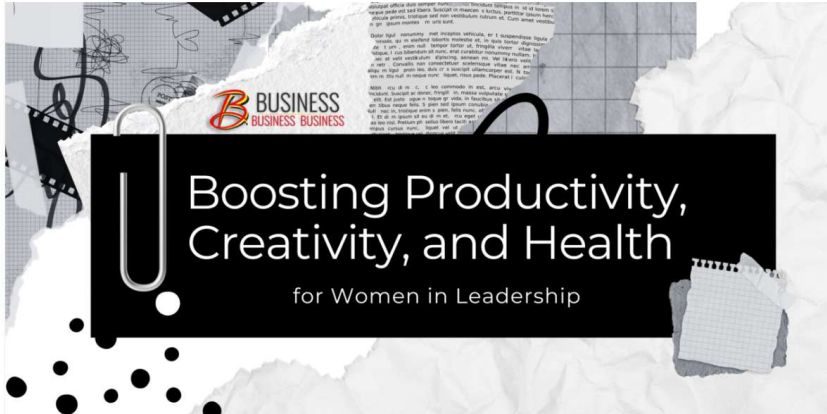


BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY, CREATIVITY, AND HEALTH FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Posted by Lorraine Allanson | Health and Business, Leadership, Learn Magazine, Productivity | ★★★★★



In today's business world, women in senior roles and business ownership often face relentless demands. From leading teams and managing projects to balancing personal commitments, it can feel like there's never a moment to pause.

Yet, research and experience show that stepping away—even briefly—is not just a luxury but a necessity for maintaining peak performance and overall well-being.

Here's why short breaks are essential and how they can transform your productivity, creativity, and health.

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WHY PRODUCTIVITY NEEDS PAUSES

It might seem counterintuitive, but working non-stop can actually hinder your productivity. The human brain isn't designed to sustain intense focus for hours on end.

Studies have shown that taking regular short breaks can:

- Combat decision fatigue: Senior roles often involve a constant stream of decisions. Breaks give your brain a chance to recharge, ensuring clearer and more effective choices.
- Enhance focus: Pausing for just 5-10 minutes can help you return to tasks with renewed concentration and efficiency.
- Boost energy levels: A brief step away from your desk can prevent the mid-afternoon slump, keeping you energised and proactive.

For women juggling high-stakes responsibilities, these moments of reprieve can make the difference between merely surviving the day and thriving within it.

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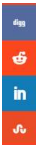
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UNLOCKING CREATIVITY THROUGH REST

Innovation and problem-solving are key components of leadership, but creativity doesn't thrive under constant pressure.

Short breaks offer the mental space needed to:

- Foster new perspectives: Stepping away from a challenging task allows your subconscious mind to process information, often leading to breakthrough ideas.
- Encourage divergent thinking: Activities like a quick walk or a chat with a colleague can inspire fresh approaches and out-of-the-box solutions.
- Reduce mental blocks: When you're stuck on a problem, a brief distraction can help reset your mind, clearing the path for creative thinking.

Many of the world's most successful leaders swear by this approach. Think of it as planting seeds during your break—when you return, those seeds may have blossomed into innovative ideas.

PRIORITISING HEALTH FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

As women in senior roles, your health is a crucial asset. Chronic stress and long working hours can take a toll on both physical and mental well-being.

Incorporating short breaks into your routine can:

- Lower stress levels: Even a few minutes of deep breathing or mindfulness can significantly reduce cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone.
- Improve posture and mobility: Standing, stretching, or walking during breaks helps counteract the negative effects of prolonged sitting.
- Enhance overall resilience: Regular breaks support better sleep patterns, immunity, and mood stability, ensuring you're equipped to handle life's demands.

Remember, self-care isn't selfish. By prioritising your health, you're not only benefiting yourself but also setting a positive example for your team.

TAKING 2-3 DAY BREAKS IN NATURE

While short daily breaks are invaluable, there is immense power in taking extended breaks of 2-3 days away from the office, particularly to quiet locations surrounded by nature.

