

Work-Life Balance : Five Easy Steps

Dr Asma Shaw

Assistant Professor (English), Islamia College of Science & Commerce, J&K, India

ABSTRACT

At the core of an effective work-life balance definition are two key everyday concepts that are relevant to each of us. They are daily Achievement and Enjoyment, ideas almost deceptive in their simplicity.

Engraining a fuller meaning of these two concepts takes us most of the way to defining a positive Work-Life Balance. Achievement and Enjoyment answer the big question "Why?" Why do you want a better income...a new house...the kids through college...to do a good job today...to come to work at all? Picking up where traditional development and work-life balance training leaves off, Five Steps to Better Work-Life Balance boosts productivity by teaching people how to attain a higher level of Achievement & Enjoyment every day, both on and off the job.

Critical drivers of performance, engagement, accountability and commitment are taught through the application of five easy-to-use tools. These tools produce immediate positive effect on and off the job results through better individual management of project and relationship outcomes.

Keywords : *Accountability, Achievement, Balance, Enjoyment, Stress.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the worldwide quest for Work-Life Balance, very few have found an acceptable definition of the concept.

Let's first define what work-life balance is not.

Work-Life Balance does not mean an equal balance. Trying to schedule an equal number of hours for each of your various work and personal activities is usually unrewarding and unrealistic. Life is and should be more fluid than that. Your best individual work-life balance will vary over time, often on a daily basis. The right balance for you today will probably be different for you tomorrow. The right balance for you when you are single will be different when you marry, or if you have children; when you start a new career versus when you are nearing retirement.

There is no perfect, one-size fits all, balance you should be striving for. The best work-life balance is different for each of us because we all have different priorities and different lives.

However, at the core of an effective work-life balance definition are two key everyday concepts that are relevant to each of us. They are daily Achievement and Enjoyment, ideas almost deceptive in their simplicity.

Engraining a fuller meaning of these two concepts takes us most of the way to defining a positive Work-Life Balance. Achievement and Enjoyment answer the big question "Why?" Why do you want a better income...a new house...the kids through college...to do a good job today...to come to work at all?

Most of us already have a good grasp on the meaning of Achievement. But let's explore the concept of Enjoyment a little more. As part of a relevant Work-Life Balance definition, enjoyment does not *just* mean "Ha-Ha" happiness. It means Pride, Satisfaction, Happiness, Celebration, Love, A Sense of Well Being ...all the Joys of Living.

Achievement and Enjoyment are the front and back of the coin of value in life. You can't have one without the other, no more than you can have a coin with only one side. Trying to live a one sided life is why so many "Successful" people are not happy, or not nearly as happy as they should be.

You cannot get the full value from life without BOTH Achievement and Enjoyment. Focusing on Achievement and Enjoyment every day in life helps you avoid the "As Soon As Trap", the life dulling habit of planning on getting around to the joys of life and accomplishment "as soon as..."

My caffeine source is diet cola. But I'm a somewhat fussy diet cola drinker. I don't like cans or bottles, I like fountain. And there is a big difference in fountain drinks. So I know all the best fountains within a five-mile radius of my house and office. My favorite is a little convenience store near my home called Fitzgerald's.

Let's say I'm wandering into Fitzgerald's at 6 in the morning, in my pre-caffeinated state and the implausible happens. Some philosophical guy bumps into me, and says.... "Heh mister... what's your purpose in life?" Well even in that half-awake condition, I'd have an answer for him. I'd say, "You know, I just want to achieve something today and I want to enjoy something today. And if I do both of those things today, I'm going to have a pretty good day. And if I do both of those things every day, for the rest of my life... I'm going to have a pretty good life."

And I think that's true for all of us. Life will deliver the value and balance we desire ...when we are achieving and enjoying something every single day...in all the important areas that make up our lives. As a result, a good working definition of Work-Life Balance is:

Meaningful daily Achievement and Enjoyment in each of our four life quadrants: Work, Family, Friends and Self.

Ask yourself now, when was the last time you Achieved and Enjoyed something at work? What about Achieved and Enjoyed with your family; your friends? And how recently have you Achieved and Enjoyed something just for you?

Why not take 20 minutes on the way home from work and do something just for yourself? And when you get home, before you walk in the door, think about whether you want to focus on achieving or enjoying at home tonight. Then act accordingly when you do walk in the door.

At work you can create your own best Work-Life Balance by making sure you not only Achieve, but also reflect the joy of the job, and the joy of life, every day. If nobody pats you on the back today, pat yourself on the back. And help others to do the same.

When you do, when you are a person that not only gets things done, but also enjoys the doing, it attracts people to you. They want you on their team and they want to be on your team.

