



VACATION TIME

Get away ... before the stress gets to you

By Vincent Scaramuzzo, President & Executive Recruiter, Ed-Exec Inc.



Sometimes, it feels like my only real goal in business, other than providing for my family and eventually paying for my son's college tuition one day, is to be successful enough to take large stretches of time off when my schedule permits it. I know, maybe not very ambitious of me, but I truly am a child of the sun, and nothing makes me happier than extended vacation time at the beach in Rhode Island with my family.

On July 4, I spent a little more than a week at the shore, and another week or two would have been ideal. But owning your own business typically doesn't allow for that, so I found myself back at the office in the middle of vacation a couple of times.

If you hold a senior management position at a campus or education organization, you can probably feel my pain. The buck stops with us, and being able to "shut off" work is sometimes just not possible. In my case, I have an obligation to the clients and candidates we represent. In your case, you have not just an obligation to your organization, but, more importantly, to the students you educate. We can't just "turn off" their needs.

In today's 24/7 email, social media, smartphone, nonstop-news world, it is very difficult to find a good work-life balance. If you work in a high-stress job, that inability to "punch out" can really wear you out.

According to a survey conducted by the National Life Insurance Company, four out of 10 employees state that their jobs are "very" or "extremely" stressful. Those in high-stress jobs are three times more likely than others to suffer from stress-related

medical conditions and are twice as likely to quit. The study states that women, in particular, report stress related to the conflict between work and family.

Some organizations have begun to realize how important the work-life balance is to the productivity and creativity of their employees – but many just can't do much about it because of budget constraints. Research by Kenexa Research Institute conducted in 2007 shows that those employees who had more favorable views toward their organization's efforts to support work-life balance also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in their organization, a willingness to recommend it as a place to work and higher overall job satisfaction.

Knowing what great job satisfaction this balance can bring, I always find it interesting that, when recruiting and placing candidates, stakeholders in the hiring process don't commonly negotiate or bring up vacation time. Instead, the discussion always narrowly focuses on salary. In addition, organizations can face challenges in staying HR compliant when modifying benefits. If an employer offered more vacation time to a new hire than to someone in the same function already working for the organization, it could possibly cause issues.

Nonetheless, I highly recommend you try to negotiate vacation time when being offered a new position. You may not get what you ask for, but it doesn't hurt to try.

For organizations hiring new employees, offering additional vacation time can be a great way to keep budgets in check. You may not be able to offer candidates the exact salary they need to accept your position – but throwing in an extra week of paid vacation can sweeten the offer enough to land the ideal candidate and keep your budgets aligned. It often doesn't cost more to cover employees when they are on vacation. Plus, you will be offering the work-life balance everyone seems to crave.

Most of the educators I work with are very passionate about their work, and many don't take even a fraction of their vacation time. The students always come first, and that means the educators are on campus serving their needs. But while you may not take the time you need, negotiate for it anyway – it's good to have. Hope to see you on the beach soon!



Vincent Scaramuzzo is the President of Ed-Exec Inc., one of the leading executive search firms in education. As a specialist in the education field, Scaramuzzo works nationally with universities, colleges, online schools and career schools. He can be contacted at vincent@ed-exec.com or 860.781.7641.

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