

Required Reading for Growing Companies



A Change in Perspective

caskey's corner

By Wayne Caskey
for Smart CEO

Where you go on vacation is less important than who you are when you get back.

Geneva, Switzerland

As Anne and I began to prepare for our trip here to visit our oldest daughter, son-in-law and four grandchildren, I pondered this topic.

What is the purpose of a vacation? Is it to:

- "Get away..."
- "Go to..."
- "Retreat to..."
- "Study up on..."
- "Relax at..."
- "Catch up..."
- "Listen to..."
- "Work out..."
- "Putter around..."
- "Be with..."
- "Read up..."
- "Do nothing..."

or, do we express it some other way?

What places do we choose? Paris, London, Hong Kong; New York, San Francisco, Las Vegas; Deep Creek Lake, Bethany Beach, Oxford - each conjures up quite a different image.

Do we choose the same place year after year, or do we like variety?

Are we eager to get there, or do we want to enjoy the journey? Are we seeking a non-stop flight, or is the important thing a car ride, a train ride, a boat ride or even a bike ride? Or, maybe the means of transportation is the vacation, whether it's a cruise or a camper, a sailboat or a yacht.

And the season we take the vacation - spring, summer, fall or winter - certainly brings up different energies.

How do we choose the length of time we take a vacation? Are we restricted to long weekends? Or is the most we can "get away" a week? Do we find that we "really relax in that second week of vacation", or do we say "I get four weeks, and I'm taking it - all at once." Maybe we have a sabbatical, and we look forward to months, not weeks.

How we organize, or let others organize our vacation time varies greatly. Everything from hourly activities at Club Med or a

Catskills or a Poconos resort, to totally unscheduled time at a remote cabin.

"Time" is the repeated word here. David Whyte, in *Crossing the Unknown Sea - Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity* describes how distorted our sense of time can become. "We speak of saving time, but time in its richness is often lost to us when we are busy without relief... We speak of stealing time as if it no longer belonged to us. We speak of needing time as if it wasn't around us in every moment. We want to make time for ourselves as if it were in our power to do so." Vacation gives us a concentrated opportunity to put our sense of time aright.

You may be with me so far, but suppose I ask, "How do we stay 'in touch'?" Are we on-line through lap top and cell phone, in immediate contact at all times? Do we call in daily? Hourly? Or, do we consciously make it difficult to contact us by not taking our cell phone, or by choosing not to have one with us that operates

worldwide? Do we go to a place that doesn't have a phone, and pick up messages daily? Weekly?

Some CEOs I know use vacations as an opportunity to measure how their management teams function without them, and a few even say, "Things went better when I wasn't there. Maybe I should take more vacations!"

What does the change of scenery do for us? Well, it's by definition not the "same old, same old". Hopefully, we can "vacate" the regions of our brains and bodies where the cares, struggles and daily responsibilities reside and give ourselves a rest, by a complete change of focus, or no focus at all. (It may not even be a change of scenery. A CEO I know just "declares a 5 day vacation" and he and his spouse radically change their routine at home!)

How does a vacation affect our relationships?

Is it a chance to reintroduce romance into our relationship with our significant other? Have things gone stale? Has there been no time for affection and love to

express itself? Have those intense and really stimulating conversations become less frequent, or even stopped?

Do we take the opportunity to really be with our children? Experience the world through their eyes? Hear music with their ears (or plug our own, if they're teenagers)? Do we need time to just play with them, whether it's softball, horseshoes, tennis, golf, or skiing?

Maybe it's even seeing the world through the eyes of a pet, experiencing the world through their wildness, or through their devoted affection.

How close do we get to nature?

Do we slow down enough to watch spiders spinning their webs, and contemplate what kind of CEOs they are? Do we watch seagulls fly in formation toward

the sunset and wonder why? Do we see the deer come to the pond for an evening cocktail? Can we watch treetops dance in the wind? Can we feel the wind's blast as we come over the top of the mountain, or as we maneuver our sailboat? Do we literally smell the flowers? Can we build a sandcastle, knowing it will, like our empires, be swept away in time by the tide?

A good vacation gives us a different perspective on our day to day existence, and on our lives. It gives us a chance to reaffirm what's really meaningful to us as human beings, regardless of whether the world views us as struggling entrepreneurs or as titans of industry. We connect with our true selves, that innocence, purity and delight we experienced as children. Somehow, when that happens on a vacation,

there's a rededication deep within us, a coming of self to self, and we emerge, with enhanced inner strength and conviction, ready for what the world may throw at us next.

So, we do various things and go various places on our vacations - everything from antiquing in Pennsylvania Dutch country, to watching a sunrise at Nag's Head or sunset in Carmel, to playing the links at Palm Springs or Hilton Head, watching the leaves turn in Vermont, wandering around Greenwich Village, hiking in the Redwoods, or skiing in Squaw Valley.

But behind all of these destinations and activities, there is an inner journey toward reconnection - with ourselves, with our loved ones, with ideas, with our values, with variety and spice in life, with reinvigorated senses of

taste, touch, smell, hearing and seeing, and with a sixth sense of belonging in this world, and wonder at its wonders, with an accompanying affirmation of the goodness of life, and our great opportunity to experience it fully and deeply. It causes us to fill our lungs, clear our heads, flex our muscles, relax our faces, and what comes more naturally as we contemplate each day is a smile - a smile arising from the joy of purely being alive, alive in a way that comes from a truly good vacation.

May you have such a vacation!

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