

### SPECIAL REPORT

# THE BUSINESS OF BALANCE

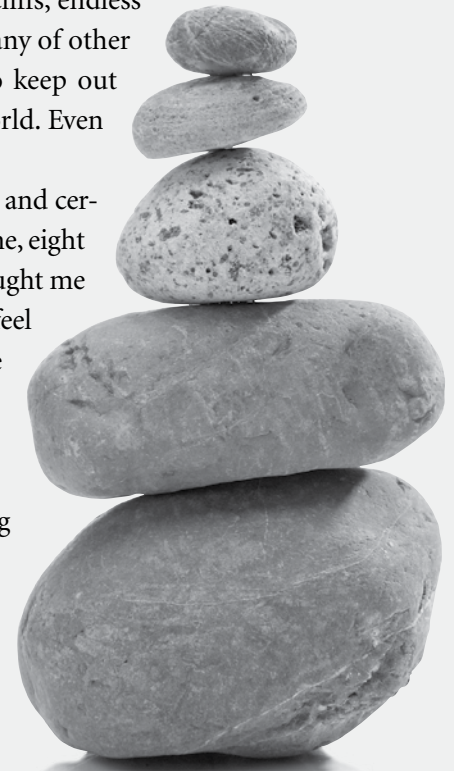
## why you need it to succeed

**T**his summer I had the opportunity to attend a writing retreat at the St. Non's Retreat Center in the tiny village of St. David's in Wales. For one week I was able to be "in the moment" — no voice mail, no e-mail, no television or radio or newspapers. Just pen and paper, my own thoughts, the crash of the sea against the cliffs, endless cups of tea, meditation, long walks, a little yoga and the company of other writers. It was easy to recognize what was important and to keep out the ceaseless chatter of the endless demands of the outside world. Even without luggage for the first two days!

But one does not live in the confines of a retreat center, and certainly a business does not prosper in such a vacuum. For me, eight hours on a train and another eight on a plane quickly brought me back to the "real world." The question is how to keep the feel of lovely St. Non's with me as I face the stresses that come with, well, life. I look for ways to integrate that experience, that sense of balance, into my day-to-day routine, such as walking down to the Connecticut River, notepad in hand, stepping away from my computer to write, or making (occasional) attempts to meditate on my own.

Sharon Seivert, author of *The Balancing Act: Mastering the Five Elements of Success in Life, Relationships and Work*, talks about balance as "a sense of being in the right place." As she explains on pages 8-9, it's an ongoing process. I wish you well on your own journey. ☺

— Mara Dresner, Editor



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# Solving the work/life balance equation

By Carolyn Gross

**S**ince the end of the year is fast approaching, it's a normal time to be reflecting on the past and making plans for the future. What did you accomplish this year that went well? What did you hope to accomplish but never found the time for?

Recently, a global Gallup Poll concerning happiness was conducted. People in 25 countries were polled to find out which countries had the happiest citizens. Can you guess how we Americans compared? We came in 16th! Is anyone else embarrassed by this? If this were an Olympic event, not only would we not reach the podium, we wouldn't even make the scoreboard!

Perhaps in part due to this poll, I see a new trend happening here that you should be embracing. As business owners, it's important that we find out what people want and incorporate such findings into our business offerings. The latest trend in America is (drum roll, please) the search for well-being.

Collectively, it seems we are getting especially tired of being overworked and underappreciated. We keep hearing the statistics that workers in Europe and South America take five or six weeks of vacation per year as the norm. Meanwhile, in the United States, corporate executives often find it difficult to take an annual two-week vacation. Many American workers have months of unused vacation hours just waiting to be enjoyed. Other research shows that even though Americans work more, our nation doesn't have the highest levels of productivity. So all this work isn't necessarily accomplishing anything!

## BELIEVE IT, ACHIEVE IT

As part of the trend, we currently see giant corporations such as Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Google and Kellogg all addressing well-being in their management retreats and leadership trainings. They are hiring best-selling authors such as Deepak Chopra to help their leaders in their own personal searches for well-being, and in finding ways to create workplace wellness in their infrastructures.

When we founded our training company, Creative Life Solutions, 12 years ago, as a forerunner in work/life balance we set out to solve this dilemma. Our tag line is: "Helping people manage chaos with confidence." We don't attempt to pretend that life doesn't throw curveballs or that people don't have to balance a lot of competing priorities.

After years of coaching a variety of clients, I noticed that as multi-tasking levels escalated to hyper-tasking, there was a definite negative impact on people's lives. As I observed this in my clients, I couldn't help but realize that if I didn't personally have a sense of happiness or balance between my work life and non-working time, I'd continuously be set up for erratic behavior, in my business and at home. I had to ask myself if

this behavior promoted good business decisions or relationships. Could I claim well-being in my own life? Can you? That's a question that can make us all pause.

I think the value I notice, after years of study in this area, is that people who keep work/life balance in their minds seem to achieve it. It is a question of believing it can be done. And it is worth the effort! Some of the benefits of work/life balance include better memory, adaptability, a positive mindset, better sleep, feeling less rushed and frantic, having the ability to compartmentalize chaos, and consistency in work performance.

## DEFINING THE EQUATION

Have you attempted to solve your own work/life balance equation? Have you ever thought about it? I approach the work/life balance equation like a mathematical equation with a solution. We are all juggling different events and schedules, yet the one similarity we all have is that when we awaken, we all have the same 1,440 minutes each day.

