

**Maximizing Results Through People**  
**A CEO To CEO Quarterly Newsletter**  
**11-15-03**  
**Staying in Balance**

Dear Fellow CEO:

One challenge we all face as leaders is creating a balance in our own lives between our work life and everything that is the rest of our lives – family, friends, play, exercise, church, etc. As leaders, we can tend to get most compulsive (maybe you don't, but I do) about work, especially as it drives staying ahead of our competition or even our own goals. That's only natural, especially among entrepreneurs.

But, our compulsiveness can be personally consuming. Without some personal balance, the more we work to accomplish our goals, the less strength we have to accomplish them. We need a strong life outside of work to prepare and condition ourselves for the struggles inside of work.

So, how can we assure that we create the personal balance necessary to sustain our own mental well being? And looking at our people, how can we set an example that will likely be followed in our organizations that helps to foster the balance that yields both personal and business health in our employees?

The first thing to do is to put into writing the importance of balance in your organization and how you intend to encourage it. At BWA, we have two lines on this subject in our Values Statement:

- We recognize that life should be a balance between work and play.
- Doing our jobs is important and will be valued and evaluated. But, family comes first.

While these are seemingly self-explanatory, we take the time to go over both lines individually with each applicant and new hire at the firm at each stage in their application process. We also go over them again (as we do all of our Mission and Values Statements) yearly at our annual meeting. It serves to reinforce our values and to remind each of us (including me) of the importance of each line that describes them.

What does it mean that, "We recognize that life should be a balance between work and play"? It means vacation is important. It means that it's OK to have fun at work. It means that all work and no play makes Bob (and anyone else) a dull boy (or girl). Work is important. We've got to work to earn a living. Beyond that, work should be an outlet to set goals and accomplish them and thus, gain fulfillment. Work should be fun. But, it can't be the only fun. There must be fun outside of work too.

How about, "Doing our jobs is important and will be valued and evaluated. But, family comes first." This is simply an extension of the statement discussed above. We've got to do what it takes to earn a living and that means goals will be set and met in order to keep the job we have. However, whatever our job is, our family must take precedence over work at those points in life where family matters more than work. Spouses, children, parents all, at times, need our help, encouragement and involvement. When we're at work, we have a job to do, but family, sometimes, must interrupt that work. That is both OK and supported by management, so long as the work gets done and goals are met. It's a balance that we all must come to grips with. When our company supports our employees' efforts in creating balance, the people in it respect and appreciate the opportunity to live within its borders. Is this always easy? No. Does it create a better work environment? I think so — both for me and the people at BWA.

Regularly going over the specifics of your Mission and Values reinforces all of the tenets that they are intended to project. It works for the boss too. It serves to remind me that I've got to have balance, and that I've got to put family in front of work.

In spite of the fact that I'm a Lowest C Low D person (for those of you not trained in P. I., the easy explanation of this is that, for me, chaos is generally good; while rules and process are generally bad), I have found that personal rules and traditions are helpful in maintaining balance too.

Several years before starting the business, when I had both little children and a sometimes aggressive travel schedule, I committed to my wife (Dana) that I would not be gone more than 8 nights per month. Knowing that I could be pulled to travel constantly for the sake of additional business, that seemed like a reasonable limit to place on the amount of time for travel. It gave me sufficient time for business needs, but also assured that I'd have enough time to be a good father and husband. So, ever since our agreement of 20 or more years ago, I've kept track of how many nights I schedule away from home and budget those nights closely. Sometimes, I've had to turn down opportunities or put them off because I'd reached my limit of eight nights. But, this has been another simple way to assure that I won't wake up an old man wondering why I don't know my children and / or have lost touch with my marriage.

As our boys have gotten older (we have two in college), we've negotiated an exception to the eight nights per month limit mentioned above. If I have business in Nashville or Central Illinois, where our older boys are in school and I can visit them on the trip, that day doesn't count toward the eight night limit. Neither does bringing Dana along on a business trip. This is another good way to provide balance – traveling where there's a home away from home.

Another tradition that's been going on for more than 10 years is that I try to put off until as late as possible scheduling travel from April until the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. All three of our boys have played baseball (none really well, but they've had fun doing it) and have asked me to coach their teams. I press Carmel Dad's Club (our local youth sports organization) for a game and practice schedule as early as possible in the season so I can block those nights off my travel calendar. While I typically miss a couple of games each season, I generally am available for most of them and, as a result, get to participate in each of my children's growing up. Do I enjoy it? Absolutely. Do they? I hope and think so. As the older boys have gone in other directions, the baseball history does make for some good stories when we're together. And with Reid, our youngest, going into what will likely be his final year of baseball, there are stories yet to be made.

Family vacations (see Ah, Vacation, 8-15-02) have also been both a tradition and a source of ongoing balance. Dana and I try to get away at least once a year without kids. Beyond that, we try to unite the clan to take other vacations regularly and without pause or regret. The opportunity to play and bond together creates in me a person who is more ready to both work and lead.

Our strength and our ability to bring power to our work is based on our ability to have equal strength at home. We need to have a good home life to really have a good work life. The more we, as leaders, can remember that, the stronger our leadership can be. And the example we set is good for everyone around us as well. Where we have balance and bring strength, our people will look to emulate our efforts and not consume themselves with a work-only based life.

I love my work and my job. But I need a strong life outside of that work and job to be as strong as I can be inside of it.

Balance is required.

Thanks for reading and I hope you have found this note helpful.



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