

A Smart Way To See The World: Take A Working Vacation

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October 6, 2014

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BRANDVOICE| Paid Program

Oct 6, 2014, 11:17am EDT

By Teresa Meek

Everyone needs a vacation. But try telling that to your boss when you've got a project deadline looming. And if *you're* the boss, it can be even harder to let yourself go.

To solve this problem, some enterprising people and companies are crafting unique

new ways of combining work time with vacation time. A “workation,” as some call it, can be anything from a business retreat to working remotely from Spain or Hawaii. Here are some snapshots of today’s “workations,” made possible by technology and a little imagination.

Go anywhere, but keep your home-office hours

Los Angeles-based trial law firm Quinn Emanuel this year offered its associates \$2,000 to go anywhere in the world to do their regular jobs for a week — provided they remain accessible during home-office working hours.

When asked why he started the program, managing partner John Quinn said, “I just thought it would be fun. What we do is very demanding in terms of time, commitment, and energy. Our people work extremely hard. If you can lay down a power strip on a beachfront café in India and do the same thing, why not give people that experience?”

More than 70 associates have signed up, and about half have already gone to places like Barcelona; Cartagena, Colombia; Ambergris Caye, Belize; Roatan, Honduras; and Bodrum, Turkey.



The firm also offers an arduous summer hike to those who dare to participate. A tradition for 20 years, it's part of the company's culture of striving to surpass your limits.

"We have a motto — it's really the Olympic motto in English: faster, higher, stronger," Quinn says. "Take all things to the limit."

It's not just talk. In a 2012 expedition in the Canadian Rockies, three employees were airlifted out. (One had an old knee injury that acted up and the other two were simply too exhausted to continue.) The hike is meant to be challenging, Quinn says.

"Self-knowledge comes from suffering," he says. "It's, 'How do I keep going?' It's conquering, doing something you didn't know you had in you, facing intimidating situations."

Kind of like being a trial lawyer.

The hike also offers the lawyers at the firm a chance to see another side of their colleagues. "You get to know people as you never will in cubicles or separate offices," Quinn says.



Kim Hansen,
chief
technology
officer of
Kwame Corp.,
taking a
"workation" at
Startup
Getaway in
Bali.

Startup Getaway in Bali

For Kim Hansen, chief technology officer of KwameCorp, an engineering and technology company with offices in Lisbon, London and San Francisco, a "creative, healthy lifestyle" is not some human resources catchphrase designed to lure new employees, but a goal he makes sure the company achieves.

Last year, that meant a trip to Bali, where Hansen and three co-workers went for three weeks to collaborate intensely on a project for a major technology company.

They stayed at Startup Getaway, a retreat where entrepreneurs can concentrate while food, shelter and work spaces are taken care of.

Hansen and his team stayed at one of the houses, where they worked in the afternoon after surfing or mountain biking in the morning. Evenings featured vacation-flavored events like Balinese massages, fish dinners on the beach and a visit to a nature reserve teeming with monkeys. Such distractions didn't pull them away from the project, which they often continued to discuss after hours, Hansen says.

“We didn't feel like we were working all the time, but like we were inside the project. We were more aligned and efficient than usual.”

Hansen sees trips such as these not as a vacation but as a work experience “breaking the four walls,” allowing the team to focus while living a balanced, healthy life. He is planning similar working-project trips to France, Hawaii and maybe Nicaragua in the future.

Co-working space in Hawaii

Rechung Fujihira named the Honolulu co-working space he founded, BoxJelly, after a jellyfish that appears only in the week after a full moon. It's also a double entendre on the slang term *jelly*, an amorphous, informal work group.

Both locals and visitors flock to BoxJelly, which provides an open office area with 14 desks, half a dozen private offices for those who need them, and a multipurpose room for hosting team conferences or the workshops and lectures for entrepreneurs that Fujihira sometimes hosts.

The space also offers a sense of community.

“Imagine an office where people pay to be there. They tend to like each other. It's more community-oriented,” Fujihira says.

In addition to the “kama'aina,” or Hawaiian locals, BoxJelly has attracted employees from companies like Apple and Uber, as well as a host of independent workers from across the globe. Rates vary from \$15 a day to \$199 for a month. Living space is not provided, but visitors sometimes find a place after meeting locals in the work space.

It's not all drudge work. People who want a break can sign up for “board meetings,” where they go surfing together, or with Fujihira, at a local beach.

Mick Thompson used BoxJelly for a couple of months while working in Honolulu for Code for America, a nonprofit that teaches cities to use technology more effectively. It provided not only a place to work, but an entrée to an island lifestyle he might otherwise have overlooked.

“Hawaii is a beautiful place I'd never seen before. I met people who offered to show me around,” Thompson says. One was a food writer who steered him to off-the-beaten-track local restaurants. Fujihira took him to a polo match on the island's north shore. Thompson

now keeps in touch with friends he made at BoxJelly and some have visited him on trips to his home city of San Francisco.

So if you can't tear yourself away from your job, maybe you should consider a workation. As these creative people prove, working almost anywhere is possible with today's technology. It's up to you to take advantage of it.

Teresa Meek is a Seattle-based freelance journalist, writer, and editor whose journalism has appeared in Newsday, the Miami Herald, the St. Petersburg Times, the Baltimore Sun, and other newspapers and magazines.



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