



## Become a better decision-maker

Stepping outside your regular routine may also help you become a better decision-maker. So say brothers and best-selling business authors Chip and Dan Heath who offer some pretty simple advice. If you are trying to make a decision in a business setting, they suggest asking yourself this question: "If I was replaced tomorrow and a wise successor took my place, what would he or she do?"

The Heath's say something profound happens when you see your dilemma from the outside like that.

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projects related to the business — may also be beneficial. Many corporate businesses are finding this formula equates to happier employees, which translates to a more innovative and successful business.

Case in point: Google was voted among the "best places to work" in 2013, and it boasted 2011 sales of \$37.9 billion. Google encourages creativity. The company even put rock-climbing walls and giant slides in some of its corporate office complexes. In addition, Google offers "20% time," where employees get to spend 20% of their workday working on projects they are passionate about. In fact, that's how Gmail and Google News both got started.

Similarly, 3M has a policy called the 15% rule, where staff devote 15% of work hours to their own projects.

What might your employees come up with for "new" ideas to improve and innovate your business or organization if they were given some time to devote to it, and if they were actually asked to share their input?

Given that Americans on average spend more than 2,000 hours per year at work, infusing a little fun into the process certainly can't hurt. It just might build a stronger, more resilient team.

Companies like LinkedIn, Zappos and Google also promote game time (such as for ping-pong or foosball) on the job. While these activities may seem completely unrelated to work, they are very powerful at building working relationships. Many company execs agree that employees who play together, stay together and work hard together.

For a ranch, ag business or feedlot, perhaps you want to encourage employees to join a bowling league or form a summer softball team. While it looks like fun and games, they are actually developing a strong team bond, which can be important for the business as well.



**Editor's Note:** Kindra Gordon is a freelancer and cattlewoman from Whitewood, SD.

# Take a Break

New perspective may be good for your business strategies.

by Kindra Gordon, field editor

**A**nother summer is coming to an end. Did you give yourself a summer vacation? Have you at least started planning a winter getaway?

If you're scratching your head wondering what kind of advice that is, consider new research indicating that surprising your brain every once in a while — maybe by taking a vacation — can be beneficial to enhance your innovative abilities.

Research by neuroscientist Gregory Berns at the Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta suggests our brain craves novelty — aka new and different things. However, most people work in the same place every day, which Berns points out results in thinking in certain ways.

To break that monotony, he suggests shaking up your routine, traveling or doing things you haven't done before and stimulating your brain. This suggests taking a short break can often help us return to the business refreshed and with new perspective — both for the production aspects of business and the marketing aspects. The

ideas that come forth to solve your same old problems just might surprise you.

Even taking a day — or night — off from your regular work routine can be beneficial, according to a Harvard business school professor.

Leslie Perlow, author of *Sleeping With Your Smartphone*, conducted research with executives who worked more than 65 hours a week (not counting some 20 hours spent monitoring their smartphones). She wanted to see what would happen if they took a full night off per week.

The result: Productivity did not drop; instead it increased. Perlow attributes this to the fact that they were forced to plan, prioritize and coordinate better in the work time they did have, and they had some personal downtime for themselves, which allowed them to recharge and return to work focused.

## 20% time

Giving employees a little longer leash — as in free time to work on their own ideas or

Similarly, if you are struggling with a personal decision, they suggest asking yourself: “What would I tell my best friend to do?”

The Heath’s most recent book is *Decisive: How to Make Better Choices in Life and Work*. They’ve also authored *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* and *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*.

With regard to decision-making, this brother duo also advises researching several options first. If you are buying a new laptop, look at three to five alternatives. Adding options makes us more honest about how we assess them, they say. They explain that if you are only evaluating one candidate for a job, or one vehicle that you may buy, human nature is to rationalize away

the negatives because you want it to work out. In contrast, if you compare two or three options, you will be more honest about the pros and cons.

Another tactic that the Heath brothers promote is doing a “premortem,” a process attributed to psychologist Gary Klein. To do this, you and your team imagine that you just made a decision, then you envision a year has gone by and the decision turned out to be a disaster. From this exercise you analyze what went wrong — hypothetically, of course.

Based on those possible disaster scenarios, you then work to ensure those outcomes do not occur in the real world.