

Five Suggestions for a Merry Christmas

This month's Productivity Update is going to range a bit beyond the office, but it always helps me to keep these suggestions in mind. It's a festive, hectic time of year. I've noticed that, even though much of the busy-ness originates outside of work, the stress of getting everything done can affect everyday work. So, for what it's worth, here are a few suggestions:

- 1. Take Time for Yourself.** Shopping, gift wrapping, deadlines at work, and repeat and repeat. It's easy to get so caught up in the holiday hustle that you forget to re-charge your own batteries. A big part of the gift you give to others at this time of year is a joyful, relaxed you. So, in the midst of doing for others, take a little time for yourself. Treat yourself to what renews your energy: quiet reading time, volunteer work, or a dinner and movie. Merry Christmas from you to you.
- 2. The Office Party Isn't a Party.** It's a business event with all the tension that suggests but without an agenda, and sometimes with alcohol. What could possibly go wrong? Unfortunately, this is an excellent opportunity to over-indulge and act inappropriately. In front of your boss, your co-workers, your subordinates. This is *not* a good idea.
- 3. Don't Over-Book Yourself.** Parties, parties, parties. Shopping, shopping, shopping. Get-togethers with family and friends. Lots to do, but trying to do everything leads to stress, and stress is not joyful. Remember item #1 above, and pace yourself.
- 4. There's No Such Thing as a Perfect Christmas (Except in Memory.)** No matter how hard you try, something is bound to go wrong. The turkey for the big family dinner will be raw on the inside. Or Uncle Fred will hit the punch too hard and decide to give vent to a few long-held grievances. It wouldn't be a big family get together if something didn't go spectacularly wrong. When it does, just roll with the punches. This year's disaster will make next year's best funny story.
- 5. Give Meaningful Gifts.** Giving "stuff" is OK, as long as it is stuff the recipient really wants. Otherwise, it is just "stuff," forgotten by New Year's. Give things with meaning or purpose for the recipient. For example, one year my children (aged 9 and 11 at the time) sat down and, with a little help from their mother, each made and illustrated a list of "10 Best Things About My Dad." I still have them. Best. Gift. Ever.

None of these suggestions is new, of course, but it's easy to forget them when we get busy.

From Barbara, Amy, and me, here's hoping you have a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!