

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

WORKING FOR THE WEEKEND: DOWNTIME AND PERFORMANCE

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes—with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

GOAL

Use weekends to consciously promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and personal fulfillment, and encourage your team to do the same.

NANO TOOL

Gallup's [2023 State of the Global Workforce report](#) reveals that 44 percent of employees worldwide experience work-related stress, a record high for a statistic that has been rising steadily for over a decade. For American workers, that figure is [83 percent](#). The report states that while there are a number of factors affecting stress, managers in particular play a significant role in on-the-job stress levels (the Society for Human Resource Management reports that the top employee workplace stressors all involve conditions that managers can address).

The good news for the companies that acknowledge the problem is that working to prevent work-related risks to mental health, and modest spending on the treatment of common mental health issues (such as anxiety and depression), come with an outsized return: for every dollar spent, there is a return of [\\$4 in improved health and productivity](#). Yet there are a number of additional actions managers can take to help employees alleviate workplace stress that cost very little or even nothing, including encouraging the adoption of a “vacation mindset” during weekends. Instead of seeing the weekend as an opportunity to play catchup on work and housework, this mindset means you use the time to disengage from everything that feels like “work” and more fully engage in all of the other activities people enjoy—activities that promote relaxation, rejuvenation, personal fulfillment, and interpersonal connection.

Research shows that individuals who adopt this mindset—treating the weekend like a vacation—enjoy this time off more and are better equipped to recharge their batteries. They report greater happiness and overall well-being and feel refreshed and more highly motivated when they return to work on Monday.

ACTION STEPS

By embracing the concept of treating the weekend like a vacation, leaders can empower their teams to cultivate a healthier and more fulfilling approach to work-life integration. Implementing the strategies outlined in the following Action Steps can also help leaders create an organizational culture that values and prioritizes employee well-being, ultimately leading to improved morale, productivity, and retention.



- 1. Encourage boundary setting:** Encourage team members to establish clear boundaries between work and personal time, particularly during weekends. Emphasize the importance of disconnecting from work-related tasks and technology to fully immerse in leisure activities and quality time with loved ones.
- 2. Lead by example:** Model healthy work-life integration by prioritizing your own well-being and demonstrating a balanced approach to managing work and personal time. Share your experiences of implementing weekend vacation mindset practices and encourage open dialogue about the benefits with your team.
- 3. Promote flexibility:** Foster a culture of flexibility within the organization that allows employees to customize their work schedules to accommodate personal priorities and leisure activities during weekends. Empower individuals to design their own weekends to align with their unique preferences and interests.
- 4. Recognize and reward rest:** Acknowledge and celebrate individuals who prioritize self-care and relaxation during weekends. Incorporate recognition programs or incentives that reward employees for taking proactive steps to maintain a healthy work-life balance and promote well-being.
- 5. Provide resources and support:** Offer resources, such as workshops, seminars, or wellness programs, that equip employees with practical strategies for integrating leisure and relaxation into their weekends effectively. Provide access to tools and support networks that facilitate stress management and promote holistic well-being.

HOW LEADERS USE IT

Jack Jostes, CEO of a digital marketing agency, says he unplugs by turning off email, work notifications, and project management and social media apps. It allows him to recharge his batteries and gain new perspectives, insights, and ideas not only about work-life balance but even about his business (which he doesn't start applying until he is back at work).

Kelly Ann Collins, founder of digital marketing agency Vult Labs, also protects her weekend downtime through a practice of conscious unplugging. She maintains separate phones for work and personal use with the work phone containing only work contacts and relaxation and weather apps. The separation allows her to disconnect from work distractions completely and to engage fully and guilt-free in activities of her choice that recharge, fulfill, and rejuvenate.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NANO TOOL

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ABOUT NANO TOOLS

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, director of Custom Programs at Wharton Executive Education. *Nano Tools for Leaders*® is a collaboration between joint sponsors Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management. This collaboration is led by Professors Michael Useem and John Paul MacDuffie.