

Summer Madness | Help, My Business is on Vacation, Too!



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(Do I really need to type this?)
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Beaches. Burgers. Bronzer. Oh my!

June 20th marked the rebirth of relaxation and unapologetic nothingness, right? Well, if you're an entrepreneur, wrong.

Face it, my business-owning comrades, we have agreed to trade in traditional time off for the freedom of being our own bosses. We signed an agreement (also known as a business registration with our city or county governments) that relinquished our rights to a typical work day and the usual vacation. At least, until our work starts to pay off. Oh, and it will my friends!

However, for now it's off to work we go. Too bad everyone else, from our customers to our children, didn't get the memo.

Summer Madness: Help, My Business is on Vacation, Too! shares the frustrations of several entrepreneurs who are mostly working 40 hours or more each week in their ventures. They also have a plan in place for the fall and the remainder of the year. Frankly, they've got it together.

Still, they share a few issues in common when it comes to the season of shorts and sandals, and this report will address each one in my no-nonsense that's-what-you-came-here-for fashion. Enjoy.

It takes two to tango...in summer madness. Recently I conducted a survey to find out what is eating at entrepreneurs as they try to make this a season of prosper, while America is on *vaykay*. Half of the survey participants feel that they cannot reach customers, vendors or anyone else

outside of a lifeguard, because of planned vacation time. Almost the other half of respondents love their children, but this summer, your babies are in the way of your work.

I'm here to tell you that summer was built for entrepreneurs: My late grandfather tended to tobacco in his backyard in Eastern North Carolina until he passed away in 2002. Everyone who was able would help him (including children) while grandmother would fill the kitchen with hunger-inducing roasts and cooked vegetables. So I refuse to believe that being in business over the summer is impossible in 2012, where even my 14-year-old, Tyra, keeps a smartphone glued to her hands.

So what can we do to get summer back to the way my grandfather had it for decades, and in the routine fashion of today's successful business owners? Let's take the two summer biz busters (sorry, kids!) and do what entrepreneurs do best, face them, fix them and keep it moving.

I can't reach anyone because of their vacation time! First, here is a note about electronic communications: While I applaud entrepreneurs for keeping up with technology and knowing how to tweet, post and share images in a matter of seconds, we still shy away from the best methods of reaching people, pre-1995 style. We either called someone and spoke over the telephone, or met in person for a bite to eat. And in North Carolina, there is plenty to eat!

No matter how you communicate with others, make sure it works for both parties involved. [Carolyn Thompson and Robin Vance](#) of Training Systems, a customized training and HR consulting company, suggests when it comes to reaching out to people that we should return to childhood teachings: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. You should learn to identify the methods in which your customers

prefer to communicate (straight to the point, in an email versus text, over the phone, in person, etc.) and adjust your way of contacting them to match theirs. “You'll sell more, get more done, and have far more enjoyable interactions with everyone!” Carolyn advises.

As a copywriter, I cannot stress enough the importance of keywords and powerful subject lines (if leaving a voice mail message, sending an email or typing a text message). These two ingredients will get you to stand out from other messages, including your competitors. Think about it: a true business owner and a die-hard loyal customer checks messages, whether voice or electronic, period. I know I open every Coach purse mailer I receive!

How will you match the best methods of communication with those you're trying to reach? Go back to past communication. Did the person text more? Perhaps there are no texts, or email, because they wanted to talk over the phone (note the time they would usually call you) or meet in person. A scheduled live meeting would be wise for the latter. Knowing what your customer or vendor wants will keep everyone happy, even during the summertime.

Now about the super-hard-to-reach: The ugly truth is that some people will not be available. Sadly, emergencies appear, and buying from you will be downgraded from the “must have list” to the back burner. But what's even worse than those who are suffering through no fault of their own, are the tire kickers who had no intention of buying from you (or working with you in a joint venture, for example) in the first place. Screw 'em. Imagine the time you have spent chasing down these types, wasting precious family time, and eventually spoiling your summer like potato salad left overnight on your kitchen counter. Yes, exactly...yuck.

Kids...love em...but they are in the way!

Most children over the age of four are simply little laborers, who are out of school for the summer months to be at your beckon call! The of summer environment is a great time to develop a work ethic with the people that you'll be responsible for until their 18th birthday. Think about that for a moment:

- Soccer practice
- Cheerleading
- Band

...and any other activity, where you have to spend money, money you're not making this summer. Put 'em to work.

Plan a breakfast morning with your newly-hired crew of children (and their friends, too!) and launch a strategy session. Discuss ways to get them to tackle administrative tasks, manual labor (housework) for a reward. If you're going to take them to their favorite theme park anyway...make 'em work for it. Sometimes resistance may rear its ugly head, but don't give in, my fellow momma and poppa entrepreneurs. If the rugrats want to enjoy their summer, they must work for it, just like the rest of us.

If you must get things done without the children (meetings, conference calls, etc.) try to schedule your “alone” time in the mornings while the babies sleep in or at night (can you say sleepover at the neighbor's?).

But if you are in business this summer, you need to be outside, with your young'ins. Why? Not only is it wise to take in some Vitamin D from the sun (with sunscreen, of course!), but this is where your customer base will be found. You'll know who they are because they will be taking part in the following activities: going to work, going to summer school, buying groceries, washing the car. In other words these people aren't lazy. And they have some

spending money. Money + people = sales. So grab some business cards and brochures, teach the kids the meaning of canvassing and go get some sales. Then, spend the rest of the day with your family.

Conclusion. It's not too late to tame the summer madness in your business. With special attention to your customers communication needs and a plan to enlist your children into your army of help, you will enjoy success under the sun.

The summer is not the time to send your business away to sleep-away camp. Unfortunately many of your competitors will not read this report, so they won't learn how to manage their summer and their work. Oh wait, perhaps this is a good thing, for you!

You can do it. I keep telling you how awesome you are, and wouldn't bother saying it, if I didn't mean it. So get out there and get your business and don't forget the bottled water. The fall will be here before you know it so why not get a jump on September before the kids return to school, another job in itself.

A now, a word about giving up: For some strange reason, many quit after trying a technique three times (or less!). I so used to be this way. However, this isn't baseball, so there is no need for the three-strikes rule. Make it a great summer.

Who is this Ty Wilson woman, anyway?

I am a freelance writer, copywriter and consultant who provides to small business owners: articles, press releases, website/blog content, newsletter copy, and more.

More importantly, I am also watching my 14-year-old diva, Tyra, grow before my eyes.

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