



### My Work/Life Balance Lessons

By Mary Mahany

Because I'm relatively young, still single, and don't have children yet, my work-life balance issues might seem less complicated than those of some others. But serving on Turner's work-life balance steering committee has opened my eyes not only to the issues others might be struggling with, but to how important it is for me to learn skills that will help me go home happy every day, no matter what phase of life I'm in.

This became clearer to me this July, when I took a longer vacation for the first time since my earlier summer camp days. That vacation, combined with what I've learned through the work-life balance stories of my colleagues, taught me two important lessons. First, I learned that I could go away and not be greeted by an avalanche of work or problems when I returned. Second, I discovered how good it felt to enjoy experiences outside of my job. I want those experiences to continue, whether they're in Manhattan or Athens.

All of these experiences have helped me see that I don't want work crossing into my home life. I know other people need it to help them juggle job and family responsibilities, but I need to make my home a "haven." Here are a few things I'm doing differently now to achieve this goal:

- I continue to work hard every day but when my work is done, I leave my job at the office and I go home. I don't bring my laptop home; I stop checking my Blackberry after 7 p.m. except for unusual situations.
- I communicate my needs and expectations better to my colleagues. Doing this before I went away for my vacation helped me get excellent support during my absence. It's even more important on a daily basis.
- I'm relying less on technology and more on face-to-face conversations with colleagues. This will lead to better relationships, which are essential to a good team and everyone's work-life balance.

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### Multi-Tasking vs. Multi-Peopling

Treating the people around you as "To Do's" undermines your relationships and is an ineffective way to get things done through others. People are not tasks. Focusing on people differently than tasks, will multiply your own and others productivity, and add to every relationship in important, upbeat, positive ways. Here's ways to do that. (Reading time 150 seconds)

A common strength of outstanding leaders is their ability to make you feel important when you are with them. It is not so much whether they agree with you or not. It is instead their ability, when in your presence, to really be with you. They make the most of that present moment, **that people moment**, by fully focusing on you and the topic at hand.

Conversely, when dealing with people, if you treat them as tasks and are not focused on them in the moment, then you are undermining that relationship.

Most of us shortchange present moments, and especially our people moments by worrying about the past or the future. We are so concerned about the meeting we just came from, or the one we are getting ready to go to, that we are never fully focused on who we are with and what we are doing **right now**.

And yet that is what all our lives are made up of – a constant series of right nows. The past was right now just a second ago...the future will be right now just a second from now. So if you don't make the most of your right now's, you won't have nearly as good a past, or nearly as good a future. If you are constantly shortchanging the present moment, the now, you are shortchanging your whole life.

Focusing on the moment pays dividends everyday. Two months after picking up specific focusing skills at a WorkLifeBalance's executive session, a senior VP related this highlight. "My 7 year old daughter came to me and said, 'Mommy, I'm so glad you are spending more time with me.'"

The VP's highlight was that in reality, because of her job demands during that period, she was actually spending less time with her daughter. The difference in results was, that when she was with her daughter, she was really with her...not just physically, but mentally as well. No working on her laptop, answering the cell phone or preparing dinner during the time she had set aside for her daughter. Instead of multi-tasking she fully focused on what her daughter was saying, and what they were doing together at the moment. Less time ended up not only being better time...it was perceived as more time...because it was focused time.

Every people moment you have is an opportunity to build that relationship in a positive way. Or, if you make that person less important than a task, you WILL undermine the respect, trust and confidence they have in you.

And this is very true at work.

When someone walks up to your desk and tells you they have a question, don't keep typing and say, "Yeh, what is it?" Instead you should find a stopping place, look them straight in the eye and say "Will this take long?" If the answer is "No, it will just take two minutes", then tell yourself to make him or her your person of the moment for two minutes. Give them the full attention of your eyes and ears and brain. Understand their question, give them an informed answer and say a polite good-bye. Then turn your attention back to your previous task.

## Quote from Anna Quindlen

"It is so easy to waste our lives, our days, our hours, our minutes. It is so easy to take for granted the color of our kids' eyes, the way the melody in a symphony rises and falls and disappears and rises again. It is so easy to exist instead of to live. I learned to live many years ago. Something really, really bad happened to me, something that changed my life in ways that, if I had my druthers, it would never have been changed at all. And what I learned from it is what, today, seems to be the hardest lesson of all: I learned to love the journey, not the destination. I learned that it is not a dress rehearsal, and that today is the only guarantee you get. I learned to look at all the good in the world and try to give some of it back because I believed in it, completely and utterly. And I tried to do that, in part, by telling others what I had learned. By telling them this: Consider the lilies of the field. Look at the fuzz on a baby's ear. Read in the backyard with the sun on your face. Learn to be happy. And think of life as a terminal illness, because if you do, you will live it with joy and passion as it ought to be lived."

*Anna Quindlen (b. July 8, 1952) is an American Journalist and opinion columnist whose New York Times column, Public and Private, won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1992. She has written five best-selling novels, two of which have been made into movies.*

But suppose the response to "Will this take long?" is "Yes, we probably need 20 to 30 minutes to plan this meeting." How do you, in a nice way, tell them to go away? You use the whole concept of wanting to make them the focus of your attention.

"I know planning this meeting is important. When we do it I want to be fully focused on you and the others involved. I can't take the time right now to do that because I'm committed to getting this client proposal out before lunch. Could we get together at 1 o'clock to plan the meeting?" ... "Great, I'll see you then."

Now, before you turn your attention back to what you were working on, make sure you record in your calendar the 1 o'clock meeting, so it doesn't fall through the cracks. Otherwise, if you don't keep the appointment, you lose credibility and they will camp out at your doorstep the next time.

Your people moments are not just Face-to-Face. What about the phone? Can you tell when someone is with you or not on the phone? When you hear those keys clicking in the background don't you get a bit put off. Don't be like that yourself; don't do unrelated tasks when you have a "people" on the phone. Be focused on them, listen, learn, answer and move on. It's much more polite and much more efficient.

Remember, multi-tasking is good and productive. Multi-peopling is not. People are not tasks, and when you treat them as such you risk completely undermining the relationship.

On the other hand, focusing during these people moments will multiply the value you and others receive from every encounter in every relationship. That is why the ability to focus on people, as people, is such a powerful and productive personal and professional characteristic.

You will be amazed at the change you will see, even in the briefest encounters. Everyone you come in contact with today, tomorrow and everyday for the rest of your life, wants to be your Person of the Moment™. If you make them that, you can make them feel like kings, queens, princes and princesses. And when you don't, you make them feel like peons.

So all day today - at work - at the grocery store - at home tonight, focus. Be in the present with each person you encounter. Whether it is 2 minutes or 2 hours, make them your Person of the Moment™. The positive results of that people focus will delight you...and them. It will also greatly add to your everyday achievement, enjoyment and balance.

Jim Bird, Publisher

## E-Tip

### Adding a Spark to Any Relationship

Trying something new together can dramatically increase the positive bond in any relationship. New studies show that the novelty of new experiences triggers the dopamine system. When you think about your parents, or romantic partner or friends, there are certain unique shared experiences that warm your heart, make you smile – that are an important part of the positive bond you have together. When such new experiences are shared with someone close to you it creates a link that appears to trigger changes in the brain. With couples, the reaction mimics the early days of being in love.

So if you want to grow the warmth and affection in any relationship, make a commitment to take dance, art or cooking classes together. Take an overnight trip and stay in a place you've never been before. Do something different that you both find new and exciting. The experience and your brains will link you up in meaningful and lasting ways.