

ACHIEVING BALANCE

BY NATHAN JAMAIL

A journey of separation between work and home.

IN BUSINESS TODAY, leaders and organizations must be more aware than ever of how their employees balance their work demands and their personal demands.

Organizations are constantly focusing on how to improve production, profits and performance, while at the same time maintaining a high level of morale. The issue is the search for personal and professional balance. As there are no definitive parameters for measuring balance, the real goal should be personal and professional *separation*. In the search for this delicate balance, a leader must first understand why separation is key—and understand the consequences when personal and professional lives overlap.

Why Separation is Important

As technology has revolutionized the business landscape, many professionals no longer leave their work at the office. This causes many people to feel that they spend all their time working or on call, regardless of location. At the same time, many parents are prioritizing attendance of their kids' events and family lunch dates using the same technology within the same time frames of "normal business hours." As a result, many people are doing two things at once—and doing neither one very well. How many times have you seen parents at lunch with their child and all of their attention is devoted to their smartphone? (Or perhaps that is you?) When your personal and professional lives overlap in this manner, both of them suffer.

If an employee is experiencing personal issues, such as marital problems or the loss of a loved one, it can be extremely distracting to say the least. Personal issues can cause them to be withdrawn and less effective, costing the organization and also impacting other employees. When this happens no one wins. On the other side of the coin, if a leader is having a tough time at work and brings their pain, stress and frustration home, they can potentially take it out on their family, which negatively affects their home life.

Jobs frequently require people to work late, put in extra hours and spend days on the road away from the family. This is because the job needs to get done, and a true professional understands that they may have to miss a child's event or be away from home at inopportune times. To be great in business a person must make sacrifices. But most professionals also feel their family or personal life is the most important thing to them.

Moms want to be moms, dads want to be dads and people want to be who they are other than what their business card states.

Be Present

So how do you do both? When a person is at work, they need to be at work, no matter their family dynamics or problems—they must learn to leave them at home. The one thing that can make any family problem even more difficult is for that person to lose their job because their personal issues are affecting their performance.

Conversely, when a person is home with their family they need to be at home. Leave your phone and your uniform or suit jacket at the door. Just like the company that pays that employee deserves that employee's very best, their families deserve their very best too.

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Consequences

In many organizations, leaders may not deal with a struggling employee appropriately, which may result in turnover. A strong leader must sit down with that employee—and with empathy—share with them the consequences of their behaviors if they don't change. They can also explore options available to the employee, if there are any, but the key is to directly deal with the issue. Some people may find this behavior harsh, but in reality it is the exact opposite. The leader needs to help the person so they can get better or give them the personal time and space to go home and resolve their issues, but to allow a person to suffer and ultimately destroy their career

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is selfish. When people don't have personal and professional separation then they feel overrun and ineffective in all things. This causes employee burnout and a difficult home life.

In leadership today a leader must be clear in their expectations to their team. To be successful a leader must have employees that are able and willing to do what it takes to achieve success. This only happens when all of the employees are at their best. Separating personal life and work does not eliminate the personal side of business—it actually strengthens it. The greatest achievement is when a person is doing a job they love and have a family that loves them. The goal is not to sacrifice one for the other but rather to be the best at both and the best way to do that is to separate them so neither is affected negatively by the other. Here are a few tips on ways to implement triggers to remember to be present:

Many people do two things at once— and neither one very well.

1. Never walk in the house on the phone.
 2. Change your clothes from work clothes to home clothes immediately upon arriving home so you feel the part.
 3. Make eye contact with those speaking with you, no matter if they are your coworker, your boss or your three-year-old.
 4. Share expectations with your company team and your family.
 5. Be aware of your personal state of mind and change it if necessary.
- Final thought: Be happy no matter where you are. Happiness is not a destination, it is a mindset and a journey—and ultimately it is a choice. Happy employees make great employees, and happy people make great people. ■