Such retreats can:

- Provide deep mental rejuvenation: A change of scenery, especially in natural environments, helps you disconnect from daily stresses and return with a refreshed perspective.
- Enhance creativity and problem-solving: Time spent in nature has been shown to boost creative thinking and cognitive function, making it easier to tackle complex challenges upon your return.
- Rebalance work-life priorities: Stepping away from the office allows you to reflect on your goals and values, ensuring your work aligns with your broader vision.
- Support physical health: Activities like hiking, yoga, or simply enjoying fresh air and natural light can improve physical well-being and lower stress levels.

Consider planning a getaway to a secluded cabin, a coastal retreat, or a quiet countryside location. Use this time to disconnect from technology, immerse yourself in the natural world, and truly unwind. You'll return feeling recharged, inspired, and ready to lead with renewed clarity and purpose.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING BREAKS INTO YOUR DAY






Incorporating breaks into a busy schedule requires intention and planning.

Here are some actionable tips:

- Adopt the Pomodoro Technique: Work for 25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break. This method has been shown to boost focus and prevent burnout.
- Schedule micro-breaks: Block out time in your calendar for 10-15 minute pauses throughout the day, treating them as non-negotiable appointments.
- Step outside: Fresh air and natural light can work wonders for your mood and energy levels. Even a short walk around the block can be rejuvenating.
- Engage in mindful activities: Use your break to practise mindfulness, journal, or listen to calming music—whatever helps you disconnect and reset.
- Leverage technology: Apps like Focus@Will or Headspace can guide you through productive breaks tailored to your needs.

OVERCOMING THE GUILT OF TAKING BREAKS

For many women in leadership, taking breaks can feel indulgent or even irresponsible. However, it's crucial to reframe this mindset. Breaks are not a sign of weakness or inefficiency; they are an investment in your

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performance and well-being.

Think of yourself as the captain of a ship. To navigate effectively, you need to step back, assess the horizon, and adjust your course. If you're constantly in the engine room, you'll miss opportunities and risks that are only visible from above deck.

By normalising breaks, you also empower your team to prioritise their own well-being, creating a healthier, more productive work culture.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

As a woman in a senior role, your actions set the tone for your organisation. By openly valuing and taking breaks, you demonstrate that self-care and productivity go hand in hand. Consider:

- Sharing your practices: Discuss the benefits of breaks in team meetings or one-on-ones, encouraging others to follow suit.
- Creating a supportive environment: Establish policies that promote work-life balance, such as flexible schedules or designated break areas.
- Celebrating balance: Recognise team members who model healthy habits, reinforcing their importance within your organisational culture.

Short breaks are more than just moments of rest; they are powerful tools for enhancing productivity, sparking creativity, and safeguarding your health. As a woman in business, embracing this practice can transform not only your own performance but also the culture of those you lead.

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Short breaks are more than just moments of rest; they are powerful tools for enhancing productivity, sparking creativity, and safeguarding your health. As a woman in business, embracing this practice can transform not only your own performance but also the culture of those you lead.

So, the next time you're tempted to push through exhaustion or skip a break, pause and remember: investing a few minutes in yourself can yield hours of clarity, inspiration, and resilience. After all, you're not just leading a business—you're setting the standard for a sustainable and successful way of working.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lorraine Allanson

Lorraine Allanson is the owner of Mountain Whispers – “MW” Collection. Her vision and abiding passion has been to restore and revitalise the five historic properties to their original former glory, embodying the Blue Mountains rich cultural heritage and history. The “MW” Collection – Varenna, Strawberry Patch, Leura Rose, The Gatsby and Chatelaine – has seen Lorraine offer Blue Mountains luxury retreats and escapes to visitors from around the world, with the properties of particular interest to those in high-level corporate roles.. Lorraine's work and dedication have been recognised with numerous regional and State business and hospitality awards, and she strongly believes in the benefit of relaxing and rejuvenating close to nature.

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