**This is Why Employees Shouldn't Waste Another Vacation Day**

*By TotalWellness*

Not vacationing this year? If you care about your health and wellness, you might want to reconsider! It's not uncommon for American workers to waste their much-needed vacation days. In fact, an estimated 662 million vacation days are left unused each year, according to [ProjectTimeOff.com](http://www.projecttimeoff.com/issue%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

U.S. workers receive an average of 14 paid vacation days, so why aren't we using them? Some employees like to stockpile days off for future use, while others wait to get the payout for unused days. Some cite the difficulties in scheduling vacations, financial worries, failure to plan, or fear that taking their vacation days may be viewed negatively. While many of these may be legitimate concerns, using those days off are crucial for your health, happiness, and career.

All work and no play leads to tremendous amounts of built-up stress. We are all aware that stress is harmful to our physical and mental health. It can cause problems ranging from ulcers to body aches to insomnia. Vacations are an irreplaceable antidote to stress – allowing employees to truly rest and recharge. Here's why taking a vacation is vital to your health and happiness:

**What’s the harm in skipping vacation?**

The risks of skipping vacation days may be more serious than you might realize. [The Framingham Heart Study](https://www.framinghamheartstudy.org/%22%20%5Co%20%22The%20Framingham%20Heart%20Study%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self), the longest-running study on cardiovascular disease, found that men at high risk for coronary heart disease, and who failed to take annual vacations, were 32% more susceptible to dying from a heart attack. A study conducted by Marshfield Clinic of 1,500 women in rural Wisconsin determined that those who vacationed less often than once every two years were more likely to suffer from depression and increased stress than women who took vacations at least twice a year.

Skipping out on vacation time can harm your company, too.  An overworked employee can be more than just physically unhealthy, too – exhaustion, poor decision-making, impatience, and low output can all negatively impact a company's bottom line. Taking some time off actually improves a worker’s productivity at work.

A study from Ernst & Young found that every 10 hours of vacation time taken by an employee improved his/her year-end performance rating by 8%, and lowered turnover. Former NASA scientists determined that people who take vacations experience an 82% increase in job performance once they return, with longer vacations having more of an impact than short ones.

**How can you convince yourself (and your employees) to utilize vacation time?**

It's never too late to plan a vacation, and it doesn't have to be a big, fancy trip. Take a Friday and Monday off to have a small adventure with your family, or simply just use the time to relax. If you're having trouble convincing yourself or your employees to take advantage of vacation days, try out some of these suggestions:

* Consider an unlimited PTO policy.
* Try a "use it or lose it" approach, limiting the amount of rollover and/or payouts for unused vacation days.
* Set an example by taking vacation yourself!
* Remind employees that vacation can be taken in small increments. Even just taking the day or the afternoon off can do wonders for improving morale.
* Make sure employees are cross-trained so that another member of the team can easily cover responsibilities of a vacation co-worker.
* Allow employees to earn more vacation time over the course of the year. It serves as a great incentive for hard workers, and helps with those individuals that feel the need to hoard PTO until the end of the year.

Taking a break from work is vital to you and your employees' health and happiness. Remember that there's a reason companies offer PTO/vacation time, and no one should ever feel guilty for using it!