

Make summer productive

There are plenty of ways for businesses to make use of slow time

July has burst upon us. The weather is warm and the festivals are upon us.

For those in the retail and hospitality business, July is a time of constant motion. As the farmer says when the sun shines, it is time to make hay. The sunshine brings out both tourists and residents tired of being stuck in their houses. Many businesses have extended hours and are working nonstop to make hay during our short summer season.

However, for many in the office and service industries, July is a slow month. Employees and clients are going on vacation, making scheduling meetings more difficult. New projects are problematic to get started. So, how do you make the best of a slow month?

Reading. Most of us are so busy with the day-to-day work, we don't spend a lot of time reading business books. However, a ton of new ones come out each year.

A few recently recommended to me that are on my reading list include:

■ "Have a Good Day" by Caroline Webb, discussing the work-life balance and scien-



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tific ways to help fight burn-out

■ "Originals" by Adam Grant, one of the youngest Wharton professors who talks about how original thinkers can change the world without risking everything

■ "The Industries of the Future" by Alec Ross, a former advisor for innovation at the Department of State. He writes about the start-ups he is seeing around the world and what some of the new big trends might be.

These are just a couple of ideas. Head over to your local bookstore or library and find some books to fit your interest.

Is a book too big of a commitment? If you know that you only will be able to find bits of time, consider checking out some professional journals.

Google is a great way to brush up on a

topic that is interesting you.

For instance, if you're thinking you want to improve security at your location, do a Google search of articles. You can find a ton of good information.

Even better, you might find a magazine or journal that you might want to subscribe to, making sure that you are staying up-to-date.

Another area to pursue is professional development. I know, many of you are thinking, "It is July; I definitely don't want to go to some conference and sit there for eight hours." Additionally, with our vacation schedule for July, trying to leave the office for several days is impossible.

However, more professional organizations are offering webinars on a variety of topics. If you belong to one of these groups, head over to their websites and check out their professional development options. If they have webinars on demand, you can potentially fulfill your educational requirements and learn some new information, all without leaving your desk.

Or, take a vacation. We all know the benefits of vacation – reduced burnout,

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improved productivity upon returning, better health and morale. However, we all don't schedule it.

Forty percent of Americans end their calendar year with vacation unused. If it is too hard to schedule a week off – although really everyone should be able to get away for a week – schedule a series of long weekends.

Summer is short here in Wisconsin. Pretty soon, we will be back up to our eyeballs in snow, meetings and conference calls. Take some time and enjoy it.

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