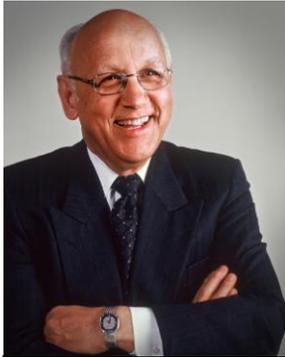




Caswell **CORPORATE COACHING** Company

Making companies better places to work - worldwide

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Bill Caswell is an experienced coach of CEOs and senior executives world-wide. He is the author of 14 books including the 12-book series *The Respect Revolution* written, by a CEO for CEOs, as a guide to getting your company to *Excellence*.

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How do I take a Break?

A message for workaholics everywhere

In my work as a coach of CEOs I often run into leaders whose hours for their work-day or work-week would make mere mortals tremble. Last month, a study with one CEO showed that her duties encompassed 182 hours (in a 168-hour week). They say they have no choice but to work relentlessly, and unfortunately, they are often right – because if they do not attend to certain details the enterprise would collapse. Long hours on the job fall within the territory of any CEO role.

Out of this chaotic environment came a repeated plea: "I am responsible for all the concerns of people at the office and I look after the issues of everyone at home. In my 24 hours-a-day, I never get any relief! How do I get a break?"

Now, as a coach, I will show that a busy person has to (a) be more efficient such as ensuring each item is handled once by them – not three or four different times, (b) make sure every CEO function is as automated as possible, (c) get help by hiring more assistants (once, I had 3 executive assistants), (d) create means to expedite follow-up of tasks, and (e) learn to invoke the three principles of delegating.¹

Realize that someone working full tilt is not going to relax by being told to take a day off to smell the roses. In fact they are likely to be more stressed out by not being allowed to address the emergencies they know are accruing every day in the office. But there are answers for taking that needed break. Firstly, the solutions lie in finding out what the individual likes to do. Secondly, set out to do it. Everyone is different of course, but I will talk about some examples I know of.

- Join a business association and begin to participate. This provides a chance to get involved in something that will be of benefit to you (so you will not feel you are wasting your time). It also might allow you to solve an industry problem that concerns your business – one that others seem unable to address (also not 'wasting' your time). Last but not least it may provide you with sales opportunities – because people always buy from people, and these people are in your same arena.
- Take a short vacation – a weekend in Las Vega or Mexico. Completely re-charge your batteries and have fun. You will come back full of vim and vigour. The \$1,000 for the ticket and hotel can be made up in one day with fresh decisions taken by you when back, more alive, at the office. (I once flew to Prague from Ottawa for a weekend to stock up on new wine glasses and crystal. Not only did I have a gas of a time, I saved thousands of \$ by purchasing at the source [Czech is synonymous with crystal] – more than the actual cost of the trip!) Take a few of these vacations every year, not just one.

¹ The three principles of delegating are: (i) Take the risk of assigning the task; (ii) Spend the time educating the newbie; (iii) Stand back and let the person do it.

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- Focus on an arts love you already have – music, dance, visual, etc. Get more passion into your life. Support a fledgling rock group, join an opera company and become surprised at the outcome. (Next month I will run a full-company seminar for a business led by a person I met during my sojourn with a choir – again more than paying for my volunteer time.)
- Get away every weekend. Build (if building can be a hobby for you) or buy a chalet or cottage and get up there every weekend. No TV because it is a huge time stealer. Yes, bring your lap top and work. But work in a fun, relaxing or beautiful environment watching deer sip from the stream before you.
- Visit distant clients. That is, travel to another city. Even though it may be all business, it never really is all business as we are continually exposed to visual stimulations of new places, people and things. You may work your butt off during the trip but you will still feel refreshed on your return because of the diversionary stimulation.
- Open a branch office in paradise. Decide where you would like to live part time that is within a reasonable distance of your office (say 5 hours of flying time). Then justify to your Board why a branch in Boola-Boola is strategically wise. If nothing else, the new branch can be the prototype for other branches you will open in more opportune locations. Then visit your Boola-Boola branch every month or so.

Now fill in your own list. You can relax your way. There is no excuse.

Bill