



people
make the
difference

People Make The Difference whitepaper

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By Craig Tegel

Leaders need a break too.

As I write this, summer has hit Sydney with a bang and there is a very distinct holiday vibe in the air. Everyone is racing back and forth across the city to Christmas parties, end-of-year school concerts, and catch ups with friends and families. In other parts of the world, the weather might be chillier, but that same holiday season buzz is kicking into gear.

In the past as a business leader, and now as a leadership coach, I encourage everyone to make the most of any break you take around this time of year. Having worked in Australia, Japan and Europe, all of these geographies have some kind of break over the Christmas and New Year period, offering employees and leaders an opportunity to relax and enjoy time with family and friends. Typically, there are no phone calls and emails to deal with (or at the very least, a greatly reduced number) and your office may even be closed.

Reflect and review

A practice I've always found useful is to use the holiday season break as an opportunity to reflect on the past year, and review what has and hasn't been successful. The ability to critically assess the past is an important element in developing emotional intelligence and leadership skills, especially if you can do so in a non-judgemental way.

When looking back on the year, here are some questions to ask yourself in order to prompt your thinking:

- What worked well?
- Where did results exceed your expectations?
- What didn't work well? Can you pinpoint why?
- What would you do differently?
- Are there any activities that weren't worth the effort required?
- Did you have team members working on the tasks they were most well suited for?

Plan and prepare

The holiday season is also a perfect time to plan for the idea ahead. Many leaders report that the distance from the day-to-day operations of running an organisation frees up mental space to come up with new ideas and creative possibilities. Relaxing and breaking your routine has regularly been shown to boost creativity and provide a new perspective on problems.

Taking a break can also help your professional development. It can provide a chance to catch up on all those articles you bookmarked with good intentions over the year, and give you the mental breathing room to think about how you could put any learnings into action. (But equally, don't feel guilty about using the holiday to catch up on the latest fiction blockbuster while you laze on the beach or curl up in front of a fireplace!)

Use this time to think about both the short-term and long-term direction of your organisation and any actions that will be necessary to achieve your goals.

Don't wait for the festive season

Ultimately, holidays are the perfect opportunity to replenish your energy levels. This will in turn allow you to be a better leader. Leaders should embrace taking leave and actively encourage team members to take leave also. The benefits from leave are widely recognised and shouldn't be saved just for the festive season. By taking breaks throughout the year, you can improve your performance and that of your team members.

If you need help with tools to help you review your organisation's progress and setting achievable goals, People Make The Difference can help. Our one-on-one coaching programs for leaders and executives, together with our workshop offerings, can help you to develop a stronger toolbox of leadership skills. To find out more about our training and coaching services, visit www.peoplesmakethedifference.com.au or call +61 412 333 415.

But for now, enjoy the time with family and friends. I'd like to wish everyone a fantastic festive season and the best for a wonderful 2016.