



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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## Ins and Outs Think Time

by David S. Duncan

To no one's surprise, actuaries are typically hired for their minds. Yet, how many of your days and working hours are filled with "doing" instead of "thinking?" It is easy to get trapped in a cycle of putting in long hours and running on a corporate or personal treadmill. We have continual access to voicemail, e-mail, beepers and pagers, whether in the office, at home, in the car, on the plane or in between. We are seemingly indispensable, particularly when we are constantly "doing."

I realize that we're paid to produce and to add value to those who are paying us. However, we no longer seem to be able to find a few minutes alone without feeling guilty about it. We no longer have vacations; we have down time. Incidentally, "down time" was a term that was reserved for machines that would run 24/7 for weeks on end, and this so-called down time was necessary to get a machine oiled, tuned, rested and running again. With corporate layoffs increasing, pressures building and expectations soaring, we can actually feel guilty for taking some time out—yet alone, time out to think!

There are some benefits to finding think time:

- You increase your value because you find time to actually learn something..
- It allows us to reflect on those things that are important to us in our personal and business lives so that the actions we take are consistent with our true internal values.
- Creativity increases.

- It gives us time away from an environment that seems to discourage thinking, which subsequently increases our self-esteem and self-worth.
- It adds balance and a richness to everyday living.

Some companies such as Microsoft actually give its employees official "think time" each week. As an aside, my personal think time is spent at Starbucks each morning, and I am always amazed at what can be accomplished when I have a few minutes alone to think.

If you can think of other benefits for taking time to think, I will publish your comments in the next edition of *The Stepping Stone*. Please email them to me at [dduncan@kclife.com](mailto:dduncan@kclife.com). If you do not have time to write, at least find time to think about it. □



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