

Title:

"Powering Off" or "Power On?"

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Summary:

Do you take your laptop on vacation? Do you sometimes "hate" your cell phone or your Blackberry? Harris Interactive recently reported that one-third of vacationers take their laptops on vacation. During a Sunday meal at a restaurant recently, I observed a man sitting with his family talking on his cell phone -- obviously about business. He was not happy - neither was his family!

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Article Body:

Do you take your laptop on vacation? Do you sometimes "hate" your cell phone or your Blackberry? Harris Interactive recently reported that one-third of vacationers take their laptops on vacation. During a Sunday meal at a restaurant recently, I observed a man sitting with his family talking on his cell phone -- obviously about business. He was not happy - neither was his family!

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, "It is the best of times. It is the worst of times." Certainly that applies when it comes to "connectivity." Stories of 9-11 victims being able to communicate with family members in the last minutes of their lives warmed my heart, while the story my friend told of her mother answering her cell phone in the delivery room during the birth of her grandchild chilled my soul.

How grateful I was for my cell phone when I came across a young woman stalled on an interstate without one, and I could immediately get help. How convenient it is on vacation to use the Internet to explore the options for entertainment in the area on a rainy afternoon, and get directions to find it easily. How comforting to know that my family can reach me in case of an emergency - or something to celebrate! -- regardless of where I am in the world. The same can be said for my colleagues.

So here's the question: Should you take your laptop on vacation? Should your

cell phone be on 24/7? Clients often ask, "What should I do?" My answer: "That's the wrong question. The question is "What will you do?" Maybe an even better question would be "What would you like to do?" Perhaps the best question of all is "What action will bring you the best results?" In order to answer that question, you have to take the time to answer "What ARE your best results?"

Repeatedly I have emphasized that one definition of "organization" is "controlling the things you can control, so you can cope with the things you can't." In the complex world in which we live, especially with the level of connectivity available, it's easy to fall into the trap of feeling that we are victims of other people. I cringe when someone complains about having to answer their cell phone. Says who? If you don't want to be reached, you can "power off." If you have to be reachable because your job requires it, then the question may be "Am I in the right job?" Or, have you simply trained people that you are "always available." Customer service is great, but it doesn't require 24/7 response. It requires good communication. It's highly frustrating to leave a message and get no response for days, but few situations would suffer if the response came one hour later so you could have lunch with a colleague without interruption.

Connectivity can be addictive. My daughter, who has her PhD in counseling, reminded me that an addiction is something that reduces the quality of your life and the people around you.

So what does all this have to do with productivity? My passion is helping individuals and organizations create and sustain a productive environment so everyone can accomplish their work and enjoy their lives. When used appropriately, connectivity does help you accomplish your work and enable you to play. It can also undermine your priorities at work, destroy your health, and poison your relationships when used inappropriately.

The issue is not whether you take your laptop on vacation or leave your cell phone on 24/7. For some people, the ability to check e-mail once a day on vacation brings peace of mind and can be done when others are sleeping or swimming. For others, the whole idea of a vacation is not taking your laptop. There is no "right" or "wrong." The question is whether your choice is enhancing or diminishing your life and the lives of the people around you.

So "Power Off" or "Power On?" - it's truly up to you!

P.S. SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Your ability to make any connection more valuable is being able to find the information you need when you need it. Are

you wasting valuable time looking for what you need? Could you find what other people in your office have if you needed it? If not, fill out our Productive Environment Scorecard, (www.ProductiveEnvironment.com) and we'll give you a free 30-minute phone consultation to identify specific steps you can take to make sure that everyone in your organization is taking the right action at the right time with the right information.