

Planning Annual Leave with Confidence: Reducing Stress Before You Switch Off

The planning and the lead up to taking time away from work for a break can cause a level of stress.

It can sometimes feel like a juggling act, stepping away from a busy role and worrying about handing things over.

Below are some practical considerations for you to think about:

Plan Proactively

- Organise leave intentionally: book and block your calendar and notify relevant teammates when you will be away.
- If taking a week's break or longer does not feel possible, consider extending weekends to allow for a break.

Create a Simple Handover

Use a handover document or email covering:

- Key tasks in progress.
- Deadlines and contacts.
- Any potential issues to monitor.
- Keep it clear and concise and store it somewhere accessible (e.g. shared drive or Teams).

Arrange Cover & Communicate

- Discuss with your manager or team who will cover key responsibilities while you're away.
- Be clear about expectations - do any emails need action, or can they wait?
- Let external contacts know in advance if your absence may affect them.

Set a Thoughtful Out-of-Office Message

Think to include:

- Your return date.
- A contact for urgent matters.
- A note encouraging non-urgent messages to be resent after your return (to avoid backlog).

Mentally Switching Off

- Log out of work emails and apps on your phone.
- Turn off work-related notifications if you're using the same device for personal use.
- Try to limit or avoid checking in 'just in case' - trust your colleagues and your plan.

Be Kind to Yourself and Others

- If you're feeling anxious about being away, talk it through with your line manager, there may be adjustments that can help.
- If your team is in a busy period, look for ways to support each other fairly, for example, rotating cover or staggering leave.

After You Return

- If your calendar allows, block some time on your first day back for catch-up and to review handovers.
- Say thank you to colleagues who helped cover while you were away.

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