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My Work/Life Balance Lessons

By Mike Farrell

My work-life balance challenges aren't very different from those of many of my colleagues – I'm always trying to find opportunities to exercise or to spend time with my children. What makes my situation a little different, though, is that my wife is a local elected official, so she spends many evenings away from home. This means that we have to make an extra effort to spend time together, but it also means that we have to do a good job of communicating our evening commitments so that one of us is home with our daughters, who are 9 and 11.

I also coach one of my daughters' soccer teams two times a week and I'm a competitive sailor, which requires a weekly time commitment for about five months of the year.

We're busy, but we keep it all straight. Here's how we do it:

- **Use the same technology tools at work and at home.** I've encouraged my wife to use the calendar in Outlook – the program we use at Turner – so that we can send each other meeting invitations or notices quickly and easily through Outlook e-mail. This helps us stay current with each other's evening schedules, but it's also a good way for us to share information about school events, too.
- **Make time for yourself.** My colleagues know that my sailing team of eight practices every Wednesday night between April and September. I appreciate that they support this and don't schedule meetings that will keep me from getting out the door on time.
- **Protect yourself from burnout.** We could all work 24 hours a day if we wanted to, so we sometimes need to make an effort to disconnect from the job. To do this, I follow the example of a former supervisor and

Making the Most of Uncertain Times

It is a disconcerting time for many; a tumultuous economy, growing unemployment and sinking retirement accounts. Here are some ways to see past the stress that these major global issues may have put on your shoulders and reap the most of the coming holidays and New Year. (Reading time 180 seconds).

When it comes to major worries I've been advised to ask myself, "What is the worst that could happen if what is worrying me comes about?" Then mentally accept that outcome. Think about it, face it and recognize those consequences as a real possibility. Then, do everything you can do to keep the worst from happening.

By accepting the worst, and recognizing that you can and will deal with it should it occur, you free your mind from constant "what if" worrying. You've already thought through, what if. Your mind is now clear to focus on positive and productive things to make the outcome much better. This approach has served me well in many stressful times.

What is unique about today's economic questions though, is that it is almost impossible to forecast outcomes whether they be good or bad. There is so much on the macro-economic level that is out of our control and unclear. Until those things come into better focus, it is hard for each of us to predict and react in the professional and financial sides of our lives.

As I've thought about these uncertainties lately, what has repeatedly come to mind are the words of St. Francis of Assisi:

"Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

If we can't take control over the bigger economic picture, what can we control and change for the better now? We should use the uncertainty in the financial world at large as a motivator to anchor ourselves even more to other valuable areas of our life.

Celebrate Your Relationships

Why not begin with your most important relationships. The holidays are the perfect time to make them even more meaningful and secure. Take control over this holiday season to reach out to those closest to you in thoughtful, loving ways that go beyond your normal busy holiday activities. Make sure you take each person you are closest to aside, one on one, and tell them how and why they are so important to you. There may be some people in your life who are worth more to you than all the possessions you own. Do they know that? They should, and it is an anchor in your own life for you to recognize that as well.

There may be others who are "just friends", but their friendship has and does add smiles and laughter and depth to your life. Take a little time; it may just be a phone call, to tell them that and to add more of that joyous meaning to your relationship.

The holidays can also be an ideal time to create new friendships, new meaning and anchors in your life. If it is a good time in your life to do so, take control and use the season to reach out and create a new relationship.

Take Control of Your Health

Make up your mind that during this coming year you are going to get into the very best shape of your life. Commit to getting more exercise if you are not already on a workout routine. There are obviously many ways to do this. For me and many others, committing to doing some form of exercise everyday for a year was life changing.

We have all heard repeatedly the advantages of a healthier diet that is lower in fat and reduces our intake of carbohydrates and calories. There is no doubt that a healthier diet changes our physical health for the better, improves our mental attitude and turns on positive stress control genes that make us much more capable of handling life's varied challenges.

Being in the best shape of your adult life through exercise and diet could be a new anchor for you this coming year. It could also be a very positive change that could ripple improvements through the rest of your life.



leave my Blackberry on the charger in the car when I'm home. I will check it frequently in certain situations, but usually don't need to. My clients have my home number if there's an emergency.

- **Take vacations.**

We enjoy an annual Block Island sailing vacation in late June and visit family in Florida every year. We try to fit in a week at home without any plans or agenda, too, just so we can all relax. It gives us time together as a family but lets us recharge, too.

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Quote

The Best Things in Life Are Free

*When we count
our many blessings;
It isn't hard to see
that life's most valued
treasures are the
treasures that are free.*

*For it isn't what
we own or buy
that signifies
our wealth.*

*It's the special
gifts that have
no price:
our family,
friends and health.*

Author Unknown

Take More Control Over the Way You Do Your Job

In tight economic times, all organizations make efforts to do more with less. You don't have to wait on your company. Recommit yourself to taking pride in doing your job in the most positive and productive ways possible. Write out your thoughts; prioritize and review them. The good ideas that you can do, just put them in practice. Those that look sound but require the help of others, run by your boss or co-workers.

One of the best ways to not only deal with uncertainty but to move you ahead in life is to stay productively busy doing good work. Recommit yourself to enjoying doing just that.

Improve Yourself

What new thing could you learn in the next year that could make your life better professionally or personally? What additional skills could you develop, accreditation could you gain, hobby could you master that would help you achieve and enjoy more in life on an ongoing basis. If there is one that stands out to you, why not decide you will take control and make it happen over the coming months.

In the face of events that you can't control, expand your achievements in areas that are in your control. Pick something important to you, and make it happen. By doing so you are assuring that your life, in the area you have chosen, will get better and better for you over the next year.

From all of us at WorkLifeBalance.com, we wish you a celebration of smiles, love and joy over the holidays and new found interests and commitments that add to your achievements and enjoyments in the New Year.

E-Tip

Following Through on Your Decision

Deciding what you will take control of in your life is one thing, actually doing it is another. To implement your life changing choices write a reminder of your committed actions in your calendar, every other day for a month. Don't write in on every day, as you tend to overlook it like the lines on the page if you see it to routinely. If you are committed to doing something daily, record in your calendar each day that you did it. Even better is to keep a tally of how many times you have done it (exercise or eating right as examples) with the objective of being over 300 by the end of a year. As a minimum though, put your reminders in your calendar for 30 days – then at the end of the month, put the reminders in for the month coming up.