

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Attendees at First-Ever ‘Vacation Commitment Summit’ Vow to Reduce over 400 million Unused Vacation Days by 20% in Two Years**

#### Attendees ask American Companies to Step Up and Do Their Part

New York – June 18, 2015 – Nationwide efforts to improve worker health and productivity by ending the current epidemic of being a “Vacation Starved Society” were strengthened at the first-ever *Vacation Commitment Summit*, which took place Monday in New York City. The conference, presented by non-profit TakeBackYourTime.org, explored the issues and discussed the development of strategies to help encourage employees to use their vacation time and employers to create positive pro-vacation environments.

Attendees, which included corporate leaders, academics, work-life balance experts, human resources executives and media, ended the day by declaring to work together to advance the goal of reducing the amount of paid vacation days left on the table by 20 percent, or 80 million days, in the next two years. According to the United States Travel and Tourism Association, there were 429 million paid vacation days forfeited annually in 2013.

Work-life balance expert Joe Robinson of “Work to Live” reported on the adverse effects employees experience as a result of not taking time off. According to Robinson, “stress undermines intellect and is the cause of 40 percent of employee turnover – all at a cost of \$400 billion to U.S. businesses.” Kenneth Matos of the Families and Work Institute shared research from the National Study of the Changing Workforce that showed a sharp increase in employee “time famine.” Growing numbers of workers claim they don’t have enough time to spend with their kids, spouses/partners, or by themselves.

“This issue is a major concern for a variety of reasons,” said John de Graaf, founder of Take Back Your Time. “Not just pertaining to work productivity, which is an issue in and of itself, but also to personal happiness and fulfillment, which means that the backbone of the American public is deteriorating because we are not taking regular vacations.”

Speakers included industry thought leaders from companies with progressive vacation policies: Susan Kunreuther, MasterCard’s Executive Vice President—Global Total Rewards and M&A; and, Laurie Brednich, Director, Employee Benefits for Go Daddy. Both shared information about the tangible rewards of their commitment to forward-thinking vacation policies that encourage employees to take the time they need to refresh, recharge and rejuvenate. Other speakers included:

- Peter Shankman, Marketing & Customer Service Futurist and Author
- Gary Oster, Executive Vice President-Member Services & Managing Director-Project: Time Off. U.S. Travel Association
- Camille Hoheb, Founder & Managing Director, Wellness Tourism Worldwide
- Dr. Leigh Vinocur, Physician and Spokesperson for American College of Emergency Physicians

Executives from U.S. Travel presented new research correlating the “no vacation nation” epidemic and internal corporate communication. Research conducted by, [Project: Time Off](#), a data-driven initiative that looks at the personal+ business benefits of taking earned time off, entitled “The Mind of the Manager: What Your Boss Really Thinks About Vacation” revealed that a large percentage of managers do not effectively communicate their support of employees taking vacation.

The report documents that while managers credit vacation time with maintaining team energy levels, improving employee attitudes, and enhancing productivity their communication with employees fails to deliver that message. Although 69 percent of managers feel that their interactions with employees encourage taking time off, two-thirds of employees report hearing nothing, negative, or mixed messages about vacation.

“There is a tremendous gap between what managers believe and what they say in words and actions,” said Gary Oster, managing director of Project: Time Off. “As a result, employees are erring on the side of caution and not using their earned time off.”

“This conference was a big first step in ultimately changing attitudes around the critical issue of taking time off,” said de Graaf “To have the best minds in the industry and corporate America gathered in one place shows that this is an important and timely discussion.”

The Vacation Commitment Summit was sponsored in part by Diamond Resorts International®, a global leader in the hospitality and vacation ownership industry, dedicated to helping people lead healthier and happier lives by encouraging families to Stay Vacationed.™ through a committed approach to vacationing. More at [www.diamondresorts.com](http://www.diamondresorts.com). To learn more about the Vacation Commitment Initiative, please visit [www.TakeBackYourTime.org](http://www.TakeBackYourTime.org).

### **About Take Back Your Time**

Based in Seattle, Washington, Take Back Your Time is a non-profit coalition dedicated to improving lives by eliminating the epidemic of overwork in the United States and Canada. Take Back Your Time advocates for broader cultural change in the workplace and has committed to promoting policy change and cultural attitudes to improve our quality of life and influence better outcomes for all of us. To learn more, visit [www.TakeBackYourTime.org](http://www.TakeBackYourTime.org)

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