

Tip of the Month

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(Pre)Beach Read: A Vacation Checklist for Lawyers

Mark Twain famously said "Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life." No offense to Mr. Twain, but he never had to manage an Outlook email account and heavy caseload. While we all may enjoy our work, everyone needs a break once in awhile. So, if you are feeling more like Shania (à la "Honey, I'm home and I had a hard day") than Mark and planning a holiday getaway, follow these tips to maximize your time away from the office and recharge:

Notify clients. Let your clients know you will be away and how to contact you if necessary. You may consider asking them to contact your assistant who can help determine whether something is an emergency or if you can address the matter when you return. Chances are, by giving your clients the heads up that you will be out of town, they will respect your time away and reach out when you are back in the office.

Coordinate with your staff and associates. Consider coordinating vacation schedules with your assistant so that they are in the office while you are out of town or at least monitoring your voicemail for any urgent messages. You may also tap an associate to be "on call" for anything unexpected that might come up.

Review your bills. If your billing cycle falls around the holidays or your vacation, make sure you review your bills ahead of time, so they are mailed in accordance with the usual monthly schedule. Your client is likely expecting a bill, and consistent billing procedures could be the difference between getting paid and not getting paid. Plus, it is one less thing you will need to add to your "to-do" list when you return.

Save the Date. Be sure to timely mark out your vacation time on your calendar, so nothing is scheduled on or around your anticipated days out of the office. As long as you give enough notice, the court won't mind kicking out that telephonic pre-trial conference when scheduling the hearing.

Short term coverage. As a solo practitioner, you may have a reciprocal arrangement with a colleague to cover each other's practices when you are out of town. Be sure to brief them on anything you anticipate might come up and let them know under what circumstances to reach you when you are gone.

While you will undoubtedly end up with a couple of late nights before any vacation, implementing these tips and strategies can give you peace of mind while enjoying the sand between your toes. Do your best to unplug, so you can return to the office refreshed and ready to tackle your inbox. Happy Holidays!