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In Touch: How Much Is Too Much?

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August 07, 2006 ([Computerworld](#)) -- Bernie Schumacher might vacation in Africa this year. He'll take his BlackBerry, but he knows it might not work, and he shrugs it off. "I don't plan vacations based on access," he says.

But in this era of constant connectivity, is it really OK to be unreachable for days, even weeks?

Executive adviser Karyl K. Innis says CIOs and other executives need to think twice about being out of touch. "The culture of the company makes a difference, and the stage of the company's growth makes the difference. If the company is in the middle of a major change, then it's best to stay in touch. If it's as close to business-as-usual as possible, then it may be all right," says Innis, chairman and CEO of The Innis Co., a career management business in Dallas.

But a vacation on a technology tether may be no vacation at all, according to the Families and Work Institute. Its 2005 report, "Overwork in America: When the Way We Work Becomes Too Much," found that people who just relax on vacation are less likely to return to their jobs feeling overwhelmed by all they have to do than those who do some work while away. This held true even for those who said they feel overworked on the job. The institute polled more than 1,000 wage and salaried employees.

Similarly, Brad Harrington, executive director for the Boston College Center for Work & Family and a professor at BC's Carroll School of Management, says the center's studies have found that people who have the greatest "blur" between work and personal time are the least likely to report a healthy balance between the two.

"If we can work anytime, anywhere, that's the equivalent of working all the time, everywhere," says Harrington, co-author, with Douglas T. Hall, of *Career Management and Work/Life Integration: A Guide to Meaningful Work and a Meaningful Life*, to be published this fall by Sage Publications.

But some executives are using technology -- or the gaps in it -- to fight back, Innis says. She says she knows people who plan vacations abroad where connections are less reliable so they can say, "You won't be able to reach me," rather than risk flak for saying, "Don't call me."