

WORKING WELL

The art of strategic breaks and genuine disconnection



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

If the benefits of daily breaks are clear, so too is the need for longer stretches of complete disengagement. Yet fully 'switching off' during annual leave remains a challenge for many. The Associated Press recently highlighted how smartphones and remote access tempt employees to check emails or attend virtual meetings from the beach or a mountain cabin.

ZARIF FAIAZ

The idea of taking a break from work may feel radical. Yet strategic pauses, whether they are micro-breaks during the workday or complete disconnection on holiday, are increasingly recognised not as indulgences, but as essential investments in productivity, creativity and well-being. Far from being a sign of weakness or lack of commitment, stepping away at the right moments has been shown to make individuals and teams more effective.

Why strategic breaks matter

Research from the Harvard Business Review emphasises that our real currency at work isn't simply time, but energy. Short, regular 'micro-breaks' help replenish focus, stave off fatigue and sustain performance over the course of the day. These pauses are most effective when they involve a genuine change of mental or physical activity, such as stretching, a brief walk or even a few minutes of mindful breathing, rather than simply scrolling through a phone.

Health-focused workplace programmes have popularised 'booster breaks', short intervals in which employees engage in activities that promote well-being, such as simple exercises or guided relaxation. These breaks have been linked to improved mood, reduced stress and, over time, lower health risks for those in sedentary roles.

Patterns also matter. Productivity-tracking

data suggests there is an optimal rhythm to work and rest: one commonly cited model advocates working intensely for around 52 minutes before taking a 17-minute break. Others suggest slightly longer cycles, such as 75 minutes of concentrated effort followed by 33 minutes of rest. The point is not that one schedule suits everyone, but that sustained high performance is better achieved through structured alternation between focus and recovery.

Vacation: escaping work begins before the outbound flight

If the benefits of daily breaks are clear, so too is the need for longer stretches of complete disengagement. Yet fully 'switching off' during annual leave remains a challenge for many. The Associated Press recently highlighted how smartphones and remote access tempt employees to check emails or attend virtual meetings from the beach or a mountain cabin. One marketing professional described missing her child's first attempts at swimming because she felt obliged to respond to a client.

The key to avoiding this trap lies in preparation and boundary-setting. Experts recommend informing colleagues and clients of your absence well in advance, activating out-of-office responses, and setting clear rules for communication - ideally, none at all. For those who feel compelled to stay informed, a single, short daily check-in may

help reduce anxiety while keeping the rest of the day free. Removing or disabling work applications from personal devices can also reduce temptation. Importantly, leadership behaviour sets the tone: when managers model true disconnection, employees are more likely to follow suit without guilt.

The deeper value of stepping away

Beyond maintaining day-to-day productivity, more extended breaks. Mini-sabbaticals and even 'adult gap years' allow people to pursue personal projects, travel, volunteer or simply rest. Those who take such breaks often report returning to work with fresh perspectives, renewed energy and greater clarity about their priorities.

There is also growing recognition that stepping away fosters qualities that are difficult to cultivate in constant motion. A reflective essay in the Financial Times framed rest not as wasted time but as fertile ground for empathy, creativity and deep thinking. This aligns with the philosophy of "slow productivity" advocated by some workplace thinkers, which encourages a focus on producing quality work at a sustainable pace rather than chasing perpetual busyness.

The science of recovery

Psychologists refer to this process as 'detachment', a mental and emotional uncoupling from work demands. Detachment allows the brain to consolidate learning, reset emotional states and replenish cognitive resources. Without it, workers risk chronic stress, reduced creativity and eventual burnout. Even brief mental respites can activate the brain's default mode network - a system associated with problem-solving, imagination and insight. It is no coincidence that solutions to stubborn problems often appear while walking, cooking or showering, rather than while staring at a computer screen.

The evidence is clear: well-timed breaks, whether short pauses during the workday or long holidays away from the office, are not luxuries, but necessities. They restore energy, improve performance, foster innovation and protect mental health. Structured rest is a discipline in itself, one that requires intention, planning and sometimes the courage to disconnect in a culture that prizes constant availability.

To work well, we must learn to value time away from our desks as much as time spent at them. The healthiest and most creative output often flows after we have given ourselves permission to truly step away. In the long run, productivity is not about working without pause, but about knowing when to stop.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

BRAC University

Research Associate
(Graphic Design and Technical Support)

Deadline: August 30

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's degree in Graphics Design, IT, CSE, Media & Communication, Business, MIS, or a related field with a CGPA of 3.5 and above. A Master's degree is preferred.

Minimum experience: N/A



Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

Senior Officer (Ranking)

Deadline: August 20

Eligibility:

🔗 Master's degree in Business, Statistics, Data Science, Education Management, or a related field with a quantitative focus.

Minimum experience: 3 years



Bengal Meat Processing Industries Ltd.

Category Manager

Deadline: August 27

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's or Master's degree in Business Administration/Marketing/Economics/Finance or a related field.

Minimum experience: 5 years



Kohinoor Chemical Company (Bangladesh) Limited

Production Officer (PO)

Deadline: August 25

Eligibility:

🔗 Masters degree in Chemistry/Applied Chemistry/Chemical Engineering from any reputed university. No third class/division in any examination.

Minimum experience: N/A



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GitHub CEO announces departure

NEXT STEP DESK

GitHub CEO Thomas Dohmke has announced that he will leave the company at the end of 2025 to launch a new venture.

In a note to staff, Dohmke said his "startup roots have begun tugging" at

him, prompting his decision to return to building something from scratch. He plans to remain for the next year to ensure a smooth handover.

