



Flying the helicopter...

Have you ever played with one of those little helicopters you see being sold occasionally in shopping centres? Has it been one of the most frustrating experiences trying to keep it from crashing into furniture, or one of the more rewarding experiences once mastered?

Sometimes in business you need to literally “fly the helicopter” taking time out to keep you sane, stopping you from saying/doing something you shouldn’t, can be beneficial to your work-life as well as your home life.

In a world where we are constantly connected through phone, internet and email on the go, we spend less time than ever completely disengaging from our work.

For possibly the first time since the caveman era, we are no longer divorced from the realities and distractions of our businesses. Just like hunter-gathering was a full time occupation, so today, with the benefit of technology we are connected and wired into our work 24/7.

However, unlike caveman, we are no longer normally engaged in outdoor pursuits. A large portion of our time is taken up in offices, shops and factories devoid of natural light and breaks from routine.

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We tend to confuse the important with the urgent, and as a consequence we, as a society, are failing to stop and take the time out we need to recharge our batteries.

There are several different phases of business growth. Each requires an investment of time, effort and in some cases tears to be successful.

Despite this, taking time out from the pressures of getting things done can not only help your business life by getting things in perspective, it can

also help things at home while truly saving your sanity.

There are three common ways to engage in the time-out. We call them flying the helicopter, walk against work and the long way home...

Flying the Helicopter

Sometimes, you just need to stop. You don’t have a lot of time, but you come to the realisation that if you don’t do something different (and quickly) there will be a negative impact on you (and those around you).

In our office, the preferred method of taking this immediate short-term break is to fly the helicopter. Our equipment of choice is a 30 cm helicopter however the item or equipment is really up to you. The real point of flying the helicopter is to (a) get up from your desk and (b) do something that requires enough of your attention (least the furniture suffers from the helicopter being flown in to it) and (c) it distracts you from what you are doing at the time.

Writing for a magazine or

dealing with issues that could have been avoided by better planning takes its toll. The mental time-out of flying a helicopter is sufficient to help press the reset button and break a difficult task into a series of sprints rather than trying to run a marathon.

The key to a successful helicopter flight is that it provides quick relief. It requires total concentration, so you can't think about OH&S or disgruntled customers; otherwise you will crash into a colleague, some furniture or a client – something best avoided...

Walk against Work

Unlike flying the helicopter, walk against work is taking the time to think.

A problem with a staff member, a negotiation that you have coming up, preparing a presentation all require time to get right. Often it can be hard to think through all the angles you need to address when you are in the middle of doing.

The walk is simply an opportunity to get away from the desk and the people around you so you have time to think through what you are trying to achieve – alone. The benefit is the unconstrained environment outside can help

you think through things rationally, logically and simply. This effective time out usually helps you to achieve a better result than sitting at your desk.

The appeal of getting out of the office can be attractive to others. People may ask to join you. Remember that the purpose of the walk is to spend time alone to think things through... People will generally understand when you tell them you have to get something right in your mind and require the walk to exercise those ideas out.

I still find each day is too short for all the thoughts I want to think, walks I want to take, all the books I want to read and all the friends I want to see

John Burroughs

The long way home

You know the feeling. You have spent a frantic day achieving little, and you are frustrated. You need to get away from the office, but seem to be incapable of leaving things behind.

Just like the walk against work you need time-out in order to

slow down and put things in perspective. The difficulty is that for many, the trip home isn't long enough to cool off and banish the day's dramas to the back of your mind. You really need to take the long way home to achieve that. Taking an extra 10 minutes to go the longer way, or stopping at the gym are all great ways of putting yourself in a better frame of mind than if you were to just head straight home after a trying day.

The advantages of the long way home is you are better placed to deal with what has happened in the lives of those you love as you have had the opportunity to deal with your day first. Selfish? Not really – you can't help others if you are still tied in a knot yourself. If you work from home – then you need to walk against work or create space to achieve this separation of the work and home lives to ensure you don't disadvantage those you love.

All of these ideas are simple however require a little discipline from you so that you can recharge those batteries.

So - explore the long way home, go for walks or better still, go on... buy a helicopter then take time out to fly it.