

Contribution to SPH Magazine, Nvyou June Issue (English Version)

1) Have you come across people who "holiwork" ? If yes, who are they? (of which occupation? nature of their work? how do they work when they go on holiday?)

Ans: "Holiwork" as you term it, is common across all industries and organizations. For "holiwork" to take place, you will need a set of tools to enable you to work away from the office. It could be as simple as a phone conversation with your colleagues, web-conference meetings, the usage of a notebook to send out emails and documents, Smartphone, blackberry and so forth. Some hotels abroad may have "working suites", so that also enables a person to work while on a holiday. "Holiworkers" applies mainly for the personnel who deal with some form of administrative work, such as your Secretaries, Executives and Management staff. It is uncommon to have, for example, a service staff or a manual worker "holiworking" due to the nature of their job.

2) Do you think it is a good practice to "holiwork"? If yes, why is that so? If no, why is that so? Could you offer us some tips how people could stay away from work when they go on a vacation?

Ans: At the end of the day, you do not want to spend so much money on a holiday, only to be unable to enjoy it! However, working away from the office is unavoidable for some. Urgent matters that need to be addressed, unexpected events that need urgent attention, critical decisions that need to be made are "reasonable excuses". It is hard for a key appointment holder, say your Director, CEO or CFO, to be away from the office for a long duration without being interrupted. However, as a rule of a thumb, if the key appointment holder is away for a short trip, say around one to three days, they should be left alone till he/she returns. For some people, taking a long vacation may result in a flooded mailbox when they return to work. Therefore, it is advisable to clear your mailbox while away on a long break. You certainly do not want to be more stressed up when you return to work and find yourself staring at a huge chunk of unread emails.

Three Simple Tips To Stay Away from Work

1. You should inform your colleagues to cover for your absence while you away. Unless absolutely necessary, inform them (including your clients) not call your mobile phone. If the issue does not require urgent attention, just ask them to drop you an email on that matter so that you can address it when you are back.
2. Do not be tempted to bring your laptop or any other peripherals that can enable you to work away from the office. Chances are if you bring them along, you would want to use it since you have lugged it all the way abroad.
3. Remind yourself the whole purpose of this trip (to rest and relax and not work!). You must have a disciplined mindset.

3) For those who cannot avoid "holiworking", do you have any advice how they can still achieve a good balance between work and play?

Ans: "Holiwork" is fine if you know where to draw the line at the end of the day. Adopt a disciplined approach and set aside a fixed period every day to address any outstanding matters. Once that is done, switch off your laptop, mobile phone and more importantly, switch off your mind from work. If you are not travelling alone, you have to be sensitive to the needs of the people that you are travelling with (e.g. family members). At the end of the day, it is a choice that everyone has to make. For some, that phone call could translate into bread and butter (especially if you are in a sales related industry such as a real estate agent or financial planner), or make or break in one's career, so it is hard to say no at times to that "minor interruption" while on holiday. It is all in the mindset, you have to learn how to enjoy your work!