Dohmke added on the note that during his tenure, GitHub's developer community grew to more than 150 million users, while its AI coding

assistant Copilot expanded to over 20 million users. GitHub will remain under Microsoft's CoreAI division, though Dohmke's successor has not yet been named.

According to a CNBC report, Dohmke's journey with Microsoft began in 2015 when it acquired

his mobile app analytics startup, HockeyApp. Three years later, Microsoft bought GitHub for \$7.5 billion, and by mid-2021, Dohmke had joined the platform as chief product officer. Within months, he replaced Nat Friedman as CEO.

LinkedIn winds down test of alternative news feed options



NEXT STEP DESK

LinkedIn appears to be scaling back its experiment with alternative feed formats, signalling the likely end of a trial that offered users new ways to navigate the professional network's home page.

The feature, available only to a select group of US members, introduced 'pills' at the top of the main feed that allowed users to toggle between three content streams: 'For You', an algorithm-driven feed; 'Following', containing updates from people the user follows; and 'News', a curated stream of business updates assembled by LinkedIn's editorial team.

The trial had been running for several months, but an updated note in LinkedIn's Help Centre now describes it as a "limited test" that has ended for some users. The company stated, "This experience is currently a test and is limited to a select group of US members only. It'll not impact feed preferences you made in settings. If you no longer see the pills at the top of your feed, it's because the feature was part of a limited test that has now ended."

While the wording leaves open the

possibility that the feature could be trialled with a different group of users, the update suggests that LinkedIn is not preparing for a wider rollout.

Social media analysts note that algorithmic feeds such as 'For You' typically drive the highest engagement, making them commercially valuable for platforms. The test appeared designed to increase visibility for LinkedIn's in-house news content, but questions remain about whether users see the platform as a destination for general business news, rather than for professional networking and commentary.

Some observers believe LinkedIn could find other ways to promote its editorial output, such as through short-form video or more prominent in-feed placement, but doubt that a separate 'News' tab would become a core part of user behaviour.

For now, the company has not announced whether the alternative feeds will return in a different form. For users who had access, the removal marks the end of a brief experiment in giving more control over the content they see on LinkedIn.

The Gen Z guide to networking

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Networking has always played a vital role in career development, but in today's competitive job market, it has become more important than ever. With limited openings and a growing pool of qualified applicants, personal connections go a long way as opportunities often arise not just from what you know, but from who knows you and, more importantly, who remembers you when the right opportunity comes along. For students and recent graduates, networking can provide access to internships, mentorship, industry insights, referrals, and even long-term career opportunities. But how do you begin building a network when you are just starting out?

Start with who you know

One of the most common misconceptions about networking is that it begins with strangers. In reality, your most valuable connections may already be part of your life. Friends from university, senior students, faculty members, and internship supervisors all form the foundation of a network you may not have realised you had. These individuals understand your background, strengths, and potential. Reaching out to them is not only easier but also more likely to result in sincere and supportive conversations.

Build a professional online presence

In today's digital-first environment, platforms like LinkedIn have become more than just job search tools as they are spaces where your work, interests, and communication style are visible to a broader audience. Creating a complete

and well-written profile, following professionals in your desired industry, and participating in relevant discussions can help you build credibility over time. Even small gestures, like commenting on a post or sharing a thoughtful perspective, can create visibility and encourage future interactions.

Keep it focused and specific

Many students and fresh graduates hesitate to reach out because they are unsure of what to say. Vague messages like "I am looking for a

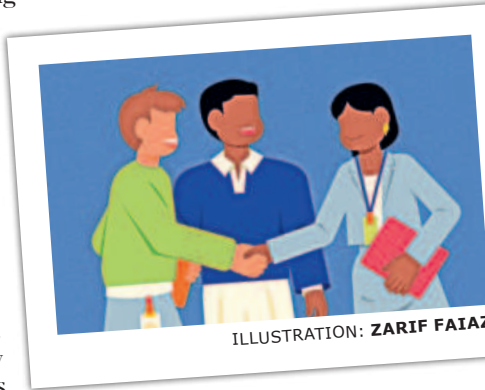


ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

job" often go unanswered. It is much more effective to communicate with clarity and specificity. For instance, saying "I am looking for entry-level roles in the supply chain, particularly FMCG companies" gives your contact a better idea of how they can help you.

Engage before you ask

One of the most common mistakes in networking is reaching out only when you need something. While asking for help is valid, relationships built solely on requests often feel transactional. People are more

inclined to support those who have shown genuine interest in their work or expertise long before any favour is asked.

Use your campus advantage

Your university affiliation is one of the most powerful assets you have. Alumni networks offer access to individuals who were once in your exact position and have navigated their way into various industries and roles. As a student, you also have access to resources that are often unavailable later in your career. Career services offices, faculty advisors, and university events offer direct channels to professionals.

Prioritise quality over quantity

In the age of social media, it is easy to assume that a large number of connections equals a strong network. However, networking is not a numbers game. The strength of your relationships matters far more than how many people you are connected to. Maintain your network over time. One of the most overlooked aspects of networking is consistency. Staying in touch with your contacts can maintain relationships and demonstrate genuine interest. A quick message congratulating someone on a promotion or checking in with a former mentor often goes a long way.

Finally, a common fear among young professionals is that they have nothing to offer in return. While it may seem like networking is about asking for favours, the most successful relationships are based on mutual value. Offering a relevant article, sharing feedback on a project, or simply expressing genuine interest in someone's work can show thoughtfulness and initiative.

"Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

