



The Smees in Fiji.

Work hard, holiday long

Kevin Smee has a young family and works hard as director of two companies – Solutions Financial Services and Brokers Independent Group. He also has a couple of hard and fast rules when it comes to taking time out.

“Weekends are non-negotiable time with the family, and I don’t take work home.”

Smee’s business is 20 years old, so it’s his view that he has ‘done the time’ and can now justify taking longer breaks. In total he manages to get away for eight to ten weeks a year, with a maximum of two weeks off at a time.

Many of these breaks take in industry conferences in places such as Hong Kong, South America and Mauritius. “We’ve had two trips per year over the 20 years, so we’ve been fortunate to go to a lot of exotic locations,” he says.

And because the finance industry traditionally shuts down at the end of the year and over January, Smee also has the opportunity to take a decent break over summer.

On family holidays he leaves his cellphone at home, and keeps an eye on email, while his wife Nicola, managing director of SFS, stays in touch by texting.

“It’s never a problem because we both have such fantastic PAs and a great office manager, and we encourage them to make decisions in our absence,” says Smee.

Favourite destinations include Fiji, where they share a property, and anywhere in Europe or the Mediterranean where Smee enjoys the historical atmosphere.

And then there is the fishing. Like Ridler, Smee spends a lot of his free time out on the water – he estimates that three out of four weekends are spent mucking around on the water in the family launch with his children Luke and Jess.

Again, the key to taking breaks is to schedule them in your diary a long way in advance. Smee regards his holidays as a reward for putting KPIs in place and getting them done. “It’s recommended you have goals in place and a means of measuring progress,” he says. “So think of measurement, targets and rewards as a strategy. Ultimately monthly rewards is a good way to go.”

Smee says even one-man operations should take a break for three to four weeks. “New Zealand practically shuts down for a month at Christmas anyway. As long as you clearly communicate your intentions to your clients, they won’t begrudge you a few weeks off – unless of course services are not available. For this you might need to get creative – perhaps job share with somebody else.”

Don’t over-complicate things

Wendy Davie also knows all about the importance of ‘organising’ a holiday into a busy business schedule. A CV that includes



emergency department nurse, photographer, writer, wife and mother means that she has devised many

ways for people to get organised, simplify life and get a lot more done.

Davie’s Christchurch-based business, Totally Organised, has been running four and a half years and was one of the first professional organising services offered in New Zealand. She runs regular workshops and seminars and presents at conferences to spread the message of how to be ‘accidentally organised and live a real life too’ (her book *The Accidental Organiser* is featured in this month’s Biz Books section).

Davie admits she’s lucky to be in a position to take a break if she needs one – she has the support and systems in place. This was why she was able to accompany her husband on a six-day business trip-come-holiday to Ireland recently, with just one month’s notice. “It was quick and a bit exhausting, but really worth putting in the effort,” she says.

Having time out from your business is absolutely vital says Davie. “I’m a firm believer that if you look after yourself everything else falls into place.”

Even if you can only manage the occasional one-day break, perhaps just to get in the garden or have a decent lie-in, it’s worth it for the sake of your mental health, says Davie. “If you think you can’t get away, just get over it, you’re overcomplicating things unnecessarily. “Nobody will thank you for always being at work – remember nobody is indispensable, even though we may think we are.”

One of Davie’s secrets to work/life success is to employ consultants for the business whom she believes can do a better