



My Work/Life Balance Lessons

By Anthony Douglas

When my two children were younger, my wife was able to work as a legal secretary from home. Later, when she returned to working in the office and my children became involved with recreational and school activities, I needed to become more involved in some of the daily scheduling details.

The changes in my personal life forced me to step back and re-evaluate my work/life balance to meet the needs of an ever-changing lifestyle. My own experiences, as well as my observations of colleagues' situations here in the Chicago office, have resulted in the formulation of some work/life balance strategies. These strategies center on the idea that the relationships created on the job can benefit us outside of work too. The basic concepts are as follows:

Accept the reality of your chosen career. Our jobs require commitment and hard work. We can't change that, but once we stop resisting it and start getting more creative about how we meet both our professional and personal obligations, life gets a little easier.

Continually re-evaluate your priorities and processes as your work and home lives change. The steps you take to achieve balance at a certain stage of your life (i.e., single, no children) aren't necessarily the same as those you should take when you are at a different stage of life (i.e., once you have a family or a position with more responsibility).

Work and home are separate entities, but look at ways to integrate them. For instance, if you have to work on a weekend, ask your spouse to join you when the work is done to enjoy a relaxing meal together. Take advantage of the company's social opportunities to spend time with your spouse or significant other. This is also an opportunity to get to know your co-workers' families, too.

Think of your job as a source of friends who expand your social network. Because you spend so much time with your co-workers, they are almost like a second family. We enjoy working with friends. It is an added benefit when you trust those people and can turn to them for help or advice.

Stay fit with the athletic opportunities offered at work. We always have people here recruiting members for recreational softball or volleyball teams. Those activities help us stay physically fit while building important connections with co-workers.

Current Issue, September 2007

Persistence and Determination

It had been a bad week for the young president of a struggling company. His largest vendor had refused to ship critical supplies unless a past due invoice was paid. His company didn't have the money for the invoice or the next week's payroll. Looking at the problems his board of directors voted to dissolve the company. Then he read five sentences that changed the future for his company and it's employees, as well as his life forever. (Reading time 120 seconds)

The vote by the board was a blow. He was also discouraged, but saw a potentially important ray of hope. The results from a newly tested sales training process looked good. It could turn things around. But he stood alone.

Disheartened he decided to spend the weekend at his father's rustic mountain cabin. When he arrived a family project awaited him, varnishing the wood floors. Not exactly what he had in mind. Unenthusiastically he spread the newspaper, put his can of varnish down and began to distractedly stroke away. His thoughts raced on the events of the week and what they meant for the future.

The repetitive work and the fumes soon slowed down his brain. His eyes aimlessly drifted to the varnish stained newspaper. There in large old English print, arranged like a poem and taking up the entire page were 5 sentences that changed his life.

His thoughts became resolve. The next week he firmly told his supplier they would never get paid if they cut him off now; there was no money. However, he had customer orders. With their next shipment he could fill them and generate the cash to pay the outstanding invoice. They agreed. With the commitment to ship from his suppliers, he went to the board – agreed to work unpaid until cash flow improved and they agreed to rescind their decision to dissolve. He put everybody available on collecting outstanding receivables.

The company shipped the orders, met payroll, paid the supplier and implemented the new sales and training system. Within a year it was profitable...within three it was a leader in its industry, and over the next 20 years created substantial returns for its investors and hundreds of new job opportunities for its employees. Here is the message that turned things around.

Press On
NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN
TAKE THE PLACE OF PERSISTENCE.
TALENT WILL NOT;
NOTHING IS MORE COMMON
THAN UNSUCCESSFUL MEN WITH TALENT.
GENIUS WILL NOT;
UNREWARDED GENIUS IS ALMOST A PROVERB.
EDUCATION ALONE WILL NOT;
THE WORLD IS FILLED WITH EDUCATED DERELICTS.
PERSISTENCE AND DETERMINATION
ALONE ARE OMNIPOTENT.

Other than these words, the only other thing on the newspaper page was a very small double arch, centered at the bottom. For some reason McDonalds had taken out a full page add to convey these thoughts – and they lay spread out on the floor when he needed them the most.

Lean on colleagues when you need to. I can take a vacation without my Blackberry because I feel confident that I can trust my co-workers to handle work-related situations in my absence. Chances are you can do that, too.

Anthony Douglas is senior project manager for the special projects division in Turner's Chicago office.

Quotes from Earl Nightingale

"All you need is the plan, the road map, and the courage to press on to your destination."

"Don't let the fear of the time it will take you to accomplish something stand in the way of your doing it. The time will pass anyway; we might just as well put that passing time to the best possible use."

"The more intensely we feel about an idea or a goal, the more assuredly the idea, buried deep in our subconscious, will direct us along the path to its fulfillment."

Earl Nightingale (1921-1989)

As a Depression-era child, Earl Nightingale was hungry for knowledge. As a young boy, he would frequent the library searching for the answer to the question, "How can a person, starting from scratch, who has no particular advantage in the world, reach the goals that he feels are important to him, and by so doing, make a major contribution to others?" His desire to find an answer, coupled with his natural curiosity about the world and its workings spurred him to become one of the world's foremost experts on success and what makes people successful.

Thirty years ago I was that young man. Since then I've never met anyone whose life did not have its share of obstacles. Our careers, our most important relationships, our physical health, all present us with occasional barriers to creating the value and balance we want. But as you know, most of life's greatest joys result from finding a way to go over, around or through them.

If you have children you know the multitude of obstacles that challenge you in trying to be the best parent you can be...but what a reward. As the child, often our parents seem to be the obstacle. And what of our personal dreams and ambitions – are there roadblocks? A bundle. What to do?

Well certainly you have to be realistic. There has to be hope and a plan.

But if that relationship is important, if the dream makes your heart stir, if the pursuit gives life meaning, then Press On.

Today that stained piece of newspaper hangs framed in my office. It's a reminder that starts my everyday and helps me through my toughest challenges. At the right time in your life it may also be helpful for you to recall that...

Persistence and Determination Alone are Omnipotent

Jim Bird, Publisher

Good Habits are Hard to Break

Just like bad habits, good habits are also hard to break. To make something a habit, you just have to focus on doing it for 30 days, and then it will be hard for you not to do. So RIGHT NOW, pick the one thing you think will improve your life most dramatically. Exercise, eat right, more Play time, start back that hobby you love, read more to improve your professional skills. Now, write a reminder to do it in your planner every other day for the next 30 days. Even though you may want to do it everyday, we recommend you write it on every other day. This prevents it from looking like print on the page that your mind just overlooks. Seeing it should be an "ah-hah" reinforcer, Think this is a good idea? Do you want to improve your life with a good habit? Then write the reminders in your planner RIGHT NOW - and it will happen.