

The Quest for Work/Life Balance: 8 Steps to Take Right Now



real talent for creative companies



by Celeste Gudas

Working on a leaner corporate team? Pressures from life outside of work increasing? Everyone is juggling ever-heavier workloads and full personal lives. And each day, balance continues to elude the work/life equation. According to a recent public opinion survey conducted by research firm Strategy One, almost half of the workers polled said their company isn't doing enough to address work/life issues.

While companies decide how to support employees, individuals need not wait to take personal steps to restore equilibrium:

Ask yourself what's important to you. Balance means different things to different people, but in general, it means matching the way you spend your time to your life goals. Become aware of how each day is spent. What do you want more of? Is it more time for family, volunteering, or exercise? It may even be for work — especially if you're looking to be promoted or chosen for an exciting new project!

Set realistic goals and take small steps. Achieving balance doesn't come from an "all or nothing" approach. Choose practical milestones that are easily achieved with small changes to your daily habits. Once one milestone is reached, set another one, and over time, you'll steadily cover more ground.

Find ways to increase efficiency. When you start tracking your time, you're bound to identify productivity drains and procrastination pitfalls. Is there a

better way to do things? Are you setting deadlines that keep you on track? Are there situations and individuals you should avoid in order to stay focused? Remember, the sooner you finish what you have to do, the sooner you can get to the things you want to do!

Harness technology — don't let it harness you! True, we live in a time of amazing gadgetry. But the very tools created to provide flexibility, efficiency and mobility have tied us more than ever to our work. Access has led to excess. So set some immovable boundaries like no email checking after 7 pm or before 8 am. Technology is not our downfall, bad habits are!

Either delegate or let it go. It's hard to find time to bring home the bacon, cook it and clean up afterward. Whether at home or at work, take a hard look at your list of tasks. What's essential, what can fall to the wayside, and what can someone else do for you? At work, delegate more or look for project partners. At home, consider hiring help or asking for it from family, friends and neighbors. Look for opportunities to either share the load or off-load completely!

Say it loud and proud — "No!" A clear vision of what's most important makes choosing how you spend your time easier. If you're stretched too thin, nothing gets your full attention or potential. So turn down tasks and activities that don't advance your professional and personal goals, and you'll have more time to say "Yes!" to the ones that do.

Negotiate your options. Speak to your manager about flexible hours, job sharing or telecommuting. Maybe suggest a project partnering policy where coworkers team up on initiatives so they can back-fill for each other when one has to step out from work. During an economic time that doesn't inspire raises, your manager may be willing to work with you — especially if you are a star performer.

Set aside "Me" time. Self-care is essential to striking the right balance. Start small. Carve out 10 minutes for a quick walk, or take an extra long steamy shower with no interruptions once you're home. Unplugging and spending time to review your progress and to recharge goes along way!

Making the Business Case for Work/Life Balance

There are real bottom line benefits to pursuing work/life initiatives in the workplace

- Boost productivity by reducing absenteeism and improving morale. Happy workers are motivated workers!
- Improve retention by fostering engaged, loyal employees (Lack of work life balance is a top reason for employees to seek greener pastures)
- Protect the investment made in hiring, training and creating proven contributors

Workforce Solutions That Support Corporate Work/Life Balance Goals

A strategic workforce solutions partner can help identify the talent to help bring balance to employees

- Freelancers to shoulder the work load when employees take family leave or sabbaticals
- Highly skilled part-time candidates to support job sharing initiatives
- Temp to perm hiring strategies help you test drive potential additions to teams before companies are ready to commit to permanent hires — whether they're full or part time



ABOUT THE AUTHOR Celeste Gudas is a leading authority on workforce strategy for creative-driven companies. A distinguished entrepreneur and recruiting industry innovator, Ms. Gudas has grown 24 Seven from a single New York office to 7 US locations and internationally to London, and has expanded the industries the firm serves. Today 24 Seven is the go-to talent source supporting the world's top teams in Fashion, Retail, Advertising, Marketing, Design, Interactive/Digital, Media, Beauty, CPG and Entertainment. A certified Women's Business Enterprise by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, 24 Seven is also a recipient of the prestigious Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. For more information about how you can create a successful workforce strategy for your company call your local 24 Seven office or email President Celeste Gudas at cgudas@24seveninc.com.

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