



All work and no play; find your balance.

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How many of you have heard the proverb ‘All work and no play make Jack a dull boy’. The fact is that as a business owner, work can directly and subtly consume all your time. You may feel justified that what you are doing is important, shall I say critical, to your business’s success. The reality can be that working too hard, not taking time to have fun, is bad for your health, bad for your business, and worse for your personal life.

So you Jack and Jane business owners, who are putting in the 60, 70, 80 hour work weeks can become unintentionally one dimensional lone ranger. With such an intense focus, you may well become blind to what is going on around you and only later regret you missed whatever else in life that was important to you.

But, you are saying to me, ‘my efforts for my business are important. I must work to create or sustain the success I am having in my business. My family and friends understand that it is necessary that I focus my attention on my business.’

I am not suggesting that focus on your business isn’t important. You are vested in your business’s success. However, what if such devoted focus isn’t as true as it would appear? A Mayo Clinic study suggests there are consequences you may well face with a poor work-life balance decision.

First there is the health issue of mental and physical fatigue. Consider you’ve already worked 10 – 12 hours today and you compelled to work 2 or 3 more. You’re tired, exhausted. The usual result is that your productivity and ability to think clearly are ineffective. What is the consequence? Errors occur that could result in costly business mistakes, which could impact both the bottom line today and your professional reputation going forward. That becomes a negative financial blow. What about the physical impact? Are you in danger of making a mistake, putting yourself in harm’s way on the job or falling asleep on the way home?

Another area, which may seem obvious, is the lost time with family and friends. Working too much often leads to you missing everyday and important family events or milestones. Whether it is a birthday, youth sporting or special activity event, or just dinner together, what frequently happens is both parties feel left out, rejected, minimized or abandoned. As hard as is it can be with the ‘understanding’ family, it becomes almost impossible to sustain friendships if you’re always working. Turn down one or two invitations and eventually they stop coming. Do you even notice?





Ultimately you are caught in the proverbial 'Catch 22'. The more you work, the more you increase expectations; yours, your clients, or others. As your extra work hours become your regular work hours, you take on more personal responsibility, which leads to additional concerns and challenges. These challenges and concerns in turn only lead to having to take more and more and more; a vicious cycle circle with no way out.

Most Jacks and Janes start a business based on their personal passion that they possess strong and valuable skills which will allow them to be successful. To feel needed and appreciated by clients is key to powering a strong personal drive required to keep a business going. That sense of purpose, of being important, can become addictive and show up in how we behave...and like an addiction, the feeling cannot be sustained indefinitely. It blinds and distorts the pitfalls that lie ahead.

Soon or later the hours worked, the missed commitment or the short cuts take their toll. You find the business performance doesn't meet your expectations, so you become resentful and fearful. You will beat yourself up or on the other side you will focus the blame on the missed expectations on others and how they have disappointed you or your clients. The desire to escape for an hour or day, letting someone else take charge can feel overwhelming. So what shows up in you, others will see. 'Jack is a dull boy'.

It couldn't be said better than by Erin Blaskie, 'Keep a Strangle-hold on your Sanity. It is your responsibility to understand your personal and professional imitation so that you can maximize your strengths'. Without sounding trite, 'the first thing is to recognize there is a problem'.

This starts with evaluating your current balance, followed by a goal to achieve what brings happiness to your life. So, let's not think in terms of taking days or weeks off. Rather let's start slowly with activities that can be built into your schedule. My business coach calls them '10 minute vacations'. Simple ideas of what these can be are getting up from behind the desk and walking while listening to your favorite music. Another may be logging into the sports site and catching up on today's games. Maybe you couldn't make the school sporting or arts event. That doesn't mean you can't spend 30 minutes or an hour on the weekend (instead of email), with one on one time. It is these little things that will ignite you. Once the pilot light has been lit, your passion for balance becomes stronger and more powerful.

That raises an important question, how do you get going? A most hated and yet rewarding action is to track your time. Before you can face the facts, you need to find the facts. This can be done with a small pocket note book and an hourly chime on your watch. Write down what you did for the past hour. You will see patterns in your daily tasks, both work-related and personal activities. It is from these facts that you will begin to decide what's necessary and what satisfies you the most, while identifying those things you can cut, consolidate or delegate.

Here is another hard action for many. Learn to say no. Regardless of the request, taking on an extra work project or the school event asked by your child's teacher, remember that it's OK to respectfully say no. Recognize and stop accepting tasks out of guilt or a false sense of obligation.





Here is probably the most common free advice you receive and don't take, 'leave work at work'. Today's technology gives you the ability to connect to anyone at any time. There is no line drawn between work and home. You own setting the boundary to make a conscious effort to separate work time from personal time. Try things like, keeping your laptop off and turning your cell phone off, making 5 to 7 family time. Organize household tasks efficiently, rather than saving it all for your day off. Put family events on a weekly family calendar and keep a daily to-do list. This way you take care of what needs to be done and let the rest go.

It is essential to realize a healthy work-life balance isn't a one-shot deal. Don't go it alone. Bolster your support system by finding a peer mentor who has worked through the challenges you are facing or work with a life coach to help you focus on what is important to you. Creating work-life balance is a continuous process as your family, interests and work life change. I suggest you periodically examine and adjust your priorities and goals, so you stay fresh and focused.

In the end, it ties back to what my mother used to say, 'Eat right, get physical activity, and enough sleep'. This is about nurturing yourself and those around you. Start by setting aside the time each day for your '10 minute vacation' and don't forget to record it in your notebook.

Now, you Jacks and Janes, go play!

About Ren: He is a Certified Personal Coach and P90X Trainer. As a Constructus Life Balance advisor, his focus is on health and vitality through action and education.