Simple concepts. And once you focus on them as key components of your day, they are not that hard to implement. So, make it happen, for yourself, your family and all the important individuals you care about...*every day* for the rest of your life... Achieve and Enjoy.

II.FIVE STEPS TO BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Five Steps to Better Work Life Balance is a revolutionary high-performance training program developed by one of the true pioneers in the field.

Picking up where traditional development and work-life balance training leaves off, Five Steps to Better Work-Life Balance boosts productivity by teaching people how to attain a higher level of Achievement & Enjoyment every day, both on and off the job.

Critical drivers of performance, engagement, accountability and commitment are taught through the application of five easy-to-use tools. These tools produce immediate positive on and off the job results through better individual management of project and relationship outcomes.

This unique approach to addressing corporate needs as well as individual needs creates bottom-line results for the organization and more value and life and work balance for the individual.

With this work-life balance program, performance, accountability and commitment go up, while negative attitudes, stress and turnover go down.

This produces guaranteed quicker, more practical outcomes for our managers and organization, leading to greater results and life and work balance for all involved. This proven Leadership Training accelerates the major leadership skills of our experienced and new managers including:

Relationship Management

Motivation

Project

Management

Time

Management

Thinking

Skills

Change

Management

Focusing

Skills

The result of this proven ongoing work-life balance program is a common management and organization language that multiplies many times over enterprise-wide commitment and performance. It solves the seemingly overwhelming challenge of personal change management faced by most individuals and organizations today.

Now that for tax practitioners tax season is over, it's time for at least a 10-day vacation — 14 if it was particularly stress-filled. This is the prescription from Dr. David Posen, a stress specialist and author of *Is Work Killing You?*

For Posen, chronic stress and a lack of work-life balance due to long hours and overwork go hand in hand. Conversely, healthy work-life balance is important because it is an antidote to chronic stress. "Work-life balance is not a luxury; it is a necessity for good health, good energy, good productivity. There are serious consequences when our lives get out of balance for too long."

Those consequences include exhaustion and susceptibility to colds, flus and even heart attacks and depression. From a business perspective, mental illness in the workplace, including stress-related illness, costs employers in Canada an estimated \$51 billion a year in lost productivity and healthcare expenses.

The good news: we can handle short, confined periods of increased stress, particularly if our lives are in balance during the time leading up to these intense periods. "Now that tax season is over, it's time to think about how you can better manage yourself through the noncrunch time so that you feel better, operate more efficiently and store up energy for the next crunch," says Posen. Here he presents five healthy habits essential to achieving work-life balance.

III. IMPLEMENT TIME-OUTS

People should learn from athletes and take regular time-outs. These include mini-breaks during the day to go for a walk, breathe or stretch; midi-breaks throughout the week to do leisure activities you enjoy; and maxi-breaks or vacations throughout the year to decompress and re-energize. "Research from consulting firm The Energy Project shows that employees who take a break every 90 minutes experience a 30% higher level of focus than people who take one or no breaks a day, a nearly 50% greater capacity to think creatively, and a 46% higher level in health and well-being," says Posen.

IV.DO AN AUDIT ON YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM

Where are you spending your time? Is it on high-value work or is there an opportunity to prioritize, delegate and redistribute work? The same goes for your team.

V.MONITOR AND DISCOURAGE LONG HOURS

“Research shows that the optimum number of work hours per week is 40. Working more than 50 hours a week starts to become counterproductive because people make mistakes, find it harder to concentrate and take longer to do things,” says Posen. “Make sure staffing levels are appropriate in order to ensure you and your team are not overwhelmed.”

VI.SET BOUNDARIES

Don't take on more work than you can handle. “A lot of us are pleasers. There are times when you have to say no,” says Posen. “Incentivize your clients to not leave things to the last minute. For example, add a surcharge if the majority of paperwork isn't in by a given day.”

VII.STOP MULTITASKING

A lot of people try to do more than one thing at a time, which is inefficient. “Multitasking is physiologically impossible because in any given instant, you can only pay attention to one thing. It leads to mistakes,” says Posen.

Finally, Posen suggests extending these habits to home. “Limit your technology use at home. Don't overschedule yourself or your kids and have a range of enjoyable leisure activities,” he says. “Build that repertoire. Make your nonwork life a source of pleasure and respite.”

Whether you are a senior executive, HR manager or individual employee, the *Five Steps to Better Work-Life Balance* will deliver measurable improvements in productivity and life and work balance, providing a significant return on your investment.

Work-life balance is not a luxury; it is an antidote to chronic stress and a necessity for good productivity.

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