

KEEPING YOUR BALANCE

"If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got."

Mark Twain

Work-life: out of balance?

In recent months, I have delivered coaching for people who were unemployed and keen to be back in work; we looked at changing their approach to jobsearch, applications and interviews in order to be successful.



At the other end of the scale, I have been asked to help others whose work seems to have taken over their entire lives to the exclusion of everything else. It's a familiar problem, often exacerbated by colleagues' absenteeism (through stress and overwork), reorganisation and vacancies not being filled.

There is no easy answer; if there were, I'd be bottling it and pitching it on Dragons' Den. However, some good questions to ask yourself are:

- Why do you really work more than you want to? Is it the culture of the organisation? Fear of failing? A workload that really is impossible? A reluctance to delegate? Or are you avoiding something else?
- What is it that you really want? To be home in time to put the children to bed? To learn to dance/paint/mend cars? To spend time just being with friends?
- Express this as a positive goal – and realise that it is just as important as those you set for yourself at work. For example: "I want to be home by 6.30 at least three evenings a week so I can read the bedtime story"
- How can you achieve that? If you're not there yet, accept that it will require you to change the way you do things just now. Instead of blocking change, start to think creatively along the lines of "How can I change this...?"

Some ideas for making changes are:

- Data dump: list the short and long term work you have to do and deal with it in order; if you're interrupted, go back to it
- Diarise your own time; make the bedtime story as important as a meeting – it is
- Deal with the worst first; get the work that is holding you back out of the way – now!
- Develop to delegate; find ways to support and train others to do tasks you have been stuck with
- Decline: learn to say No when work time becomes all the time.

Easier said than done? Maybe, but easier done than not done in the longer term.

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