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1	2	4	5	9	8	3	6	7
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- 4 Want to Make Your Holidays a Little Easier?

HOLIDAY HACKS FOR THE BUSY PROFESSIONAL 4 TIPS FOR A LESS EXHAUSTING HOLIDAY SEASON

The holidays are an incredibly busy time of year. Between work and home, it can feel like there isn't enough daylight to get everything done. We have projects to complete, emails to answer, dinners to plan, gifts to buy — *and* family is coming in from out of town. Is it possible to take care of everything and not be completely exhausted by the end of it? While we can't answer that definitively, we can share a few "holiday hacks" to help you get more out of your time.

Put work aside. Give yourself blocks of time to focus on one thing at a time. You may be tempted to multitask, but for your mental health, don't do it. Focusing on one thing at a time produces better results (this applies equally to cooking as it does to client work) and you'll feel better through the process.

Delegate — at home! You delegate assignments at work, so why not do the same at home? Start with your immediate family and work your way out. Give everyone a task: Someone does the grocery shopping. Someone is in charge of a main course dish. Another is on side-dish duty. Others get dessert. Don't forget to assign a clean-up crew. Save yourself for the tasks you REALLY want to do.

Take frequent breaks. When you have a lot going on, frequent 5–10 minute minibreaks can go a long way in easing the mental pressure. Don't hesitate to take brain breaks throughout the day. Go for a quick walk around the building or neighborhood. Read a chapter of your book. Play a quick game on your phone.

Say no to the kitchen. When your time is precious, why spend a lot of time in the kitchen? While some find cooking a joy, others find it burdensome. If you're in the latter group, it's okay to go the boxed or prepared meal route when time is short. Boxed meals can still be prepared with love, and you can get high-quality frozen dishes or freshly prepared meals from your favorite grocery store. The time and energy you save is worth the investment.

In 2020, we have more options than ever to make life easier. So, enjoy the holidays a little more by doing the things you love and using these tips to make the most of your time and energy this season.



All I Want for Christmas Is ... a Stocking Full of Fruit? Looking Back on Our Family Holidays

Most couples bicker over things like money, politics, and where to go on their next vacation, but my wife Kaye and I butt heads about something else entirely: Christmas.

You see, even though Kaye and I both grew up in the same small town in Wisconsin, we had radically different Christmas traditions. Kaye's family consisted of farmers, so most of their traditions were focused on Christmas Eve. For example, they would always go to the Christmas Eve service at their church. While they were gone, Santa would visit and leave presents for the kids. When they got home, they opened them right away! Basically, they had Christmas a day early so they could get their farm chores done in the morning.

My family, on the other hand, weren't farmers. When we went to bed on Christmas Eve, the space under the tree was bare. Santa came in the middle of the night, and we woke up to stuffed Christmas stockings and a pile of presents in the morning. The stockings in particular were a big deal in my family — my mother would always find a way to fill them with small gifts from "Santa," and I loved digging into mine as a kid.

As you might imagine, when Kaye and I got married almost 50 years ago, we had a heck of a time figuring out a Christmas plan for our family! Eventually, since we aren't farmers, we decided that Kaye's traditions would take a back seat to mine when it was time to raise our kids. It was

“When our daughters woke up and opened up their stockings, one discovered a banana, another pulled out an orange, and the third found an apple!”

hard for her at first, but we found ways to compromise. The saving grace was that we always had presents from the family under the tree on Christmas Eve so our kids could open one or two that night and then the rest of the gifts from Santa on Christmas Day.

By far, the most difficult thing for my wife to adjust to was the stockings. She never had a Christmas stocking growing up, and I could tell it irked her in the early days when I reminded her about the extra presents we needed. She always had to scramble to go shopping at the last minute, and sometimes the socks were a little light.

One year, Kaye forgot about the Christmas stockings completely! In a middle-of-the-night panic, she dug out some fruit from the fridge and dropped it in. When our daughters woke up and opened up their stockings, one discovered a banana, another pulled out an orange, and the third found an apple! To this day, they can't tell that story without

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... continued from Cover

laughing, and Christmas wouldn't be complete without one of them using it to poke some good-natured fun at their mother.

Of course, now that our daughters are grown up, Christmas stockings aren't as much of an issue as they used to be. We might not even see our girls this holiday season because of the pandemic. Our oldest, Shelley, is planning to stay in South Korea, where she teaches, and our youngest daughter, Monica, will be home in California for Christmas. We might still see our middle daughter, Dana, because she lives nearby in Austin, but it's hard to say. Regardless, we do have FaceTime so we'll be able to celebrate Christmas somehow!

Traveling farther afield than Austin is definitely off the table. Kaye and I already got our fill of pandemic travel this fall and decided we're done for 2020. We took a seven-day trip to Wisconsin to see my wife's sister and visit the graves of our relatives this September. It was great to spend time with our families, but there was a lot of hassle along the way.

