Preparing for vacation is hard work

By Alice Brodin Tribune Media

Tribune Media

I am proparing for a vacation, two weeks of bilss away from the day-to-day pressure of running my business, making decisions and juggling my personal and professional life under one rock Part of me can't wait, the other part doesn't think I will make it because the preparation for it is killing me.

Vacation preparation is not simple when you run a home-based business. Film for the camera and suntan lotion are minor concerns compared with letting clients know you won't be available, arranging for your phone calls and e-mail messages to be handled, planning for bill payment and invoicing while you are away, and taking care of security of your

ITEPATI

It is much simpler to plan for vacation when you work in a traditional office because you don't have to worry about who will turn on the alarm system or accept packages for you. You also don't have to think to remind your assistant to run the dishwasher every few days so the coffice and tea cups employees use in the office don't turn moldy.

If you are planning a trip this summer, my advice to you is to start preparing well ahead of time. A few weeks before you leave, write down all of the tasks you take care of without thinking about it, like pulling down shades in your office to make sure your equipment doesn't got too much sun, emptying the trash can in the bathroom employees use, and lock-

ing windows and doors at the end of the day.

To help you make your list, I will share with you some of the items on my home office preparation list. If you think of anything it have for you think of anything it have for you think of anything it have for you want to have to let people know you are out of the office for an extended period and will probably need to publicize this on your answering machine. By doing this, you create a security risk for your home and your office. We are solving the problem by having a house sitter. Another option is to have friends or family come to your house poriodically and bring in mail, turn lights on and generally create an auru of habitation in the house.

• In addition to having someone which your house, it is a good idea to have someone check your home office, take messages off of your machine so it doesn't fill up, add paper to your fax machine, collect packages before they are sent back to the sender because they cannot be delivered and handle other, office maintenance items. You can do this for a colleague; they reciprocate when you go away.

• Armage to have an automatic, response go out from your e-mail whenever someone sends you a message. The response tells people you are out of town and will return their message when you are back in the office. This is a courtesy that lets people know why you have not responded. If your e-mail provider decen't offer this service, give your password to a friend,

assistant or associate, and ask them to cut and paste a message to this effect in replies to e-mails you receive while you are away.

"To minimise the upheaval you will experience upon your return, sak a trusted associate to scan your mail for bills, checks, lotters from the internal Revenue Service and other important documents that arrive while you are away. Pay this person for their time, and have them got rid of junk mail, write checks and organize your mail so you do not come back to a huge mess.

"If you have employees in your home office, designate someone to keep the kitchen clean, get milk for coffee, empty trash cans and run the dishwasher periodically so the kitchen stays clean while you are away.

If employees need to get in to work while you are away, don't feget to give them keys. It is easy to everlook this item if you are used to being in the office whenever they arrive.

Of course, neify key client they use will be out of town. When appropriate, identify a colleague who they can call in an emergency to answer questions on projects you have already completed.

Alice Bredin is author of the "Virtual Office Survival Handbook" (John Wiley & Sont) and host of The American Express Small Business Exchange Web site http://www.mericanespress.com/www.com/ww.com/www.com/www.com/ww.com/www.com/www.com/ww.com/www.

Job anxiety creates a cycle of failure Job now, people have asked me a log destinated about how I felt about they had overlooked that fact and ask you why you didn't say anything; point to the employed are often begged in never noticed I was unemployed and how they present them never noticed I have never liked about they have they had to be one management liked about they past, but what am thing to hide it. My performance record has they had overlooked that fact and I have received excellent and ask you why you didn't say anything; point to the employment dates on your resume to when they hired me. I have never liked about the past, but what am thing to hide it.

By Lindsey Novak Tribune Media Tribune Medla
Q: This is my first year working after graduating college.
What is the most important
thing I should do in the workplace if I really care about
advancing and succeeding, no
matter where I work?

A: There are three crucial requirements and, depending on your company's culture, not necessarily in this order:

• Be smart (stay abreast in your field)

your field).

· Give 100 percent of yourself (this does not mean to be a worksholic, but rather, take your

work seriously).

• Schmooze with the "right" people. This does not mean be a snob or a superficial brown-

noser, but be smart about those with whom you associate. Employees are often "pegged" in the beginning according to how they dress, whom they befriend and how they present themselves. Once menagement selves. Once management decides what type you are, it's very hard to break out of that image, especially if it affects moving up on the ladder.

DON'T ANSWER QUESTIONS
THAT ARE NOT ASKED
Q: I was recently hired for a
great job after being fired at my
previous job for a misunderstanding. When I interviewed, no
one asked me why I left my other
job, though it was clear on my
resume that I no longer worked
for my previous employer. On the

A: If your resume showed the correct employment dates for your prior job, and you have never lied about anything, there's no reason to announce what happened there without being asked. They may have overlooked that you were let go, but fortunately, your past employer acted professionally and did nothing to destroy your reputation. Questions like, "How did it feel to say good-bye?" could apply to any type of termination.

LONER WILL HAVE TO DEAL

LONER WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH CO-WORKERS'
Q: I have been in my job for only a few months and do not get along well with my co-workers. From the first week, they openly displayed their hostility and I have had to defend every action I make - not taking lunch, not attending social functions, etc. They even criticize me at meetings, which causes supervisors to give me skeptical looks.

A: A certain amount of socializing in the workplace is important, even if your performance is outstanding. Review your introductions and beginning conversations with co-workers to see why they are so antagonistic. If only one employee reacts negatively to a new co-worker, the problem generally lies with that employee. If an entire group responds negatively, the problem may be in your ability to assimilate to the group. A: A certain amount of social-

Loners are often mistaken a Loners are often mistaken ag-arrogant, which could cavide instant dislike among co-work; ers. More people are fired due to personality clashes than incom-petence, so you may have to change your, attitude about socializing if you want to suc-ceed. If you have previously experienced difficulty socializing in a work setting, consider seek-ing counseling, groun therapy of ing counseling, group therapy of joining a group such as Toastmaster's to overcome this problem.

Having problems on the job! Write to Lindsey Novak in care of Tribute Media Services, Inc., 435 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1590, Chicago, Ili. 60611. She can also be contacted AtWorkbyLN@AOL.com

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