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### **Work-Life Balance on a Mega Project**

By Mary Marks

Turner Universal's work on the Fort Knox Human Resource Center of Excellence project began in October of 2007 with a core group of people that expanded to 33 employees working on a large project with a tight timetable. We work together to get the job done on time and to help each team member attain as much work-life balance as possible.

Next month, two years after starting, we will celebrate the team's one million work hour milestone. That's a lot of hours for our team – enough to create ongoing work-life balance challenges. The project location has an impact on our balance, too – 90 percent of us live more than 250 miles away. In addition, weekend coverage is mandatory, so we travel home to be with our families only every other weekend. Not surprisingly, all this travel brings challenges: we've faced flight delays, snow storms, tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, and accidents on various interstate highways that slow down traffic.

To offset these "adventures" and reduce the stress of being away from home so much, we take care of and support each other by acting as family away from home. This can take on the form of food – we often enjoy sausage biscuits and doughnuts in the morning, deli lunches prepared by our administrative team, crock pots of stew and chili, and homemade desserts. Outside the job, we keep the family spirit going with golf, pool, boating, baseball, sailing, cookouts, holiday festivities, community service work around the winter holidays, or just dining out at a local restaurant.

We've celebrated many important milestones and happy occasions as an extended family – the births of four grandchildren, family reunions, milestone birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and vacations to far away places. There have been

### **The 4 Work-Life Balance Questions**

**Here are 4 questions to evaluate how positive a work-life balance you are creating for yourself. Asking them each day can insure you will have a more rewarding day and a more positive and productive life. (Reading time 180 seconds)**

People and projects are the keys to work-life balance. Each of us achieves important meaning, value and balance in our lives through our relationships with people. We attain the things we need and want by completing the big and small projects we undertake.

As a result, planning and evaluating your daily activities regarding people and projects is essential to your work-life balance. You can gauge your people and project progress with four simple questions.

As you ask yourself each of these work-life balance questions don't limit your answers to just work. Think about how they apply to your family, your friends and very importantly to your self interests, well-being and projects.

#### **Question 1: Did I successfully complete my important routine activities today?**

We must achieve our daily bread as a foundation for surviving and potentially prospering. Accomplishing the important routine projects and activities of our job and life are essential. But all activities that come up in the course of the day are not important.

Too often we procrastinate by distracting ourselves with unimportant busy work because it is easier to address than the priority we were working on. When that happens we are shortchanging our achievements for the day. Neglecting our most important to do's also adds stress to tomorrow because our highest priority expectations were put off.

Knowing you will be asking yourself at day's end, "Did I complete my important routine activities today?" focuses you on what they are and motivates you to complete them. And being able to answer "Yes" to that question adds a bit of a smile to your evening.

#### **Question 2: Did I complete at least one activity on a high priority bigger project to make my future better?**

You are always going to have "bigger" opportunity projects or challenges waiting in the wings to be addressed. These are major impact projects that add to or safeguard your life and future. They may address your work, career, health, finances or family.

Because your routine time is so filled with daily expectations and distractions, these "longer term" plans often get put off until you find a larger block of time to address them. Although valuable, those larger blocks of time have a way of constantly getting pushed out.

Another equally helpful and necessary way to make progress on your life-changing projects is with a small investment of time on a routine daily basis. This begins by committing to doing something every day to moving a bigger project along. 30 minutes a day is 15 hours a month, 180 hours a year. You can make a lot happen on major items in that much time.

But to get a yes answer to this big priority question on any given day your investment of time might be as short as 3 minutes. It could be a phone call to set an appointment with a doctor or a financial planner. It could be an email to seek an answer you need.



sad times as well, with the loss of family members. We've endured floods, vehicle accidents, medical procedures, and other everyday life occurrences that keep us out of work. When this happens, we depend on the other team members to pull together and cover our responsibilities. We are never disappointed.

We're fortunate that our on-site senior management and our colleagues on the corporate staff understand the importance of work-life balance and work with us to find reasonable solutions. In fact, thanks to encouragement from the very top, many of us who are parents were even able to be home for the first day of school.

In another six months, we will all be reassigned to new projects as this one closes. Even though we will begin anew, we will stay committed to supporting our assigned team members as we all work to meet the demands of our daily lives, our families, and our company.

*Mary Marks is project administrator on the Fort Knox project for Turner Universal.*

### Quotes

*"Small strokes fell great oaks."*

*"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."*

*"Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today."*

**Benjamin Franklin** (1706–1790)  
*A Founding Father of the United States of America and an author, printer, politician, and inventor.*

Early in each day, ask yourself what activity you will do to advance an important, non-routine project today. Why not find 30 minutes to: search options on the web – outline talking points for an important conversation at work or with a family member – advance your education – or write your novel.

As your day progresses the desire to answer Yes to the question, "Did I complete at least one activity on a high priority project to better my life?" can prompt you to make a call, open the file, or plan your next step. And on some days, once you start with a little step, you will continue and accomplish even more than you expected.

### **Question 3: Did I do something extra to positively improve a relationship today?**

The things we attain in life - food, shelter, transportation, toys, provide for our survival and more. But for most of us it is relationships that make our lives especially worthwhile.

Because of that, doing something a little extra each day to positively impact a relationship is an important way to make your day and your ongoing life better. Do something unexpected, or more than expected, or sooner than expected. Score a yes on the question by congratulating or thanking someone you might not have otherwise. Find a different way to tell someone you love them.

Reach out to a friend, a client, a relative you have not reached out to in some time with affection, humor or support. Take a few minutes and chat with the new person who joined your office a few months ago but you've never gotten to know. Or do a little something for yourself today, to improve your happiness or satisfaction with who you are.

### **Question 4: Did I enjoy something today?**

Remember Work-Life Balance is defined as daily Achievement and Enjoyment at Work and with Family, Friends and Yourself.

What good does it serve us to achieve the world but not experience and share the joys of the journey? Each of us needs to appreciate and celebrate the many joys of life as we check off our accomplishments.

But routine daily enjoyment doesn't come automatically to your life every day. You need to keep it in the forefront of your mind so you take advantage of and create opportunities for it. Regularly asking yourself this question will make that happen.

Each day that you can answer yes to these four questions is a day you will have successfully completed your important routine activities, moved a key project forward to better your future, positively improved a relationship and enjoyed yourself during the process. That's a day you can be proud of.

Every day you ask yourself these questions you will be prompted to do things to get "Yes" answers. And the more yeses you have each day going forward, the better your daily and lifetime work-life balance will be.

Smiles,  
*Jim Bird, Publisher*

### **E-tip**

Put a daily reminder in your calendar or on your desk to ask yourself the four work-life balance questions shown in bold in the attached article. Do this over the next week and see if it positively impacts your actions and results.