The attorney's guide to taking a vacation

For some people, vacation planning started last summer, as soon as their last vacation ended. For others, the planning process is an annual springtime immersion into hotel deals and must-see attractions. Then, there are the overly worked attorneys who can't remember the last time they even said the word vacation. Well, I'm here to tell you workaholics that you can and should take some time for yourself. It's good for your health, good for your practice and great for your overall quality of life.

I get it. Your practice can't stop just because you want to chill on the beach for a week, but with proper planning it doesn't even have to slow down. Time away from work isn't some self-indulgent fling. It's a necessary de-stressor that benefits your mind, body and soul. Many attorneys are chronically stressed and over-worked. This type of lifestyle leads to depression, illness and resentment for the career that you worked so hard to pursue. Taking time away helps you to be a better attorney, while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Put it on the calendar. Now.

Most areas of law are predictable, with scheduled deadlines that grace your calendar far in advance. Take advantage of this predictability by planning your vacation for a week (or two) that has not yet been taken over by appointments and and due dates. Mark the time off well in advance. That way, when flexible tasks arise, your admin knows not to schedule them during your vacation time.

Now, I know this is much easier said than done for some of you. When domestic relations, criminal law, or litigation is your bread and butter, you pretty much have to expect the unexpected. Surprise motions, emergency

hearings and uncontrollable clients can easily put a wrench in an otherwise perfect plan. But all hope is not lost. If you are in a practice with other attorneys, make arrangements for one of them to handle any emergencies in your absence. Make it a trade off. I will help you take a vacation if you help me take a vacation.

For the solo practitioner, I hope you have created professional relationships with other attorneys in your area. Call on one of them to back you up should an emergency arise. Of course, you must be careful of conflicts and court rules, but even when you aren't vacationing, it's always good to have backup.

Planning it out

Now comes the fun part – the planning. When it comes to planning a vacation, there are two types of people – those who hate it and those who enjoy the process more than the vacation itself (my kind of folks). For those who hate it, I'm here to tell you that the vacation gods have created numerous methods of simplifying the process.

- All inclusive packages – With these one-stop gems, all you do is pick the destination and pay. No need to pour through numerous hotel sites, attraction options and restaurant choices. These packages do all the work for you.
- Cruises – Like all inclusive destination packages, the only stressful part is picking a destination. Everything you need for a week of rest and relaxation is aboard the ship. All aboard!
- A travel agent – There are some great, reputable travel agents out there, who would love to do your planning for you. These well-connected travel experts can save you money as well, with special deals and payment plans.
- Travel apps – These handy dandy pieces of modern technology have all the tools you need for a successfully planned vacation. From travel guides and online reviews to easy car rentals and restaurant reservations, travel apps take the stress out of your vacation planning.

Take a minute to imagine your perfect vacation right now. Feels good, right? You probably lowered your stress level some with just that one moment of contemplation. So, stop thinking about it and start planning your vacation. Now.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to TimeSolv and a variety of other publications.