

Five Ways to Keep Your Team Humming All Summer Long

By Liz Bywater, PhD., Leadership Expert



Summertime has arrived.

If you're like many of my clients—successful [leaders](#) across the Fortune 500—you may have some mixed feelings about that. On one hand, summer brings a more relaxed pace, a reduction in daily firefighting, and an opportunity to finally get things off your incredibly full plate. On the other hand, you may find it challenging to compete with your team's vacation schedules, personal commitments, and ever-so-slightly distracted approach to the work.

Here are five ways for you to keep up the momentum, engage your team, and inspire creativity all summer long.

1. **Bring the team together for brainstorming lunches.** Pick any day of the week (but avoid Friday, when people are most likely to take off for long weekends). Then, on a weekly basis, treat your team to lunch and ask each of them to come prepared with one idea they'd like to brainstorm with the group. No formal presentations or pitches required. Just some informal, "Hey, here's something I've been thinking about. What do you think of my idea?" A relaxed and open atmosphere, conversing over some good eats, will stir creativity, allow new ideas to be fleshed out, and build a sense of camaraderie among

the team.

2. **Get your 1:1s back on track.** With fewer meetings on the calendar and less competition for your time, it's time to reprioritize 1:1 time with each of your team members. Use your meetings to discuss career plans and ambitions, identify growth opportunities, check in on your relationship, and provide real-time feedback and guidance. Ask them what they'd like to talk about. Just don't let the conversations turn into bland weekly updates that might better be delivered by email.
3. **Encourage risks.** With the pressure dialed down and timelines a bit less harried, look for places where the team can take smart risks in the pursuit of progress. Tap into the creativity you've unleashed in your weekly lunches and during your 1:1s. Find one way for each member to try something new, different, and just a bit scary. Don't let fear of failure hold the team back. Remind them, nothing remarkable has ever been accomplished without a few stumbles along the way.

Focus on priorities for the post-summer months. Identify your key goals for months ahead, make sure the team is clear on strategy, and get your resources lined up for successful implementation of new or pending projects. You'll find yourself and the team prepared to hit the ground running when the dog days of summer give way to falling leaves and cooler temps.

5. **Get out of the office!** If you're like most busy executives, you consistently prioritize work over leisure—and that can be a mistake. Don't miss the chance to take time off to decompress and recharge your batteries. Use your vacation days, do something you love, spend time with friends and family. You'll be a great role model to your team and a better leader all the way around.

About the Author: *Liz Bywater, PhD. Leadership Expert, Trusted Advisor to Fortune 500 Executives, Speaker and Author of the forthcoming book, Slow Down to Speed Up: Harnessing the Power of Pausing to Improve Leadership, Advance Your Career and Get Things Done!*