

Unlocking Success

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## WORK-LIFE IMBALANCE IS A GOOD THING

How executives can improve the ebb and flow of work and life

The ultimate life challenge for most leaders is how to balance home and work — especially with today's demanding travel schedules. While we are chasing urgent business goals, we often lose sight of the truly important priorities of family, faith and friendship.

Are we doomed to workaholism as we labor to ensure our company's success? Or, the flip side: will we never advance in our corporate world if we put family first? I don't think so.



After many, many years at this, I conclude: There is no such thing as work-life balance — and that's OK. We live in a constant state of imbalance. Life and work events necessitate elasticity in our time and attention toward each. The key is to know where you are on the continuum of imbalance and to be proactive in managing through it.

On the work side, you may face weathering the largest economic

downturn in our lifetimes, managing through a merger or acquisition, developing a proposal that might double your company's size, supporting the leadership of the nonprofit board you sit on or managing through a difficult time. Each of these demands extra hours, conference calls and endless days. These are all guaranteed to impinge on your personal or family time.

Similarly, on the "life" side, you may face the sudden or prolonged illness or death of a parent or child, helping your teenager navigate a difficult time, or supporting a close friend who has encountered a tragedy. Each can demand a sudden or prolonged time away, such that you need others to cover for you. You also need to honor less-urgent but highly important things like your son's little league championship, your daughter's dance recital or a long-planned family vacation, regardless of conflicting business demands.

These tugs and pulls define the ebb and flow of our lives — and that's a good thing. It will always be this way. The key is to have strategies to deal with it successfully:

Take care of your physical and spiritual health. Commit to sleeping, eating healthy, and exercising. You must be healthy, both physically and emotionally, to be at the top of your game. If you don't take care of your body, then where will you live?

Get ahead of your schedule by prioritizing your time. It's one thing to manage tugs and pulls, but it's another to be the caboose getting whipped around because you've lost control

of your schedule. Work closely with your assistant or teammates to ensure everyone is aligned on where your time should be spent.

Know who your A-Team is at work. Tell them about both the business priorities and your personal commitments. Enroll key people who can help you seamlessly cover work needs when your attention must be elsewhere.

On the home front, recognize your unsung heroes. Devote special attention to your spouse/partner/parent who sets the tone for how your children and others understand the demands of your job and your absence from events. Recognize the huge impact your work challenges have on your unsung heroes and how hard they work to help hold everything together. You cannot thank them enough.

Remember that what we sow, we reap. So, model your support of others when their work-life imbalance shifts unexpectedly. In doing so, you are demonstrating how others can help you do the same. Because you bring passion to both your work and life, and bring your A-game to the table every day in all that you do, you will inevitably emphasize one over the other at times, thereby living fully into your work-life imbalance. But that's a good thing. Just know it's happening and plan accordingly. <<



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