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My Work/Life Balance Lessons

By Lana Horton

As the first female employee at Turner Universal in Nashville to have a baby in the almost eight years I've been here, I feel a bit like a pioneer. It's new territory for all of us, but it seems to be going smoothly, in large part because of mutual trust.

Because the managers in my office know my work ethic and quality, Turner has allowed me to use a nontraditional approach, transitioning back to full-time work after my maternity leave by first working part-time for several months. Now that I'm full-time again, I work from home two days a week to reduce daycare costs. My supervisor and I will evaluate the arrangement after three months to make sure that the quality and quantity of my work has not diminished. However, I'm confident that we will discuss any problems as they come up.

Working from two offices – especially when one of them includes a nine-month-old colleague – requires a special approach. Here's what I've learned during this experience that helps make sure that both my family and my job get their fair share of my time and attention:

Ask for advice. I talked to a lot of parents both inside and outside of Turner to learn what did and didn't work for them when they became parents. I used what I learned to help me better determine what might work best for my husband, son, and me.

Communicate and always be professional. I wrote a proposal outlining how I'd like to handle my job after returning from maternity leave and reviewed it with my supervisor. We made adjustments until we were both comfortable with it.

Be open-minded and innovative. There were a few different ways I could use Turner's technology to

Volunteering is Good for You

I learned from a car wreck that volunteering a bit of yourself to give back to others can pay big rewards in your own life. It turns out that Karma thing is worth paying attention to. (Reading time 120 seconds)

I was in the midst of a week where, although I was smothered with major projects, I felt I had gotten nothing important done. Each day seemed to deliver a caravan of dump trucks loaded with demanding new to do's. As they tipped one unexpected load after another on me I felt suffocated and lost in the pile.

The stress of my time constraints was undermining my focus and efficiency. So I left my office to de-stress with a quick caffeine break to my local convenience store. It didn't work. On the drive back, diet soda in hand, still stressed, the traffic in front of me stopped. I was already short on time and now this!

As I cut through the parking lot of a fast food restaurant I saw the culprit - a white mini-van, rear smashed in, turned sideways in the intersection. I parked and navigated on foot through the six lanes of traffic streaming around the van.

I found a stunned woman in her mid-forties slumped over the steering wheel. Although she had no outward signs of injuries and could move, she was so shocked by the impact she could not speak.

Standing next to the van was the driver of the other car, a young red-headed woman. She was sick about causing the accident, and hyper in her phone call to reach the police. She was crying. I asked her to have an ambulance come as well.

It took about 15 minutes to calm the van driver down enough for her to speak, navigate her van from the dangerous intersection and help her into the fast food restaurant, out of the heat. Her heart was racing, her chest was tight and she was scared. She put her head on the table.

I brought her a cold drink and she seemed comforted having someone there. I stayed with her until she was safely in the ambulance that had arrived. She sincerely thanked me. Afterwards I sat with the younger driver to try and help her regain her composure and relieve a bit of her guilt.

Before I left the paramedics assured me the van driver's vitals had returned to normal, she was speaking and did not want to be taken to the hospital. I exchanged goodbyes and thanks with the younger driver, and went back to work.

When I sat down at my desk an amazing thing had happened. I was calm and relaxed. I felt good about myself. Stress had released his oppressive grip on me.

The result was that the gates opened on the mental dam that had been blocking my clear thinking. Productive answers and actions flowed. What had been a low performance, high stress week instead turned into a productive and rewarding one.

By volunteering to help out in small ways with a car wreck I personally got a big return. I became more productive on my job and happier with myself. Plus there was at least a small positive impact on two other people I wasn't responsible for or obligated to. A double-double return.



work from home part of the time. After we reviewed all the options and discussed the pros and cons, we decided that a laptop and an external hard drive would be the best way for me to access all the information I need to do my job from my home office. I sync the hard drive with the system before I leave on Wednesdays so I'm working with the most current material possible.

Make it as easy as possible for colleagues. I forward my office phone to my cell phone when I'll be working from home so that my co-workers can reach me as they always do – simply by calling my extension. They don't even have to know my cell phone to contact me on the days I'm working from home.

I am grateful that my colleagues support this more flexible working arrangement. It makes it possible for me to be the type of parent and employee I want to be.

Lana Horton is senior marketing coordinator for Turner Univesal.

Quotes

“Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.”

“Always be a little kinder than necessary.”

James M. Barrie, (1860-1937) - A Scottish dramatist & novelist best known for his character Peter Pan.

It turns out there was a physiological reason for my results. Scan testing of the brain has shown that “When we do good deeds, we're rewarded by a dopamine pulse,” says bioethicist Stephen G. Post, PhD, coauthor of *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*. “That activation releases feel-good chemicals, triggering a surge of physical energy.”

In today's economy and job culture, most of us have higher stressors and demands than we have experienced in decades. Volunteering and helping others is a way to give your brain a break and enjoyably boost your productivity and enjoyment in life.

I've found there are several very easy ways to benefit from being a volunteer.

1. Be an informal volunteer in your day to day life. Be aware and act on some of the opportunities that come along to help others out in small ways. I'm not a formal car-wreck volunteer. I was just an informal one when the opportunity presented itself. So have a volunteer attitude about the everyday opportunities that come along to help others out.

2. Formally volunteer for a community effort or cause that you can regularly engage in. In doing so you have planned a volunteer fix; one that will regularly deliver that double-double value and more. If you're not sure how to get started, think about the things that have or could have been important to you, your family or friends, had someone been there to point the way. Then find an organization that helps address that health, or mentoring or social issue that is important to you.

3. Volunteer to help one or more of your co-workers grow and develop in their job and their life. Again you can do this very informally and quietly. Select an individual or two and ask them about their life expectations and professional goals. Then be aware and look for opportunities to teach and support them. Or, volunteer more formally, to be there as a mentor, and help them develop a plan and achieve it.

Certainly taking care of your self and those you are responsible for is the primary step in making the world a better place. It insures you are part of the solution and not part of the problem. It just turns out that making an effort to help others ends up helping you take better care of yourself as well.

So find someone to be nice or caring or helpful to today. It will pay off. As the lead character in the TV comedy, My Name is Earl would say, “It's that karma thing.”

Happy Volunteering!
Jim Bird, Publisher

E-tip

Don't think you have the time to volunteer...then double duty. Ask a family member, good friend or a new friend to volunteer with you. You will get double value; enjoying your time with someone important in your life while helping others in their lives.