

# HOLIDAY PLANNING

Written by Laura Horton



We are approaching the time of year when everyone is thinking about their summer break. Laura Horton discusses how to properly plan enough time off to enjoy the full benefits of downtime

**W**hen was the last time you took two weeks off work? By that I mean a full fortnight off, with no popping in to the practice to sort out a problem or see a patient that couldn't be cancelled, just two weeks of uninterrupted time to rest, relax, and recharge.

If you can't recall your last decent break, then it's probably time to reassess your work-life balance. For many managers and owners, the mere mention of taking two weeks off results in a jaw-dropping facial expression, but I am a huge advocate of a long break. I have now been having a two-week break twice a year for three years and I know I am reaping the benefits both physically and mentally.

While a one-week break is great – some owners are grateful for one week away a couple of times a year – the importance of real time out to switch off and relax cannot be stressed enough. If you know that you are refreshed from a one-week break, imagine what you will be like after a two-week break. I promise that you will be rested, calm, focused and raring to go again. Your business will not fall apart while you are off – if it does that should tell you something!

## HOW TO DO IT

A good way of looking at it is to ask yourself this: if you were setting up your business again, what would you want it to look like? How many weeks holiday would you ideally want each year? Your circumstances may have changed since you started up your practice, so

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Laura worked has worked in dentistry for 21 years and has an unrivalled passion and enthusiasm for treatment coordination, business and team development. In 2008 Laura left her full-time practice management role. Ever since, with her years of experience and vast amount of knowledge, Laura has been working with dental practices to help them successfully reach their true potential. Laura is a master at communicating with patients and provides training to dentists with her grass knowledge experience. Every aspect of training comes from real experiences with patients over a period of many years. Horton Consulting works with dental practices through the UK and Europe to motivate and inspire the leaders and the team to deliver the vision of the owner(s) in a patient-centred business.

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carrying out this exercise every so often can be really worthwhile. For example, I carefully plan my two-week breaks to run at equal points throughout the year, June and December work really well for us as a family.

Once you decide how many weeks holiday you want per year, plan it and take it out of the diary. This will give you regular breaks, which is so important for mental and physical well-being. I always suggest aiming for 8-10 weeks a year away from work. Many dentists like to allocate two weeks a year for courses, leaving eight weeks for breaks. If the thought of this amount of time off scares you then try booking six weeks first and build it up.

If you have not planned your holiday for the remainder of 2019 and into 2020, then you really must take a look at your diary and work it out now. You don't have to choose your holiday locations just yet, but do decide what time you are blocking out.

## MINIMISE DISRUPTION

It is important to bear in mind disruption to patients. I find it very unfair that a patient pre-books their appointments in advance only to have them cancelled because clinicians are not organised enough to block out their time off in advance. In my opinion, all clinicians should have to give six months notice for a day off for a course or holiday in order to prevent the need to move patients' appointments around.

## YOUR WORKING HOURS

Many of my clients have a top priority of achieving a better work/life balance – more and more dentists are now seeking this balance rather than working like crazy every hour of the day.

We've reduced clinical hours to 29 per week for some of my clients and they are now more productive and earning more in those 29 hours than they were in a five-day week. Why? Quite simply, they have their head in the game for the most effective amount of time.

We start by taking a look at the current week and really uncovering how it is working for that individual. You can do this by asking yourself how much time you want to spend

on your business in reality? How much time do you need for non-clinical work? Practice owners definitely have to divide their clinical and non-clinical hours.

Effectively changing your working week is all about getting organised and being really comfortable with the decision that you make. Don't do what others expect you to, do what's right for you. It's a big thing to get the hours in the business right, there are processes to go through, but it can be done.



## BEAR THIS IN MIND

I really value time off work before and after a holiday too. Preferably a day off the day before the holiday to make sure everything is ready, and then at least a couple of days off afterwards on my return to remain relaxed and have some time at home to just potter and get my head ready for work mode.

Give it a try or get in touch with us to see how we can help you reset your working week. ●

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