



# The manager's annual leave checklist:

## Preparing to switch off



Taking time away from work is essential for recharging, but for managers, truly switching off can feel like a challenge. Preparing well in advance gives you the confidence that everything is under control, your team is supported, and your projects will continue smoothly in your absence. This checklist is designed to help you make that transition seamless, so you can enjoy a genuinely restorative break.

Use the following steps in the weeks and days leading up to your annual leave to ensure your team is empowered, your work is covered, and you can switch off fully knowing you've set everyone up for success.

### Team preparation

#### Communicate dates early

Have you let your team know the exact dates you'll be away as soon as they're confirmed? This gives everyone time to plan, reprioritise, and adjust workloads where needed.

#### Delegate decision-making

Make sure you assign clear ownership for key decisions that may arise while you're away. Giving people explicit authority helps them move forward confidently and prevents unnecessary bottlenecks.

#### Review upcoming deadlines

Look ahead to any deliverables, meetings, or milestones scheduled during your absence and if needs be, shift timelines or redistribute responsibilities to keep work flowing.

#### Host a pre-leave catch-up

Have you booked a short meeting with your team a day or two before you go? This is their chance to clarify anything, raise concerns, and confirm responsibilities before you switch off.

### Work handover

#### Create a comprehensive handover document

Ensure you outline all ongoing projects, current statuses, upcoming deadlines, and any risks or blockers to be aware of. Include links to key files and contacts to keep everything accessible.

## Nominate a primary point of contact

Have you chosen a trusted colleague or peer manager to act as the main point of escalation in an emergency? Make sure your team knows who this is and what situations warrant their involvement.

## Brief your cover thoroughly

Don't forget to walk your nominated cover through the handover in detail. Talk through nuances, potential issues, and any important stakeholder relationships they'll need to maintain or manage.

## Process outstanding approvals

Make sure you sign off anything time sensitive, such as expenses, holiday requests, timesheets, or project approvals, so your team isn't left waiting while you're offline.

## Communication plan

### Set a clear out-of-office (OOO) message

Write an OOO that includes your dates, alternative contacts, and any information people might need in your absence. Be explicit that you won't be checking emails.

### Notify key stakeholders

Have you informed important clients, suppliers, or partners about your leave and introduced them to the colleague who will be supporting them while you're away?

## Personal preparation

### Block out your return morning

Keep the first half-day back meeting free. This gives you time to ease in, review emails, and get up to speed before rejoining the flow of work.

### Disable notifications

Don't forget to turn off work notifications on your phone and personal devices. Reducing digital noise makes it easier to disconnect fully.

### Clear your workspace

Have a tidy up of your desk, whether in the office or at home. Returning to a calm, organised environment helps reduce the overwhelm of post-holiday catch-up.

### Commit to disconnecting

Most importantly, make a conscious commitment to yourself to truly switch off. You've prepared your team, created clarity, and put strong plans in place. Now your job is to rest.