

HEATHER BOULGER | INSIDE THE JOB MARKET

Summer is more than a season — it's an opportunity to recharge your batteries

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Employees benefit by resisting the urge to checking emails or responding to calls instead of taking the break they need. Truly unplugging reduces stress, improves focus and helps prevent burnout.
KLAUS VEDVELT -- GETTY IMAGES

Summer has a way of changing our perspective.

The days are longer, vacations are on the calendar, and thoughts naturally drift from the office to the beach, the mountains, or a backyard barbecue. It's a season to slow down, recharge, and spend more time with family and friends.

A few fun facts help set the stage. July is National Ice Cream Month, Americans eat an average of 15 pounds of watermelon each year, and August is the busiest travel month of the year. Here in Berkshire County, that matters — our tourism industry supports more than 8,000 local jobs and helps fuel our regional economy.

For employers, however, summer can also bring unique challenges. As the weather improves, it can be harder to keep employees engaged and energized. Fortunately, a few simple changes can make a big difference.

Encouraging employees to step outside for a walk, participate in wellness activities, or take advantage of flexible summer schedules can boost morale and productivity. Even something as simple as an occasional early Friday departure or promoting the use of earned vacation time sends a clear message: employee well-being matters.

That message is especially important because many workers aren't truly disconnecting. Nearly seven in 10 Americans report working while on vacation, checking emails or responding to calls instead of taking the break they need. While staying connected may feel responsible, it often leaves employees returning to work just as tired as when they left.

Real time away has proven benefits. It reduces stress, improves focus, and helps prevent burnout. Planning ahead by setting an out-of-office message, delegating responsibilities, and resisting the temptation to check work devices allows employees to return refreshed and ready to contribute.

Summer also brings another opportunity that shouldn't be overlooked: seasonal employment.

Whether you're a high school or college student, someone looking to supplement your income, or considering a career change, summer jobs offer much more than a paycheck. They provide valuable work experience, expand professional networks, and help build the skills employers consistently seek.

Today's workforce values communication, teamwork, customer service, leadership and attention to detail just as much as technical expertise. These "power skills" can be developed in almost any summer job — from

hospitality and retail to healthcare, manufacturing, construction and the skilled trades.

The good news is that summer employment continues to rebound, with more young people returning to work after the pandemic and employers across many industries looking for seasonal talent.

So while summer is certainly a time to enjoy everything the Berkshires has to offer, it's also a season for growth. Take the vacation. Recharge your batteries. Explore a new job or career path. Invest in developing new skills.

The warm weather won't last forever, but the experience, connections and confidence you gain this summer can benefit you long after the leaves begin to change.

To learn more about employment opportunities, training programs and career services, visit MassHireBerkshire.com or stop by the MassHire Berkshire Career Center at 160 North St. in Pittsfield.

This summer, make time not only for relaxation — but for your future.

Heather Boulger is executive director of the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board in Pittsfield.