

# Beach Blanket Bingo

Vacation season is here – you can make a fast getaway and still return to an organized office

By Jeanine Baron



**W**e all dream of summer vacation – sandy beaches, warm sunshine, romantic European villas, and a host of other exotic destinations. Then reality sets in – what a vacation really means – extra planning, packing and preparation that puts a strain on our already overscheduled lives. Consequently, the first few days of our vacation are spent recovering from the stress and frustration related to poor planning techniques. Waves of fear about the imminent return to our fast-paced home and office environments consume our remaining days of relaxation. You can, however, greatly reduce the stress and strain associated with summer travel. Here are a few simple tips to provide a smoother transition during the summer vacation season:

**Chart a plan to your destination** – Commit 15 minutes each day to planning your trip. Gather maps, determine the route you will use to get to your destination, select sites to visit while on vacation, and prepare a *flexible* agenda for ideal sightseeing, shopping and eating at special restaurants.

**Create templates for packing** – Each time you travel, create a standard packing form. You will need a different one for cold weather travel, one for your beach trips, overseas travel, etc. Keep a list of things to do before traveling, such as stopping the newspaper and mail, putting the lights on timers, or asking someone to take care of your pets or water your plants. Keep these templates in your “travel arrangements” file, and a copy in your luggage for easy retrieval.

**Use electronic mail tools to keep you organized** – A recent study says that the

average office worker now spends about two hours a day dealing with e-mail, and that most don't use the sorting tools their e-mail programs provide to ease the burden. Most e-mail programs have an auto-reply tool that will inform senders that you are out of the office and when you are expected to return. You can also sort your e-mail into categories *now* so that, even while you are away, incoming e-mail is automatically forwarded to specific folders. This allows you to prioritize responses upon your return.

**Put systems in place now!** – Organize your office and develop information systems now, before you leave for vacation. Develop rou-

ties for co-workers while you are away. Place file folders where they can store incoming mail and memos during your absence.

**Protect your work** – Back up all digital files before you leave for vacation. Eliminate the possibility of losing weeks of work you thought was securely “saved.”

*Jeanine Baron is the Principal/ Founder of Streamliners, Inc., providing organization solutions, and a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers. Reach her at 215.616.2660 or via e-mail at streamliners@att.net.*

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