

How to maximise your annual leave

7th April is World Health Day, which might give you pause to examine whether you're maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Are you, for example, maximising your annual leave?

Almost all full-time workers in Australia are entitled to four weeks of paid annual leave a year, which is a significant amount of time. When used correctly this time off can reap huge rewards for you both personally and professionally.

To get the most out of your annual leave, it's important that you put some thought into how you're going to spend that time. Make a list of the things you want to do, think about how you will achieve them and put plans in place to ensure none of your valuable time off is wasted.

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Here are some suggestions on how you can maximise your annual leave to improve both sides of the work-life equation:

- **Utilise public holidays.** Look at all the public holidays coming up over the next year and build them into your annual leave plan. Choosing your dates wisely will leave you with significantly longer breaks, allowing you to achieve more with your time off. Make sure you plan well in advance though as these days tend to get snapped up quickly.
- **Travel.** Use your annual leave to expand your horizons and gain new perspectives. Planning ahead will also allow you to stretch your travel budget further. That might mean travelling overseas – where you'll gain invaluable experiences by seeing new and different cultures. When you come back to work you might find that you see things in a new light, which can help reinvigorate your work

- **Pamper yourself.** Sometimes you just need to step away from work, put it out of your mind and take some time for yourself. Looking after your health means guarding against burning yourself out.

Ask yourself: 'how can I unwind and relax?' Is it getting a massage? Or maybe treating yourself to an all-day movie marathon? Whatever it is, allocate some time to indulge in the things you don't get to do when you're too busy with work.

- **Spend time doing some of the things you neglect when you're too busy with work.** No matter how much you love your job, chances are there've been moments when your enthusiasm has waned. It's only natural that your motivation ebbs and flows – it can be harder to bounce into work full of energy some days more than others. This might be because you're tired and need a break.

Use your annual leave to step away from work for a few weeks and reacquaint yourself with some of the hobbies and interests you've neglected.

- **Log off.** Do you ever find yourself just going through the motions? Maybe your to-do list gets longer and longer while you spend your day wasting time on social media. It's easy to become a slave to technology. It might be worth swearing off some technologies while you're on annual leave. Set your out of office reply and don't check your email while you're on holiday. Or, maybe, stay off social media for a week. Whatever you choose to do, you might find that you bring a renewed focus to your work after your 'technology detox'.

Well planned annual leave leads to more fulfilling time off and more fulfilling time off benefits you both personally and professionally.