



### My Work/Life Balance Lessons

by Boris Carvallo

My work/life balance philosophy has made it possible for me to be the husband and father I want to be for my six children, who are between the ages of 4 and 19. My philosophy is pretty simple: I work hard when I need to and I take time for my family and things I like to do when it's appropriate.

For me to have balance, I have to like what I do, both at work and at home. I do like my job and the people I work with, so going to work is not a chore. And I look forward to going home at the right time - however that is defined on any given day.

Here's what has helped me maintain balance:

- **Prioritize what's important at the moment.**  
The rest can wait until tomorrow.
- **You make your own work conditions, so make yours positive.** I've been in some pretty dismal work environments but have always found something to enjoy. Sometimes all it takes to turn around a bad situation is taking a long lunch with colleagues once a week or socializing outside work occasionally.
- **Don't worry about anything until you have to.**  
I know what's important for the next couple of weeks and that gets my attention. If a decision doesn't need to be made for a few months, I don't spend any time thinking about it now. I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.
- **Realize that the company will survive without you.** If I've made a commitment to my family, I honor that commitment, knowing that the business will keep moving ahead even if I leave 30 minutes early.
- **Know your values and be true to them.**  
It's much easier to find the work/life fit that works for you when you know what's most important to you.

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### Avoiding the Overplanned Lifestyle

There is great value in planning and in scheduling your plan. However, it is critical to realize that some of life's greatest values come from unplanned moments. By creating unplanned time you will discover some of the most meaningful thoughts, discussions, actions and emotions life has to offer. Here's how taking a shower, having a date and a few other tips, will help you make that happen. (Reading time 120 seconds)

#### Unplanned time for you

Unplanned, do nothing time, is critical to strengthening every relationship - including - the one you have with yourself. Unplanned time alone is when you often realize and resolve some of your most important life issues. To recognize this think about what we call Shower Power.

You, like many others, may find that you often get good ideas while in the shower. Why would this be? A shower cuts you off from all outside sounds, sites and distractions. Our minds totally relax and clear out the buzz and the fuzz for just a few minutes and...wow...a good idea has a chance to get into our working memory. So to un-stress as well as to clear your mind so you can hear yourself...relax with this unplanned time. Take a long, warm shower. I mean that literally as well as figuratively. In addition to long showers:

- Have lunch by yourself occasionally
- Take a leisurely drive, bike ride, or walk in a park or in the country
- Exercise without a TV, radio or headset
- Periodically take a couple of days and go somewhere alone

The point is to just spend from a few minutes to a couple of days, with NO PLAN, just "being" with yourself. Now this unplanned time is equally critical in getting the most value from your important relationships with others as well.

#### Unplanned time with others

Our neighbor Amy, recently told us that she and her husband had decided to give themselves a "Life Style Promotion". They wanted more unplanned time to interact with each other and with their three young children. Even though they often were physically together, they didn't feel like they were being together. They were always doing some planned activities or rushing to get to and from them. They'd concluded that all this "doing" was adding unnecessary stress and taking away value from their everyday lives.

As part of their life style promotion they decided to move to a smaller community where their three children would all be going to the same school instead of three different schools. They were going to scale back on pushing their kids to participate in as many after school activities so that not as many late afternoons and evenings were booked. And they were going to have more unplanned time to just "be" with each other.

Amy's conversation focused on the reality that you build great relationships by engaging a person in both planned and unplanned ways. Most of us focus on building relationships through planned accomplishments, which is important. What is often overlooked is the critical value that is added to a relationship with a little unplanned time together.

I relate to this on a very personal level. My wife is a key member of our organization's management team. As a result she and I interact in planned productive activities for long hours most days. But there are many times, despite all this planned interaction, that I miss her. And what I miss is the just "being" together.

To build a great relationship with someone else you need that time where the focus is just on being with the other person; not on the tasks that could be done, the decisions that could be made, the phone that might ring or the e-mail that could be answered. And you don't have to move, like Amy did, to accomplish it. Here are some tips to create and enjoy the value of unplanned time in just a few hours a week.

#### **To Don'ts**

- " Don't work late everyday - Make sure you schedule at least a couple of days each week to be home for dinner with your family, friends or just yourself and stick to it.
- " Don't commit and schedule after work activities on too many days.
- " Don't answer the phone during dinner.
- " Don't do your professional OR household work after a certain time every evening.
- " Don't look at your computer after your "turn off" time.

#### **To Do's**

- " Set aside a couple hours of unplanned time each weekend with an important person in your life.
- " Have lunch during the week with a personal relationship
- " Take that leisurely drive, bike ride, walk, with key relationships
- " Make sure you know and keep in mind the difference between a "Date" and a "Meeting" and stick to it.

If you have not been having great "Dates" lately or don't recall the Date-Meeting difference please take two minutes to read our October Work/Life Balance newsletter

Unplanned time does not mean unscheduled time. You know, in your busy life, if you don't schedule it, it probably won't happen. Scheduling unplanned time may seem like a contradiction. It's not a contradiction; it's a necessity to pull this off.

Either for yourself, or someone important to you, decide when you will have some unplanned time right now. Pick out one of the items above or create your own and put it on your calendar now. Give them a call and let them know too. What about tomorrow night?

Relax, smile a lot and just "be" together.

*Jim Bird, Publisher*

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