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BreakAway

Life Outside The Office

May 21, 2001

Unreachable Getaway

Don't send the fax, it'll just get wet.

It's a scene all too familiar to today's harried IT professional: You're at your desk answering E-mails, cell phone pressed to one ear with a client holding on your desk phone. The pager's vibrating, you haven't finished tomorrow morning's presentation, the latest operating-system upgrade is set to begin, and it's 8 p.m.--but you haven't eaten since noon.

Where can you go to escape this madness? Well, we think we know the perfect place: the ocean floor. Scuba diving is wonderful recreation and exercise for anyone interested in catching a glimpse of the magnificent underwater world while leaving the world above.

Since diving involves using life support to enter an alien world, the diver must concentrate on the tasks at hand (so forget about work!). Once under water, the reef's beauty instantly captivates and thoughts of IT fade. Stress melts away, and the diver, hearing only his or her rhythmic breathing, becomes absorbed in the aquatic world. For an hour or more, contact with life above is severed.

Compared with the ever-encroaching online, wireless world, where you're presumed to be instantly reachable, the underwater world is a haven. Neither of us has ever received an E-mail under water.

The best way to get started is to take a course at a local dive shop or YMCA. Through a series of classroom and pool sessions, you'll learn the equipment and techniques to be safe. These courses last about four weeks and result in a scuba-diving certification. Some tropical resorts offer "resort courses," which are generally four-hour sessions that introduce you to diving and permit you to be taken on a guided tour of the reef while accompanied by a trained diver. This is a great way to see if you like the sport before investing the time in true certification. Equipment can be expensive, but you can rent gear for the day.



We recently returned from a shark diving expedition in the Bahamas. On a particularly harrowing day at the office, a colleague approached and asked how we remain so calm. "We've just returned from a hair-raising dive with sharks," we answered with a smile. "How can today's pressure be more anxiety-provoking than being face to face with a school of reef sharks?"


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So, take time from the bustle of today's IT world to visit a place that will captivate you for years. Strap on a tank and take the plunge!

Michael Salvarezza is an IT director; Christopher P. Weaver is a programmer analyst and Web applications administrator. The two New Yorkers have been diving for 22 years.

Share your ultimate IT escape at informationweek.com/forum/IWKForum. ■



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