Staying Organized Over the Summer

Summer may mean endless months of vacation for your kids – but life is a bit different for us adults. Work doesn't just stop from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and you have to find a way to get your job done in between the trips and summer holiday celebrations. It's hard to stay on track, keep on top of your responsibilities, and meet your work deadlines – while at the same time fitting in vacations for you and your office staff. That extra time off can pose a real challenge to your organizational skills, but a little advance planning will go a long way toward making your summer both fun and productive.

Set Up a Three-Month Calendar

Part of what makes summer so challenging is the sense that you're sort of flying by the seat of your pants in terms of your schedule. Vacation days sneak up on you, you didn't realize that your assistant was going to be gone right before the big meeting, and it turns out you've accidentally scheduled a project deadline for the same day as the company picnic. No wonder you feel like you're always running behind! The solution is to sit down and plan out your summer months right from the start. Some time during May, take a minute to sketch out your plans for June, July, and August. Include any dates when you will be out of town or off work for personal reasons, as well as vacation days for your boss, employees, and key co-workers. Then take a look at the tasks that need to be completed during that time, breaking larger goals into small bite-sized steps. Working backward from the deadline, plug each project into your calendar, allowing adequate time for completing each step. It sounds like a lot of up-front work, but you'll thank yourself later when you avoid any major scheduling conflicts.

Stick To a Regular Routine

You may find that your summer schedule has a tendency to become erratic – folks are a lot more relaxed about office hours, and it's easy to get in a habit of strolling in late then working until past dinner. However, this isn't really the most productive way to get things done, and you're more likely to end up stressed and exhausted than if you stick to a consistent schedule. Routine is a cornerstone of efficiency, so try to maintain a regular daily and weekly routine. That means starting and ending your days at the same time. It also means being willing to set healthy boundaries when you are asked to put in extra hours to cover for a vacationing co-worker. Certainly, summer is a time of give

and take, and you need to be willing to help others if you want folks to reciprocate when you're gone. However, those requests should not eat into your evenings and weekends – you have to be the one to draw the line when “overtime” becomes unreasonable or burdensome. And finally, don't forget to include regular admin time for completing routine tasks like filing, returning phone calls, and follow-ups. Don't let the relaxed summer atmosphere destroy all of your good habits!