



The American Institute of Architects

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It's summer! Time for cookouts and beaches, fireworks and festivals. I took a vacation this month with my family to the East Coast for a week at the beach; it has been years since I've had a vacation like that. I purposely left all work behind – no laptop, no reading work email. My phone did not forward calls from my office. I truly took the week off and unplugged. It was heaven!

Recently Forbes reported about the role technology plays in our vacations. "When asked about work habits on vacation, 22% of respondents said they spend a few minutes each day working, usually sending short responses to questions or forwarding time-sensitive emails to someone at the office. Another 24% said they don't intend to work, but will reply to emails or phone calls from their boss." Nearly half of us can't unplug, and that's a shame.

If you're an employer or manager, do you encourage your staff to disconnect while on vacation? What about weekends? Weeknights? Technology allows us to work all this time, but what we need most is work life balance. Managers need to lead by example and disconnect during our time away from the office. We need to prepare before vacation, to plan and prevent fire drills that ruin our time away. Too often, we rely on people taking work home or checking email at all hours, and that isn't fair – not to them, not to their families or loved ones – and it isn't to our benefit either. We can and should do better.

Employees need their vacations; it is an important part of their wellness. Moreover, people who take time off can perform 31% better than those who don't. They are more productive, more collaborative, and just plain happier. People who take all their vacation time are more likely to be promoted than those that do not. In this time where we struggle to find, hire, and keep employees, a healthy approach to vacation is necessary to attract and retain talent. So please, take that vacation, and respect your team members who do – and work at unplugging during your time away from the office. Trust me, you'll feel better for it.

One last reminder for an upcoming event: please join me at the Design Retreat, being held on September 13-14 this year; registration will be sent soon. But in the meantime, go out and relax!

Onward and upward,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristen Nyht". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristen Nyht, AIA, AICP, LEED AP