

Can things really run smoothly without you?



Wayne - ESP

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Quote of the month

**SYSTEMS RUN THE
BUSINESS AND PEOPLE
RUN THE SYSTEMS**

MICHAEL GERBER
PICTUREQUOTES.COM

Summer has well and truly arrived. The days are warmer. The evenings stretch on. And there's that ever-familiar shift in pace. Conversations start to include phrases like "when are you off?" or "we should catch up after the holidays," and the pull to step away, slow down, and soak it all in feels stronger than ever.

Whether it's a weekend escape to the coast, an all-inclusive overseas adventure, or just a few lazy days strung together, this is the season when many of us try to disconnect – at least for a little while.

But let's be honest. For business owners, especially those at the helm of something they've built from the ground up, the idea of stepping away can feel a bit... idealistic. When you've poured so much into building something, the thought of stepping away – even temporarily – can raise more questions than excitement.

Can things really run smoothly without you? Will your team know

what to do if a curveball comes their way? And most importantly, can you actually relax, knowing everything is in hand?

This is the season where we talk about rest. However, the truth is that true rest only comes when there's trust in your systems, in your people, and in the foundation you've laid.

If your business can't function unless you're checking your inbox from a sun lounger, maybe that's not a sign of your dedication, maybe it's a warning light.

This time of year invites us to think not just about the holidays, but about resilience. Building a strong business isn't just about being present every single day.

It's about creating something that doesn't fall apart the moment you step away. It's about knowing that when you do take that well-earned

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The myth of the ‘working holiday’

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break, everything is running smoothly; not by accident, but by design.

So, as the out-of-office replies start to pile up and the sandals come out of storage, maybe take a moment to reflect. Not just on where you’re going this summer, but on how your business holds up while you’re gone.

And if the answer feels a little shaky, maybe that’s the invitation to build more trust, tighten the gaps, and create space for rest, not just for you, but for the whole team.

In this edition of *The Business Brief*, we’re diving into how to manage your holiday spend and how you can bring this into your business, what it really means to take time off, and most importantly, how to design a business that lets you do that without checking in every two minutes.

Here’s to hammocks, handovers, and a summer that works – even when you don’t

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Let’s be honest, holidays are supposed to be a break. A reset. A chance to step away from your business, clear your head, and return feeling energised.

But for so many entrepreneurs and business owners, taking time off somehow ends up being more work than... well, work.

The week before you go away. Chaos. You’re cramming two weeks’ worth of tasks into five frantic days, staying up late, clearing your inbox, pre-scheduling everything from social posts to invoices like you’re prepping for a corporate apocalypse.

And the week you come back? Just as brutal. You walk into an overflowing inbox, unanswered queries, and a to-do list that practically hisses when you open it. So, what do you do? You work longer hours, cancel personal plans, and tell yourself it’s just “catch-up mode.”

Sound familiar?

You’re not alone. But it doesn’t have to be this way.



The myth of the ‘working holiday’

Somewhere along the way, we picked up this belief that holidays aren’t meant for us, not really. That as a business owner, you should always be “checking in,” just in case. So, you pack the laptop. Check emails over breakfast. Tell yourself, “I’ll just do 20 minutes” that slowly turns into half the day.

Here’s the thing: if you’re answering emails poolside, fielding client calls in flip-flops or trying to write copy while your family’s already halfway down the beach, that’s not time off. That’s relocation. And it’s exhausting.

True rest doesn’t come from simply being in a different postcode. It comes from trusting that your business can function — at least temporarily — without you glued to a screen.

Plan smarter, not harder

Taking time off shouldn’t mean overworking before or after. It should mean designing your workload with intention, ahead of time, so things flow while you’re away, and you’re not stepping back into a storm on your return.

Here’s where to start:

- 1. Prioritise, don’t panic**
Not everything needs to be done before you go. Instead of trying to clear your entire to-do list, focus on

The myth of the ‘working holiday’

what truly needs your input. What’s time-sensitive? What can be delayed? What can be delegated?

2. Set clearer boundaries

Let clients and colleagues know well in advance when you’ll be away and when you’ll be available again. Include it in your email footer, schedule an autoresponder, and stick to it.

