

The Swedes have it right

I used up some leftover 2009 vacation time last week, and basically spent the week hiding under a rock.

Okay, not literally, but certainly figuratively. I hardly ventured off the farm. And dammit, it was great.

A long time ago I learned that one working in the newspaper business must 'disappear' every once in a while, to escape the pressures of the profession.

When I'm working, I generally get up at the same time, get the chores at the barn finished before I jump in the shower, grab breakfast and head off to work.

But when I'm on vacation, one would naturally think I'd sleep in a bit, lazing in bed for an extra hour. Funny as it seems, I don't usually sleep late, in spite of the fact I can.

I think it's simply knowing that I'm getting up by choice—to enjoy the day, do a few things I enjoy, or tackle some project I've been looking forward to—not because an alarm clock or work commitments have dictated that I do so.

I was recently reading about vacation time in Sweden, one of the most efficient industrial countries in the world.

Swedish workers enjoy a minimum five-week paid annual leave, after the first year of employment. Vacations are often taken so employees can have four consecutive weeks off. Many workers get 10 weeks vacation after a few years. Most vacations are taken in July, so many companies close down operations for the month. Sweden also has 12 yearly public holidays.

Ted Brown



Now, many Canadian employers would be quick to jump on me for endorsing the Swedish vacation requirements, but there's another side to the coin.

The Swedish companies also enjoy incredible efficiency from their workers, with considerably fewer sick days, absenteeism and lack of productivity.

Simply stated, a rested worker is a productive worker.

And after a week off, I can see why.

The week I was off on vacation, I probably worked harder physically than I ever would when at the office. At the end of each day, I'd drag myself into the house, almost ready to fall into bed the moment I finished supper.

But it's a 'good tired', a 'tired' that's good for the muscles, the brain and the attitude. I'd go to bed and sleep like a baby.

I think the Swedes may be on to something, recognizing the value of a well-rested and happy worker.

Will the same mind-set come to Canada? I doubt it—but it's nice to dream.

Especially when I'm puttering around home—on my own time.

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