

Holidays are not what they used to be. Rare is the employee who leave all their work behind these days. Plenty of people will at least furtively scroll through emails while on the beach. Everyone has occasionally shirked work, now many workers are shirking holidays too.



*"O.K., you. Break's over. Time to resume summer vacation."*

In the olden days, life used to be binary. Establishing whether Bob from accounting was on annual leave was a simple as checking whether he was at his desk. Then BlackBerrys -the executive status symbol of the early 2000s- were granted to those who implicitly agreed to use them outside office hours.

Now everyone has smartphones tethering them to their inbox, and the pandemic means Bob has probably not visited the corporate headquarter for several months or more. Whether he is on holiday or not might be immediately clearly only to him, and the HR computer system logging his days off.

Bosses are mostly mindful not to demand that their underlings do anything while on statutory leave. In Europe policy makers talk of a "right to disconnect" which allows employees to leave their day jobs behind during holidays (as well as evenings and weekends). But the right is not an obligation, and some individuals might find a small dollop of work a respite from their time off. Even the most petulant colleagues can be relaxing to deal with than one's own children at times.

Time away from work serves to clear the mind. Plenty of jobs now require a measure of inspiration. A stretch away from the office helps, all the more so if it is an actual break, complete with a change of scenery away from home. Severing all links to your quotidian tasks can be salutary for employers too. Refreshed workers are less likely to burn out.



So what is the right balance? Nobody suggest toiling on leave at the same pace as in the office, but most people will conclude that if a few minutes spent answering emails can save a stranded colleague hours of work, it would seem churlish not to step in. If nothing else, keeping even a distant eye on things can make a return to the job less daunting.

An intriguing possibility is that the rise of remote work will spawn a new type of holiday. Some people are “working from home” in what look to be pretty lavish holiday destinations (the Greek islands come to mind). The *woliday* -work while vacationing might well become the new norm.

Thus the binary nature of holidays -either you are working or your aren't- may yet become another casualty of Covid-19. Plenty of thought has been given to how the pandemic has changed how people work. It may end up altering how they don't work too.

Be safe, be well!

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