You teach people how to treat you by the way you communicate. Respect your time, and they will too.

3. Delegate and automate

This is where good systems shine. Can someone else handle the basics while you’re away? Even if it’s just checking in for emergencies.

Can you automate tasks like invoices, appointment scheduling, or marketing emails so they tick along in your absence? Use the tools available. Let tech carry some of the load.

4. Book a re-entry day

The day after your holiday? Don’t book back-to-back meetings. Give yourself time to settle in, review what you missed, and ease back into your workflow.

Your brain will thank you. So will your inbox.

Reclaim the reason you went solo in the first place

Most people don’t start their own business because they want to be

busier. They start because they want freedom of time, of choice, of lifestyle. And yet, somewhere along the way, we start acting like employees without benefits, burning out under the pressure to be always-on.

The holiday season is your chance to step back and challenge that. To design a business that doesn’t just survive your absence but supports it. A business that runs on systems, trust, and clarity, not last-minute chaos and late-night laptop sessions.

Because here’s the truth: your business can only grow as far as you’re willing to let go.



Time off is a leadership decision

If you’re constantly working through your holidays, pushing harder before and after you leave, or treating rest like an inconvenience, your team and your clients will notice. You’re setting the standard. And if your standard is burnout, everyone else will either follow... or burn out themselves.

Taking a real break and modelling what it looks like to prioritise balance is one of the most powerful leadership moves you can make. It tells your team that health matters.

That boundaries are respected. That rest is part of the plan, not something you earn by overworking.

Here’s your reminder...

You don’t need to clear your entire desk before you leave. You don’t need to pack your laptop “just in case.” You don’t need to feel guilty for stepping away from your inbox.

You just need to plan, protect your time, and trust in the business you’ve built.

This holiday season let’s do things differently. Let’s take time off without the chaos. Let’s create space to recharge properly and return not buried in catch-up work, but full of fresh ideas, calm, and clarity.

Because you didn’t build your business to feel trapped by it.

You built it for freedom. So go ahead and take that break. You, your business, and your team will thank you for it.

Managing your holiday spend:

Picture this: you're scrolling through holiday photos on social media, mentally calculating the cost of that beachfront restaurant, the designer shopping bags, and the endless stream of cocktails with tiny umbrellas.

It looks incredible, but there's that nagging voice in the back of your mind asking the uncomfortable question we all face when holiday fever strikes.

Do I actually have enough money for this holiday? And more importantly, how much will I really spend when I'm there? It's the financial reality check that can either make or break your well-deserved break.

The holiday budget reality check

Let's start with the uncomfortable truth. Most of us are terrible at budgeting for holidays. We factor in the flights, the accommodation, maybe even the airport parking, and then convince ourselves we'll "be sensible" with spending money.

Fast forward to day three of your trip, and you're already wondering how that tapas lunch somehow cost more than your weekly grocery shop.

The first step to holiday financial sanity is being brutally honest about your spending patterns. If you're someone who can't walk past a market stall without buying something, don't budget like

someone who window shops. If you're the type who says "we're on holiday" every time the wine list appears, factor that in from the start.

A good rule of thumb? Take your initial spending money estimate and add 30%. Then add another 20% for the things you genuinely didn't see coming.

That museum entry fee, the taxi when you got lost, the extra night in a hotel when your flight was delayed. Holidays have a way of generating expenses that seem to appear from thin air.



The art of holiday money management

Once you're actually away, the key is conscious spending rather than restrictive budgeting. Set a daily spending limit that feels comfortable, but don't beat yourself

up if you go over it for something genuinely worth it.

The goal isn't to come home with money left over; it's to come home without the sick feeling that you've completely blown your finances.

Consider using the envelope method, but make it digital. Set up separate pots in your banking app for different types of holiday spending: meals, activities, shopping, and emergencies.

When the meal pot is empty, you know it's time for that supermarket picnic instead of another restaurant dinner.

And here's a controversial thought: sometimes the most expensive option is actually the best value. That slightly pricier hotel with breakfast included might save you money compared to the budget option where you're buying overpriced coffee and pastries every morning.

Factor in convenience, time, and peace of mind, not just the headline price.

