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The MYTH of Work–Life Balance

By Shawn M. Driscoll

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The MYTH of Work–Life Balance: Stop Juggling, Start Living

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As a parent and coach, I hear the same refrain on a weekly basis ... "I need more life balance". I believe the promise of work–life balance is a myth because it suggests that there is a perfectly balanced state that we can achieve, if only we were "better" time managers, or more efficient, or able to say NO more. And, while it may be true that we could improve in the way we spend our time and by saying "no" a bit more, the reality is that we'd still be struggling to keep our balance. Why? Because we are thinking of it as "keeping balance" in the first place.

Just think about what image the word "balance" conjures up for you...perhaps you think about riding a bike, balancing a ball on your finger, or maybe scales or a teeter totter. And think of what is required in each of these situations to maintain balance...sustained effort. You see, maintaining balance requires ongoing effort, a constant juggling of either side of the equation, in order to stay centered. Stop juggling or moving and things start tumbling down around you. Who has energy for that?

All the effort we are putting into getting "balance" is part of why we always feel "out of balance". We spend far too much energy juggling schedules, commitments, and interests, trying in vein to even it all out over time. As humans, we simply cannot effectively compartmentalize our lives enough to make the balance equation work.

So, what are we to do if work life–balance is a myth? I strongly advocate a work–life integration approach. Get work and life out of competition with each other—stop positioning them as polar opposites of this delicate balancing act—and start integrating the two together. A well integrated life IS balanced, and with far less struggle. The goal is to create the lifestyle you want so that it becomes nearly effortless to keep in balance. Sound too good to be true? Perhaps, but I have seen it work. It takes time, effort, and commitment to get started, but in the long run, it can make all the difference. There are 3 keys to starting to live a well integrated life:

The MYTH of Work–Life Balance

1. Orient your actions and goals around your values
2. Recognize the choice or solutions in each situation, rather than always compromising
3. Find and fix the source of any imbalance (which usually is caused by trying to compartmentalize things or control too much)

ORIENT AROUND YOUR VALUES

What is it you most value in your life? Write down the list of everything you hold dear. Not what you "should" value, but what you actually value....family, contribution, excitement, passion, purpose, creativity, mastery... whatever is "it" for you. Now choose the top three that you want to be your legacy. Once you have these selected ask yourself: "How much of my time am I spending on things that

support and embody these values?" If it's not where you want it to be, decide what you will do about it.

STOP COMPROMISING

Yes, compromise can be necessary. But most of us compromise what we want far too often and it leaves us resentful, restless, unfulfilled and out of balance. Look at those places where you recognize those feelings and root out the compromise you are making. Are you staying in a dead end job because of money when you'd rather be doing something more fulfilling? Are you taking on more than your share of household tasks so someone else (kids, spouse) can do what they enjoy? Look at each of these situations and identify the choice you are making. Compromising yourself or your values is a choice. You can start looking for solutions or continue the compromise...the choice is yours.

FIX THE SOURCE

Oftentimes we blame our circumstances for our sense of imbalance—the job we have, the people we work with, our financial needs, family obligation, etc. But, our imbalance can also come from within us. The choices we make, the beliefs we hold, and the situations we accept all contribute to our sense of being "out of balance". Take time to think about this question: What one thing, if changed or eliminated, would make the biggest difference in your life starting today? Once you have an answer, brainstorm at least 12 ways you could make that happen. Only after you have identified 12 possible solutions, may you begin to think about which to pursue, given the realities of your situation.

Work–life balance might seem like the answer in the short run, but over the long term the only way to have a sustainable, and nearly effortless inner balance is by integrating your life rather than compartmentalizing it. If you are ready to find your natural balance, start here:

3–2–1 ACTION

Write down your top 3 values and think about how your life expresses those today. How would your ideal week, month or year look if those values drove your actions and goals?

Identify 2 compromises you continue to make that contribute to your feelings of imbalance. Decide to make a different choice or find a solution for each situation.

Resolve to fix 1 cause of your imbalance before the day is done.

Shawn is a Career and Business Coach and owner of Succeed Coaching and Development, located in Metro Detroit Michigan. She has over 15 years experience in supporting people to have more productive and fulfilling work–lives and work–places. To learn more visit www.succeedcoaching.com.

The 10 Myths of Successful Selling

By John Mitchell

The 10 Myths of Successful Selling by John Mitchell

Myth #1 You should close early and often

Myth #2 Sell features to get a higher price

Myth #3 There's no methodology to selling – it's pure art

Myth #4 Objections are a sign of customer interest

Myth #5 Open questions are better than closed questions

Myth #6 You can't teach a person to sell

Myth #7 You have to understand the difference between wants and needs

Myth #8 Great products sell themselves

Myth #9 Making a benefit statement is the best way to open a sales call

Myth #10 All customers make up their minds in the first 4 minutes

Want to know more? Read the full Myths each month at our website www.inclusic.com – just go to articles & news!

John Mitchell is President and CEO of Inclusic, a company providing sales and marketing outsourcing in the UK and USA. He was a top performer in IBM sales for 5 consecutive years; Chief Marketing Officer of a Fortune 500 company; and CEO of a NASDAQ listed consulting company. John has written for the London Economist and has been guest lecturer at NYU, London Business School and Swiss Banking School.



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