How do I get my staff to kick their post-holiday blues?

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THE PROBLEM

Offices are currently filled with despair and inertia as people start to return from their holidays, feeling sluggish, trying to hang on to that vacation feeling by resisting any work. How do managers get their employees to re-engage with the office? And should they try to raise their spirits?

THE ADVICE

The executive: Jon Moulton

So you are depressed at coming back to work? You poor, poor soul. Let me tell you – none of us need some miserable-looking soul hanging round the office. Three weeks partying has obviously left you with severe sleep deprivation, jet lag, indigestion and an apparent concern about your post-night club activities.

Hard work never killed anybody but there is no danger of your testing that today. So get your act together. Put the lights back on in your office, retrieve the untouched in-tray you dumped into your colleague’s tray and stop the low moaning noise. We need bright-eyed, fully fit and properly motivated staff so that I can go on holiday.

We never had these problems when you lot were only paid enough to afford a week in Blackpool.

The writer is the founder of Better Capital, the private equity firm

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The consultant: Stephen Brooks

Most of us are motivated when we feel that the work we do matters and it matters that we do it. Returning from holiday often leaves us questioning whether either of these is true.

A back-to-work inbox is filled with activities of doubtful value. This only reminds us of how much of our working life is spent unproductively. We see that the organisation has survived pretty well without us, raising the “do I matter?” question. Managers can counter this by delegating particularly important and challenging tasks to people as soon as they return to work. Let them leave the mundane stuff until later and work on something that matters.

The writer is a specialist in people management and organisational change at PA Consulting

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The academic: Rita McGrath
Post-holiday let-down is emotional and requires an emotional response. Break the re-entry into three stages: catching up, letting go, and moving on. The catching up stage for many employees can induce despair. Ease the burden – declare an e-mail moratorium and hold off on more assignments. It deals with the work and shows you care.

In letting go, the task is to celebrate the vacation but get people focused on the here and now. You might consider asking people to reflect on something they learnt on holiday that might have business implications.

The moving on phase is your opportunity to get people focused on interesting activities. It is easier to leave the holiday behind if you have something exciting to look forward to.

The writer is an associate professor at Columbia Business School.