What your holiday spending teaches you about business

Now here's where it gets interesting. The way you handle money on holiday is often a mirror of how you handle money in your business, just with the volume turned up and the consequences compressed into a shorter timeframe.

lessons for life and business

Do you find yourself constantly checking your holiday budget app, worried about every purchase? You might be doing the same with your business finances, micromanaging every expense instead of focusing on the bigger picture.

Conversely, if you're someone who completely abandons financial awareness the moment you step off the plane, you might be taking a similarly hands-off approach to your business spending.

The most successful holiday budgeters are those who plan well, track consciously, and then trust their system enough to actually enjoy themselves. Sound familiar? That's exactly the approach that works in business too.

Building financial resilience

Just as you need a business that can run without you constantly checking in, you need a personal financial system that can handle the occasional holiday splurge without derailing your entire year. This means building buffers, not just budgets.

If you know you take two holidays a year, factor that into your annual financial planning from January. Set aside money monthly into a dedicated holiday fund, just like you would for business equipment or marketing campaigns.

When the time comes to book, you're spending money that's already been allocated, not borrowing from future months or putting pressure on your cash flow.



The trust factor

Perhaps most importantly, your holiday spending reveals your relationship with trust. Do you trust yourself to make good decisions when you're relaxed and out of your usual environment? Do you trust that you've planned well enough to handle unexpected costs?

In business, this trust translates to everything from delegating financial authority to team members to investing in opportunities that might not pay off immediately. If you can't trust yourself with a holiday budget, how can you trust yourself with business investment decisions?

The bottom line

Managing holiday spending isn't really about the money. It's about creating systems that work, building trust in your own judgment, and finding the balance between planning and spontaneity. These are exactly the same skills you need to build a resilient, profitable business.

So as you're planning your summer escape, don't just think about where you're going. Think about how you're managing the journey, financially and otherwise.

The lessons you learn might just transform how you think about money in every area of your life.

Here's to holidays that refresh you without emptying your bank account, and business practices that let you actually enjoy them.

Can you switch off on your holiday?

There's a particular type of holiday photo that's become all too familiar: the laptop balanced on a sun lounger, the "working remotely" caption accompanied by a beach backdrop, or the classic shot of someone taking a "quick call" while their family builds sandcastles in the background.

We've somehow convinced ourselves that this is what modern success looks like – being so indispensable that we can't even take a proper break.

But here's the uncomfortable truth: if you can't switch off on holiday, you're not being admirably dedicated. You're highlighting a fundamental weakness in how you've built your business.

The switching off paradox

We take holidays to recharge, yet spend them more stressed than usual, juggling relaxation with constant notifications. We're physically present but mentally scattered across time zones, trying to solve problems we can't properly address while wearing flip-flops.



This half-hearted approach doesn't just ruin your holiday – it makes you less effective when you return. Instead of coming back refreshed and full of new ideas, you return having never properly left. You've had the expense of a holiday without any of the benefits.

The real question isn't whether you can afford to switch off; it's whether you can afford not to. Your creativity and decision-making suffer when you never give your brain a proper break.

Pre-holiday preparation: the foundation of switching off

Switching off doesn't start when you board the plane – it starts weeks before you leave. The most relaxed holidaymakers aren't those who are naturally laid-back; they're those who've done the groundwork.

Begin with a "responsibility audit." List everything that might need your attention while you're away, then ruthlessly categorise: what genuinely needs you, what can wait, and what someone else could handle.

You'll be surprised how much falls into those last two categories.

Create practical handover documents focusing on emergencies rather than documenting every possible scenario. Your team needs confidence in their authority to

make decisions, not a comprehensive manual.

Set up your out-of-office message properly. Don't just say you're away – redirect people to specific team members for different issues. This stops your inbox becoming an overwhelming avalanche that ruins your first day back.

The art of digital boundaries

Here's where most people get it wrong: they try to go completely cold turkey on technology. Unless you're hiking in the wilderness, this rarely works and often creates more anxiety. Instead, create intentional boundaries you can actually stick to.

Designate specific times for checking messages – perhaps 20 minutes morning and evening. Outside those windows, your phone stays in the hotel safe or airplane mode.

