

## *Financially Speaking*

With Trisha Arndt

### The Cost of Not Taking Vacation

“A vacation is over when you begin to yearn for your work.”

Morris Fishbein, M.D. Medical Editor and Writer

I don't know about the rest of you but I think the last couple of months have been absolutely exhausting. Between the charged political debates going on both in Madison and Washington D.C., the worrisome events in the Mideast and the tragedy in Japan – all of which affect the financial markets – I don't think my brain has stopped working. Add in the “spring” that has recently decided to go AWOL and I am ready for Calgon to take me far, far away.

I bet I'm not the only one.

Every culture approaches work differently and many believe that one of the reasons America has prospered so greatly over the last century is our hard working attitude. We heap praises upon people for working long hours, putting in over-time and, sadly, even for not taking time off.

Frequently when I sit down with people to discuss their finances they proudly tell me about how long it has been since they took time off or about how many weeks of banked vacation they can get paid out. One gentleman recently recounted to me how over 30 years of work he had taken only three weeks of vacation – two of which were for his two respective honeymoons.

For workers covered by pension plans that calculate benefits based on a few highest years of earnings the push to work long hours can go even beyond not taking vacation. The Madison bus driver frequently referenced that earned \$159,000 in 2009 even though his base wages would have put him at closer to \$60,000 accomplished that by working nearly every calendar day in that year – often times double shifts.

I suspect people are frequently surprised at my reaction to their tales of sacrifice.

Rather than congratulating them on the financial sense of not spending money on trips and getting lump sum payouts for unused vacation, I generally tell them that not taking vacations is one of the first things we need to change.

You see, there is an absolute cost for not taking time off. Vacations provide an opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family and to let our body and mind rest. The ramifications on our physical health are numerous. I recently read that taking regular vacations can reduce the instance of coronary disease in women by 50 percent and in men by 30 percent.

Taking vacations can translate to improved financial health as well. Giving yourself time to mentally separate from your work can allow your brain to decompress and relax – and maybe even devise new ideas for your business. You can return to work with a refreshed outlook and renewed energy that will almost certainly translate to improved performance and increased efficiency – which can lead to raises, promotions, increased sales, etc. There is a very good reason that Epic pays for employees to take month long sabbaticals after five years of work.

Even those who plan to work extra time over a few years to try to shore up pension benefits need to take a hard look at what they are doing to their physical and mental health and allow themselves some time off. Accumulating assets or attaining higher pension benefits doesn't do you any good if you aren't alive to enjoy them.

Taking vacation doesn't have to translate into expensive trips to Disney or European cruises. You can get just as much benefit from visiting some of our beautiful Midwestern sites, camping in our vast system of parks or even from staying home and just allowing yourself time to do what you enjoy.

The cost of not taking time off can far outweigh the cost of a vacation.

If you have a question that you would like answered or a suggestion for a topic for a future column please feel free to contact me via email at [Trisha@wealthstrategies.biz](mailto:Trisha@wealthstrategies.biz).

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