

28th November 2008

Sabbaticals are back

The solution to unemployment is not working

I commute regularly to work in London and buying a ticket on South West Trains from Farnborough, my closest station, costs me £29.30 in peak travel times. Admittedly that includes the tube in London too.

Now with a bit of simple maths, that means I have to earn (at say an average 30% tax and NI rate..... too low I know) at least £45 a day before I even cover my travel cost. Travel costs for the journey to work does not fall within the definition of solely, exclusively and necessarily for the purpose of work and therefore is not tax deductible.....

So, my commuter's take is that the Government (or South West Trains) are trying to inspire us all to stop working by charging us so much to get there it becomes completely uneconomic to work in the first place.

But I read recently that the latest solution is the sabbatical. Apart from being reasonably tricky to spell, this is a great ruse..... I mean a great idea. You give up work temporarily and go and travel for a year. You might get zero pay or low pay (20% etc), but when you come back there should be a job for you. I have to emphasise the 'should' at this point.

I mentioned this to my wife and explained about the advantage of me going away to the East for a few months with nothing but a DJ and a collection of Ian Fleming novels. She wasn't impressed.

Whilst the idea of me going away wasn't too much of a problem, she felt I didn't understand that my James Bond back packing mirage was unrealistic and, running my own business, it would be slightly tricky to 'up sticks' at this stage....

Undeterred I have investigated further. I can confirm that James Bond did not go back packing (although I need to check if Sean Connery, Roger Moore, George Lazenby, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan or Daniel Craig ever went/go in a personal capacity.)

I can also confirm that firms across the land are now taking sabbaticals seriously. They are a great idea for younger staff with less commitments to worry about, who could take some time while the commercial world in a spin and go and enjoy the wider world (and perhaps areas of the world where people get on with their lives in vastly inferior economic circumstances than those to which we have become accustomed.)

Furthermore the firms are many and varied, from solicitors and estate agents through to large scale manufacturers, all are giving staff the opportunity to take sabbaticals.

But for those with families desperately needing regular cash to pay the bills and the stability that family yearns, impromptu low paid trips abroad just don't figure.

In reality the alternative is shortened working weeks, higher redundancies or business failures. So in comparison sabbatical seems so much nicer, if you can find the right mix of staff willing to go.

As is so often said on this blog, tap sabbatical into Google and see what comes out, it might be useful or interesting.

12.12.08.