



International Federation of
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Taking Time Out with Family & Friends

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As young professionals, we are all too easily caught up in our ambitious drive to further our career and can forget to take quality time out with family and friends.

We spend our childhood at school and then head to university to get the degree we need to enter our preferred engineering career. That's 18 years at pre-school and school, before another 4-5 at university, finally entering the fulltime workforce at about 22 years of age. We then work fulltime until we hit retirement age of 65.5 (which is increasing to 67 in 2023), although there are many engineers I know of who go on well over 70. So, that gives us about 45 years of work and if we then live to the average life expectancy of 80 years, about 13 years of retirement to enjoy, not much time really!



With two young children 6 months and 3 years, my wife and I decided whilst she was on maternity leave, to take 3 months off and spend time with our family and friends in Europe, via the Maldives. Not everyone gets this opportunity and I am at this point very grateful to have worked with one company long enough to make the most of my long service leave accrued after 10 years continuous service. I have also known many friends that have taken this opportunity to take a change in their careers, move companies and take the extra dollars instead of the time out. Neither is wrong as it depends on the circumstances of the individual, but I am truly grateful for this time and connecting with my close and extended family and friends.

We both have family and friends in Europe, but why the Maldives? One of my best friends was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease at age 34 and given a life expectancy of 2 to 5 years. He and his partner also have a young daughter and it was at this point that I started thinking what was important to me in life. With one month's preparation 35 family and friends descended on the Maldives to spend time with our friend and his family. The aim of this trip was simple have fun together and take him snorkelling with a Whale Shark, both of which we succeeded in.

Travelling with 2 young children has been excellent and certainly easier than expected. It has also slowed us down, which has been exactly the purpose of the trip. As we enter the full European winter, as a born and bred Australian, I am thankful we are not expecting the 'big freeze' of last years -30°C, and hoping for my first white Christmas. The cultural experiences of the different countries we have visited over this festive period are something I will never forget and I look forward to enjoying many more with my extended family in the coming weeks.

Getting this balance right from day to day, week to week, is extremely difficult and I am certainly no expert in work-life balance. The only advice I have ever given anyone when asked about how to balance this is to leave the word work out and simply try to get your life balance right. Work is part of life not a separated part that makes it stand out in importance more than anything else.

Being half way through the trip, I am now at a point where I feel I have fully relaxed and am free of the everyday pressures that I don't feel you always get away from on a 2-4-week holiday. I need to reflect more on this time once we have completed our trip, but at the moment regardless of how ambitious I have been and continue to be in my career, I want to be able to do this again somehow before retirement, maybe twice. The time with my children alone is priceless. Going back to work after this break, I know I will be as motivated as ever, but refreshed and positive about life.

I would like to encourage all young professionals to take time to regularly reflect on their life balance and make sure they enjoy the time they spend with their family and friends to the fullest. Work is an important part of life, but it's just a part not all and different for all of us!

