

How to say

“Darling, I'm taking Christmas off” - and mean it

by Hannah McNamara, HRM Coaching Ltd

With only two months to go until December, have you left yourself enough time to plan for taking Christmas off? If you've got staff, the holiday forms will start coming in soon and everyone's going to be asking for the same time off – that week between Christmas and New Year. Are YOU going to be left holding the fort again?

How is it that Christmas manages to creep up and surprise us? After all, it happens every year and our office supplies companies have been sending us Christmas card brochures for the past few months. So why do so many business owners end up wolfing down their turkey and patting the kids on the head before rushing back to the office on Boxing Day to catch up on admin? Christmas doesn't have to be like this. With careful planning, you can put systems in place so that the business looks after itself over the holidays.

Good for you, good for your business

In the same way that if you over-train a muscle you'll damage it, you can do the same to your mind. Relaxation is an important part of creativity. Many business owners find that their best ideas come when they're out for a walk or even in the bath. Taking regular breaks and completely switching your mind off for a few days allows your creative, subconscious mind to take over.

Turn your PC into your PA

There are some tasks that you have to do over and over again. Whether it's sending out brochures to new customers or issuing invoices, there are ways for you to automate your processes so that you don't have to be there in person. Consider using an auto-responder like AWeber.com on your website to allow customers to get a brochure instantly delivered to their inbox. Or think about having a dedicated 24 hour enquiry line where interested customers can leave their details.

Do you use a database or contact management system to store your customers' details? If so, look for features such as Automated Process (on Goldmine) or Activity Series (on ACT!) because they can be set to remind you or your staff to send out information to customers at regular intervals, removing the need for endless lists. It could be the difference

between waking up in the middle of the night because you've forgotten to send something out and sleeping soundly.

Checklist

Just thinking ahead can help to you to react to supposedly 'unforeseen' circumstances. It's time you updated your procedures manual to include:

- Order-taking over Christmas/New Year
- Delivery times/ altered service levels from suppliers
- Emergency procedures – who deals with ringing alarms, customer problems, etc
- Contact details for key customers and/or suppliers
- Changing answer phone messages and publishing opening hours/dates on your website

Make time to make time

When customers, suppliers and staff are vying for your attention, it can be difficult to find the time to think ahead and then to follow through with your plans. One solution is to work with a professional business coach.

Business coaches not only bring their experiences of helping other business owners, but also bring their objectivity. Being outsiders, they are able to quickly identify areas of the business that aren't running as smoothly as they could and help you to tackle them head on.



Hannah McNamara

Coaching also has plenty of personal benefits. Through one-to-one confidential sessions, you'll start to understand yourself better. You'll feel more motivated and alive. You'll discover ways to have more time to do the things you enjoy. You'll delegate (either internally or externally) the things that you don't enjoy and generally feel happier and more positive about your business.

And that's a great way to start Christmas and the New Year!

HRM Coaching Ltd has a wide network of experienced and qualified coaches and can select the specialist who is most appropriate for your situation. An initial discussion is totally free of cost or obligation.

Call Hannah on 020 8544 8024 for more information. This could be your first significant step towards saying that you'll take Christmas off - and meaning it.

You can find more information on www.hrmcoaching.com where you can also sign up for Hannah's regular business coaching newsletter.