Use the "24-hour rule" for non-urgent responses. If something isn't immediately critical, wait 24 hours before responding. Many issues resolve themselves, and your delayed response often comes with better perspective.

Consider changing your usual communication apps. If Slack or WhatsApp are full of work conversations, use different channels on holiday. Sometimes a

Can you switch off on your holiday?

simple platform change helps your brain shift modes.

Physical and mental switching off strategies

Your environment shapes your mindset more than you realise. If you're staying somewhere with a desk, resist setting up a "little workspace." Pack your work laptop in the deepest part of your suitcase. Make accessing work deliberately inconvenient.

Establish new routines unrelated to your usual schedule. If you normally wake up checking your phone, start holiday mornings with balcony coffee or a pre-breakfast walk.

These ritual changes signal to your brain that you're operating differently.

Engage in activities demanding full attention. Whether it's paddleboarding, cooking classes, or getting absorbed in a proper book, choose pursuits that make thinking about work impossible.

Practice the art of boredom. We're so afraid of unstimulated time that we fill every moment with input.

Allow yourself to sit by the pool without entertainment, people-watch in a café without your phone, or take long walks without podcasts.

The trust exercise

Ultimately, switching off is an act of trust – trust in your systems, your team, and your ability to have built something that doesn't require constant oversight.

If your business can't survive a week without you, that's not a testament to your importance; it's a red flag about your business structure.

Start small if this feels overwhelming. If two weeks of complete disconnect feels impossible, try a long weekend first. Gradually build confidence – yours and your team's – in operating independently.



Coming back refreshed

When you return, resist immediately diving into everything you missed. Schedule a buffer day if possible – return Saturday, ease back Monday. Use your first day to triage rather than react.

Remember that ideas and perspective gained from truly

switching off are often more valuable than emails you didn't answer immediately.

A refreshed leader returning with clarity brings far more value than one who never properly left.

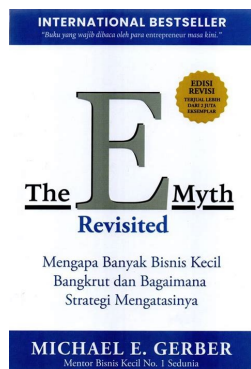
The businesses that thrive aren't built around irreplaceable people – they're built around great systems empowering capable people to make good decisions.

Your next holiday isn't just a break; it's a test of whether you've built something truly sustainable.

So the real question isn't "can you switch off?" It's "what does switching off teach you about the business you've built?" The answer might just transform how you approach both work and rest.



Sharpening the saw...



The E-Myth Revisited by Michael Gerber

If you've ever found yourself checking emails from a sun lounger or fielding "urgent" calls during what should be family time, Michael Gerber's "The E-Myth Revisited" will feel like a mirror held up to your business practices – and it might not be a comfortable reflection.

Gerber's central premise is brutally simple: most small businesses fail not because their owners aren't skilled at what they do, but because they're working *in* their business instead of *on* it. Sound familiar?

It's the same reason you can't switch off on holiday – you've built

a business that depends entirely on you being present and involved in every decision.

The book introduces the concept of the "entrepreneurial myth" – the idea that people who start businesses are entrepreneurs, when in reality, most are just technicians having an entrepreneurial seizure.

They know how to do the work, but they don't know how to build a business that can do the work without them.

What makes this particularly relevant to our holiday discussions is Gerber's emphasis on creating systems and processes that function independently.

He argues that your business should operate like a franchise – with clear procedures, defined roles, and predictable outcomes that don't require your constant intervention.

The practical advice centres around documenting everything, creating operations manuals, and building what Gerber calls "turnkey

systems." This isn't just business theory; it's the foundation that allows you to actually take time off without everything falling apart.

While some of the examples feel dated (it was first published in 1995), the core principles are timeless. The book can feel repetitive at times, but perhaps that's intentional – Gerber is trying to break decades of bad habits and mindsets.

If you recognize yourself as someone who can't delegate, can't switch off, or feels like your business would collapse without your daily involvement, this book offers a roadmap to freedom.

It's not about working less; it's about working differently so that eventually, you can choose when and how much you work.

The ultimate test? Whether you can take a proper holiday and come back to find everything running smoothly. Gerber shows you how to build that reality.



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