How savvy are you at managing your day's minutes? In a given week, how many hours are poised and prepared versus those that are spinning out of control? How did you do with this process during the past year?

Let's start with an overall equation:

$$\text{Work/Life Balance} + \text{Happiness} = \text{Well-Being}$$

In order to arrive at well-being — our goal — and "solve" the equation, we need to look at the individual components that make up the equation. To do that successfully, you will need to answer numerous questions. As you read through the components and the accompanying questions on the next page, be as honest as possible with your responses. Make note of the ones that really sting and those that make you feel proud. Do this annually or whenever you feel that your life is tipping out of balance. Take a look at your score in each part of the equation. Where is your life in balance? Where do you need work? What steps are you willing to take today, this week, this month to achieve more balance in your life?

Balance and well-being are ideals. We can't solve the equation once and never address it again. The equation varies from person to person, and it shifts, contingent upon a number of variables. This is why it's important to reevaluate your equation from time to time.

For example, some people can work 12-hour days. They are content and don't feel burdened. For others, working eight hours a day causes burnout. Sometimes turning a certain age changes the equation; sometimes a life event becomes a defining moment.

Working too much can suddenly prove to be a burden, or too much emphasis on success creates havoc in your personal life. Work/life bal-

ance can grab at us as we face failed relationships or troubled teenagers. Maybe a health challenge comes along and redefines your world.

Some people are able to redefine their lives when they realize they need more balance. I have one friend who did this at 60. He sold his home so he could downsize and work less. He incorporated his children into the family business. He used to speak as if he only had a few years left to live. Now, with a simpler life, he never mentions deteriorating health or being at the end of his life. His attitude has totally changed!

Maybe in 2008 you can put well-being into your goals for the year. You can realize that the 24/7 work world will always be beckoning, so if you are going to carve out some vacation time or time for yourself, that time is now. Work/life balance is a worthwhile quest, because when you

solve the equation, you feel so good about yourself and your life, and that carries over into everything you do. Like the growth and success of your business, it doesn't happen by chance. ⑤



*Carolyn Gross is an award-winning speaker, coach, host for INSPIRE! Talk Radio, certified trainer for Day-Timer and author of two books: Staying Calm in the Midst of Chaos and Treatable and Beatable: Healing Cancer without Surgery. Her expertise includes time management, workplace wellness, customer service and relationship strategies. For more information, visit [www.creativelifesolutions.com](http://www.creativelifesolutions.com).*

## EQUATION #1

### Time Management + Self Management = Work/Life Balance

For each of the questions that follow, give a numeric answer: No/Never – 0; Yes & No (Occasionally) – 1; More Yes than No (Sometimes) – 2; Absolutely Yes (Often) – 3

#### Time Management Skills:

- Do you know your goals and priorities?
- Have you devised a written plan to reach them?
- Do you have a system to review and assess your priorities on a monthly/weekly basis?
- Are you setting boundaries with your time, whom you can meet, when and for how long?
- Do you honor these time frames?
- Can you manage interruptions or unexpected events effectively, or do they frequently overtake your day when they occur?
- Have you identified your optimum time in a 24-hour period, and do you protect it so you can be more efficient? (Optimum time equals those hours in the day when you think and act most sharply, make good decisions and feel "up.")
- Do you use a time-management system?

#### Self Management Skills:

- Have you ever had a personality assessment done that helped you gain insights into your behavior and motives?
- Do you use this self-knowledge to improve your life?
- Have you ever worked with an effective coach or counselor?
- In response to adversity, are you aware of your coping style?
- When unexpected or unpleasant events occur, do you know how to react appropriately?
- Are you skilled at setting emotional boundaries?
- Are you able to let resentments go?
- Do you have a system that helps you to process change, adversity and obstacles?
- Do you belong to a mastermind or support group?
- Do you have an activity or sport where you can vent and release stress from your life?

#### Let's check in on your work/life balance scores:

- More than 40: You are managing well and have systems in place to keep you effective and focused.
- 30-40: You are aware of work/life balance but could implement some additional strategies.
- Less than 30: Reassess your priorities to achieve clarity. Try hiring a coach, learning time-managing techniques, or going on a vacation to take a step back and renew.

## EQUATION #2

### Health and Wellness + Conditions of the Heart = Happiness

As we look at the components of happiness, let's review your health and wellness assets, as well as your emotional life, which I'll call the conditions of the heart. For some people, their happiness may be coming out of the time-management/self-management skills. These individuals are generally more results-oriented and logic-based. The happiness part of the equation is a more emotional assessment than the logic-based work/life balance assessment. Since we all have both mind (logic) and heart (emotions) to achieve well-being, we need to address both areas.

#### Health and Wellness:

- How is your health? Do you get annual checkups?
- Do you have a wellness regimen in terms of diet and exercise?
- Do you have enough energy to accomplish your goals?
- Do you pursue a hobby for relaxation?
- Have you overcome any bad habits or health challenges?

#### Conditions of the Heart:

- Are your relationships satisfying?
- Do you make time to enjoy your inner circle of family and friends?
- Are you doing anything for personal growth?
- Do you engage in a spiritual practice?
- Do you have a church or religious group that supports your growth?

#### Let's see how you scored with the components of happiness:

- More than 25: You probably light up a room with your smile and sense of contentment.
- 20-25: Good days are more frequent than bad, so remember to enjoy the ride.
- Less than 20: Take some steps to improve your sense of health and well-being. Try eating more healthfully, going for a leisurely walk or getting together with friends.

### Work/Life Balance + Happiness = Well-Being