Move your team ahead – by putting the “breaks” on

We all know that taking a break is good for us. Christmas holidays, weekends, vacations — we love ’em and we need them.

But we also need breaks during the day. Time away from the desk, the phone, the computer, or out of the car is good for our energy, enthusiasm and effectiveness. But often we get trapped into thinking that if we’re not working we’re wasting time. Taking a break almost becomes a sign of weakness. In fact, not taking a break is a sign you might be heading for a break-down!

There is a point of “diminishing returns” in working without breaks. But we can feel like we’re letting the team down, so one way to help everyone become more effective, energetic and enthusiastic is to plan to “put the breaks on” for everyone at once.

• Schedule the time and announce it: “10:00 - 10:30 Tuesday”. Start on time even if not everyone is there (they will be next time!). And finish on time so the time spent is invested not wasted.

• Attract people to the break. Let them know there’ll be an announcement, celebration, cake, whatever. Why not think up a crazy award — “tie of the week” or “craziest coffee cup”?

• Inject energy into the event. Maybe it’s acknowledging an achievement. But it may just be some music. A Powerpoint slide show of staff at work or play. Or bring in a masseuse for shoulder massages. It may just be laughter. But change people’s environment and help them relax.

• Repeat regularly. The world won’t go away in 20 minutes.

So, move ahead by putting on “the breaks”.

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