raise your profile. I leave it to you to see which idea fits your situation best.)

- **Planning Is Part Of The Fun.** Obviously one day at the beach is not as much fun as a week at the beach. And you cannot recharge your batteries as fully with a two-day break as you can with a two-week vacation. And those with whom you are closest know this as well as you do. Including all family members in a realistic discussion about why this year might not be the best time to take a lot of time off can be a valuable opportunity. It can enhance the sense that your family is a team that pulls together, it introduces your kids to the realities of the world of work that funds their lifestyle, and it can generate some group planning activities for what to do on the days you do manage to take off. And remember - the planning and anticipation of fun events experienced together are a real part of their pleasure.

- **Try A "Staycation".** The travel industry press has noted that vacation spending (except for the very rich) is off by 30% or more in some areas. Many locales are promoting the

idea of the "staycation" which is jargon for saying at home and visiting attractions and places of interest within a day's drive. In addition to the obvious budget savings, this idea has the additional benefit of being able to be used on a "day here, day there" basis. A creative way to find enjoyable, local things to do is to ask yourself what out-of-towners most enjoy doing when they visit you. A sightseeing cruise on a river or harbor, exploring a historic home or battleground, picnicking at a state park, using low-cost or free tickets available at your local library to museums and attractions are all fun and cost conscious ways to take your vacation in day-sized bites.

• **Everyday Pleasures.** When grabbing a day off you do not have to spend a lot of dough at the country club, ski slope, or yacht basin to enjoy yourself. In his recent book, [Seven Pleasures: Essays on Ordinary Happiness](#) (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), Professor Willard Spiegelman of S.M.U. shares how seven uncomplicated activities give him pleasure and happiness. They are: looking at and enjoying art, listening to music, reading, writing, walking, swimming and dancing. It is interesting to note that none require much, if any, money and all (ok, maybe except dancing) can be done alone and pretty much on your own schedule. Spiegelman observantly notes that happiness is "something that can be cultivated" - a life skill well worth learning. What are your simple, everyday pleasures? What are those enjoyable activities for which you say you never have time? What simple pleasures are right there at your fingertips waiting for your attention?

• **Accept No Excuses.** Don't buy the excuse that you are too important to take a break. I have devoted the lion's share of my life's work to work: jobs and careers that provide engagement, challenge, monetary reward, socialization, and a sense of accomplishment. I'm fortunate to love my job so I've always thought the mantra "Thank God it's Friday" had an essence of exhaustion and sadness to it. But it is essential for us all to realize that we do not live by work alone; we need to savor our time away from work in order to return to it ready to give it our best.

Life Map is about trying to achieve that valued balance of satisfaction from both our work and non-work lives.

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• Tired of boring meetings??

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<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/speakingschedule.html>

Resources

• **Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?**

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• **Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?**

Or know someone who is? To order your copy of *"Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding a Job You Love"* by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksarticles.html>

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