

Healthy Workforce = High Quality, High Value Rest



**everyone
home safe
every day**

Dear all,

Amongst other things, the end of this week marks the start of my summer break. I don't have plans to go away, as things have been too difficult for me at home, and it could never have worked out – but that isn't to say I'm not really relishing some time off. Importantly for me, it's less about wanting to get away from work, quite the opposite. I'm looking forward to trying to reset and refresh myself for the steady run into the early autumn, which as proud railway folk know is a fairly long natured march to new year.



**Rob Cairns,
Regional Managing Director**

Despite the urge to commit a safety message towards trips, slips and falls – I think generally you've got that, so will save you the disdain. Not because I want anyone to trip over, but rather I think if anyone does, it won't be because they missed my message asking them not to.

I do however personally find the correlation between good rest and positive wellbeing incredibly important. It is important to me to talk openly and visibly lead on the importance of having permission to regulate the need to take proper leave away from work. The rest we need, and how that rest is taken, is incredibly personal to us all – and can often be a direct reflection of our personal selves. That isn't to say I am a source of best practice; I know I'm not. That is why I think about this important topic a great deal because I know all too well it has previously been a problem for me.

It's not a straightforward landscape, as good mental health often relies on a lot of contradictory areas. I personally get mental value (wellbeing) from working as hard as I can, and giving it my 'all,' but that is not the same as saying I don't need to look after myself and rest.

In years gone by, I used to find annual leave really hard. I could have anxiety during my absence, what was I missing, what decisions were being made without my input. I would find it hard to leave my work phone alone, and often checked it whilst I was off. I would envy those people who appeared to have the ability to switch off – an art form that seemingly alluded me.

The impact would often be that I would return to work without the rest I needed. One of the tactics I've employed to some success is spotting the link between resisting the urge to not sit still (a problem for me), and forcing myself to get bored. I would traditionally seek to avoid boredom because of how negative it feels, however I now know of myself that through that sensation of boredom comes the gift or relaxation and restoration.

It's incredibly important that we never underplay the role that each and every one of our managers have in ensuring their teams are given the psychological safety for leave to be planned and respected, and there is never unspoken or implied obligation for people to neglect their need to take proper leave, and hence the rest which their health requires.

I find rest far easier these days, I think that's associated with my individual worries, needs and anxieties having developed and sophisticated over time, and I now rarely invest any energy into being needed, coupled with one of life's greatest gifts which is memory fade. I no longer remember what to worry about, and notice myself forgetting about the things I need to feed my anxieties! The gift keeps giving, as I can now comfortably re-watch the full Line of Duty trilogy each year, re-enjoying the plot in full with none of the burden of remembering what happened.

On a closing note, whilst we were united in our sadness at last week's riots, it was also difficult not to take comfort from the solidarity shown by the gatherings carried out towards the end of the week by the anti-riot protests.

Stay safe

Rob

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