We chose to drive rather than fly so we could enjoy the time together in the car and manage our exposure to COVID-19. That meant a lot of masks and social distancing at gas stations, spraying down hotel rooms with disinfectant, and dealing with people who weren't as careful as we were. I'll never forget the moment when, during one late-afternoon stop at a Cracker Barrel, a woman came in with a party of 12. None of them were wearing masks, and when they heard they'd have to wait for a table, they dispersed throughout the gift area, chatting and wandering without any consideration for safety or social distancing. It was uncomfortable to say the least. Then, when we got to Wisconsin, it rained the whole time we were there! Thankfully, Kaye had convinced me to pack a few pairs of long pants just in case — I would have been pretty darn cold in my shorts.

Still, even with those downsides, it was a fun trip, and I'm heading into the holidays feeling very grateful. Yes, there's a pandemic, but my health is good, my family is happy, my yard is mowed, and things will just get better from here. I hope that however you spend it, you have a very merry Christmas and a great start to the New Year!

Travis Weir

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Tactics for Making the Best Business Choices

As a business leader, you're likely well-versed in making decisions, but in the midst of a global health crisis, a political minefield, and environmental disasters, planning for the upcoming year is different territory for even the most seasoned business professionals. So, how do you make the right decisions for your 2021 plans? Start with these three steps.



NO. 1: LOOK AT THE DATA.

Data has never steered you wrong before, so don't stop using it now. However, you have to use the right data and contextualize it with today's lenses. For example, when choosing a new marketing campaign or direction, continue looking at the cost, revenue, potential errors, and risk factors. Use those to make an informed decision about which step to take. For example, is the campaign empathetic to the needs of your clients, or will it come off as tone-deaf? (**Hint:** Try split testing in 2020 before fully deploying a new campaign in 2021!)

NO. 2: DON'T GO WITH THE STATUS QUO.

"This is how we've always done it" will kill your business. Nothing is the same as it was just one year ago. The entire world has transformed, and attempting to continue with what's "normal" will only cause you to miss *what could be*. As you plan for 2021, consider the abnormal. Look at options you would have never considered doing and test their efficacy. If one fails, move on. But there's a big chance that you may stumble into something that is totally unique and completely worth your time.

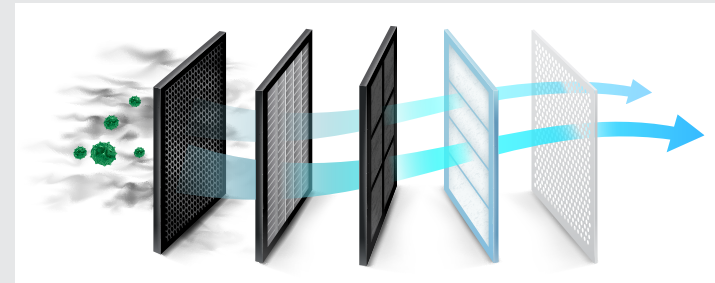
NO. 3: EMBRACE CHANGE.

You've set your course. You have your team in place. You're excited to begin. Now, get ready to change everything. Sounds exhausting, right? But it can happen. Rather than being resistant to what isn't working, admit defeat and move on. If there's one benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's that we were all given a crash course on how to adapt quickly. Take those lessons and apply them to your 2021 plan. Be prepared to admit when your original plan isn't working because staying on an ineffective course can do more harm than good.

Don't avoid it. Planning for 2021 is necessary — even if you need to change course quickly.

YOUR GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT AIR FILTER

Keep the Air in Your Building Scrubbed Clean



Are your building's energy bills going up unexpectedly? Is your HVAC system malfunctioning? If so, then old, faulty, or inefficient air filters could be to blame. We see this relatively often in commercial buildings when we're called in to investigate HVAC system issues. Filters are easy to overlook, but choosing the wrong filter or leaving an underperforming one in place can wreak havoc on your building's air quality.

AIR FILTER 101

Air filters are a vital part of every commercial building's HVAC system, along with furnaces and boilers, chillers, cooling towers, air handling units, exhaust fans, ductwork, and steam piping. Most commercial air filters are made from layers of fiberglass stretched across metal gratings. These layers trap and hold contaminants, including mold and spores, pollen, animal hair, bacteria and microorganisms, dust, lint, and more. By catching these contaminants, the filters purify the air circulating through your system, ensuring your tenants can breathe safely.

EFFICIENCY IS VITAL.

Simply having an air filter isn't enough — you need to choose the right one. Wherever possible, we recommend high-quality air filters. They come at a higher price, but their performance is worth the cost. To pick the efficient, high-quality filters out of the pack, check their Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating.

This rating system was developed by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) in 1987. It sounds complicated, but the idea is simple: The higher the MERV rating, the more efficient the filter is and the more particles it removes from the air. A filter with a MERV rating between 1 and 4, for example, will capture just 20% of particles between 3 and 10 microns in size, while a filter with a MERV rating of 16 will capture 75% of particles between .3 and 1 micron in size, as well as larger ones. That's a world of difference!

KEEP YOUR SYSTEM RUNNING SMOOTHLY.

To do their job, air filters need to be chosen well, cleaned often, and replaced regularly. If your building's filter is clogged with dust, it can increase your energy bills, cause your HVAC system to malfunction or wear out more quickly, and cause contaminants to build up in the duct work. Worst of all, it can leave your tenants breathing dirty air. If you think you're still having filter problems after a cleaning or replacement, call our team at 281-448-1100 to investigate.

SUDOKU

HAVE A LAUGH WITH TRAVIS



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