



My Work/Life Balance Lessons

By Ken Leach

I accepted a new position in the company a couple of years ago which required my wife and me to move completely across the country. Just one of our four adult children moved with us, leaving the others – and our first grandchild – behind on the East Coast. We have a great relationship with our kids and a nice circle of friends back there, so it hasn't been easy – we really miss them.

This would probably be easier to deal with if I allowed my new job to completely consume me. But I have two people at home – a wife and a special needs son – who don't have the distractions and built-in social network that I have. So I'm working to make this transition as positive as possible for all of us. Here's what I'm doing that might help others in similar situations:

- **I do my best to be home for dinner as often as possible.** This helps my wife and son feel less isolated.

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"Work-Life Balance Defined"

Work-Life Balance Defined - What it really means!

Despite the worldwide quest for Work-Life Balance, very few have found an acceptable definition of the concept. Here's a proven definition that will positively impact your everyday value and balance starting today. (Average reading time 120 seconds)

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

Work-Life Balance does not mean an equal balance. Trying to create a set hour equivalency between various work and personal areas of your life 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 personalities and 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 lets explore a little deeper the concept of Enjoyment. As part of a relevant Work-Life Balance definition, enjoyment does not just mean "Ha-Ha" happiness. It means Pride,

- **I use technology to my advantage, but try not to let it take over my life.** I often begin checking e-mail or participate in conference calls before 5:00 a. m. when the East Coast work day starts, but I try to turn off my Blackberry and cell phone after I'm home.

- **I make sure to schedule some time off to play "tourist."** It's fun to explore together. It also helps us get to know our way around the area.

- **We make better use of our time with our children, family and friends.** When they visit or if we travel back East, we are much more organized about how we use our time so that we get the most out of every minute.

- **I never forget that it's harder for my family than it is for me.** My job could keep me busy 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But I know there are two people at home who count on me to remember that we're a family. And that's what this is all about.

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 everyday 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 Coke. And I'm a fussy Diet Coke 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.

Now let's say that I'm wandering into Fitzgerald's at 6 in the morning, in my pre-caffeinated state, and some 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 my 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.

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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.

Jim Bird, Publisher

To view the Four Life Quadrants click here: [Big Picture](#)

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