

## TIPS FROM THE RISK & PRACTICE MANAGEMENT ADVISOR

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### Taking That Much Needed Break

**T**ime away from the office is vital to your well being. Going years without a regular vacation is a recipe for disaster, both personally and professionally. It almost always results in burnout and mistakes. Start your vacation planning now. Read my article posted on the LIANS website at [www.lians.ca](http://www.lians.ca) entitled "Taking That Much Needed Break." Consider the following when planning vacations:

- Commit to regular breaks from the office and schedule those breaks into your calendar.
  - Coordinate the vacations of your support staff so that you do not have employees critical to your operation absent from the office at the same time.
  - When deciding to accept a new client or a new matter, consider your vacation schedule, as well as your current caseload and your other professional and personal commitments. If you do not have a competent partner or associate who can handle a matter during your planned absence, don't accept the matter. Refer it to another lawyer.
  - Make sure that your clients and the opposing lawyers are aware of your vacation dates. Before leaving on vacation prepare a detailed memo on the status of your active files. Review it with those persons who will be responsible for your files during your absence.
  - If you are a sole practitioner, arrange with a competent colleague to be the "go to person" on your files if emergencies arise. Initially, try this for even a few days, to see how the arrangement works. If it works, your next break can be for a longer period.
  - Do not schedule court appearances or discoveries for the days immediately following your scheduled return to work.
  - When leaving for vacation set up your out of office assistant on your email, directing anyone who requires a response during your absence to the person who is handling your files. Leave a similar message on your voicemail.
- If you feel you must work while on vacation, and you bring along a laptop, cell phone or Blackberry, limit the amount of time you spend working. Rather than constantly checking for messages, consider dealing with emails and phone messages at a particular time each day.
  - If you are working while on vacation, continue to document advice given and instructions received, and make sure this documentation is saved to the file.
  - Continue to properly track and record your time. If not, you are working for free.
  - When your regular assistant is absent from the office be particularly vigilant of work done by his or her replacement.

If reading these tips leaves you grumpy and saying that taking a vacation is easier said than done, then you really do need a vacation. Start planning now!!

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