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Life Balance - What to do?

Since it's the summer and many folks are taking vacations and enjoying the summer while others are struggling to fill in "back at the office", I thought it was appropriate to discuss life balance. My consulting mentor, Alan Weiss, talks quite a bit about this subject and has a monthly newsletter on the topic - "Balancing Act". There has never been a better time to take a step back and think about life balance!

I've known many exceptional people ranging from CFOs to VPs of Operations to Directors of Supply Chain & I.T. who have had to take significant pay cuts and/or had to look for new jobs. And, on the other hand, I've seen many retirees deal with what is supposed to be "retirement" and "rest" - I know my relatives want to know when the rest will start! And, to add to these complications, there are endless things to worry about ranging from nuclear crises to a dollar crisis to how to pay for the rising cost of gas. Thus, life balance is even more critical today in order to not only survive but to enjoy life.

I just returned from a driving trip with my family - not really "restful" in that I drove endless numbers of miles with many complicated family scenarios to make life entertaining; however, it was great to spend time with them. Have you ever heard anyone near death say they wished they had gone on one more business trip? Me either.

Instead, we discovered that the over 65 crowd (and me) had trouble answering questions to prove we were "better than a 5th grader". Of course, my nephew returned later to prove it isn't easy for a new 5th grader either. We also saw a bison rolling in the dirt to scratch his back. My mom particularly enjoyed the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone (although her favorite part was seeing her best friend from her youth - my Aunt Cheryl), and my dad enjoyed the parts of Yellowstone he'd never seen before (as he kept the tradition going since he went to Yellowstone with his parents, and he and my mom took us to Yellowstone when we were children and now everyone went with my nephew).

So, how do you achieve life balance? Of course I do not have all the answers but I have a few ideas to think about: 1) You have only one life. 2) People are #1. 3) Prioritize.

1. **You have only one life** - Most people try to separate their work life from their personal life, and I concede that this works for some folks; however, I've found that if I look at it as having 1 life, it is less complex and easier to enjoy. If I want to do emails from the beach (although Yellowstone does not support this idea as there is no cell or email service - good grief!), I should do that so that I can support my clients and enjoy the rest of the day. On the other hand, if I want to take off to see my best friend's son play baseball in the middle of the day, I should do that too. Life becomes much simpler with 1 life to keep track of - and enjoyable.
2. **People are #1** - Similar to what I always say about business success, people are #1 in personal success as well. It is easy to get wrapped up and lose track of those closest to you. Although it's easy to do (I often get sidetracked thinking of what's ahead and forget what's going on at the moment), what could be more important than remembering that people are #1? People can cross over between your work and personal life as well - another great reason to have 1 life. Great people are hard to find. Keep in touch and appreciate them!

3. **Prioritize** - Last but not least, remember to prioritize - an excellent way to maintain life balance. Think about what is most important to your work and personal life. Then, focus on those people, tasks etc. as your #1 priority. Sounds easy? Not! It seems easy to spend all your time on "one last" C task and never get around to your A priorities. I've found making a list, reviewing the importance and urgency of items and then sticking to priorities "works".

In today's new normal environment, life balance is a must. Similar to what airline attendants tell you about using your oxygen mask before assisting your children and others, you must take care of yourself (personally and professionally) before assisting others. Why not start now?

Lisa's Tips: Lean I.T.

A friend and colleague, Vicki Jeter, is exceptional at designing and implementing lean for I.T. - in essence, Lean I.T. is about providing value in the eyes of the customer, driving out non-value added work, and leveraging systems to achieve bottom line results. Join her Linked In "Lean I.T. Professionals Group" (<http://linkd.in/p39H4k>). A few tips I've learned from her include:

1. **Provide value** - forget about the latest and greatest technical gadgets and software fads; instead, think about how to leverage your systems to provide value for your customers.
2. **Automate** - look at each task for what is non-essential and can be automated. There are endless opportunities to automate in I.T. and for the business.
3. **Streamline** - if you cannot automate, how can you streamline the process utilizing the system?
4. **Leverage** - how can you leverage your systems to improve decision-making and drive bottom line results? Look for underutilized assets, systems, fields, functionality etc.
5. **Eliminate waste** - are you performing non-value added tasks or extra steps? Routinize maintenance tasks and systematize all tasks that do not require high skill levels so that your valuable resources focus on what's most important.

Recommended Reading

"[Running Blind](#)" by Lee Child - keeping in the theme of life balance, I thought I'd throw in a mystery book - my favorite type, as my best childhood friend knows (and hopefully reads this) since we wrote an award-winning mystery book in the 6th grade - "The Secret of the Hidden Panel". My mom read Lee Child's book out loud in the car, and it was a great mystery. You can't go wrong if you enjoy mysteries.

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