SIGMA
Leadership Series

Great Leaders Have Balance

GREAT LEADERS HAVE BALANCE

> " Don't get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life.
>
> — Dolly Parton

The demanding pace of modern work culture may pressure leaders to invest long hours at the office. Because technology makes communication possible around the clock, leaders may also feel obligated to check their work email on weekends, take calls at any time, or be available to meet with clients outside of their normal hours. Work-related stress can spill over into other areas of life, especially if you're still thinking about your "to-do" list after work. Over time, this stress can take a toll on your performance, happiness, relationships, and well-being[1,2].

A healthy work/life balance involves achieving harmony between work responsibilities and life outside of the office. While effective leaders may be highly engaged in their work, they also take the time to unwind, recharge, and pursue leisure activities. This helps them perform at their best without burning out. People with good work/life balance are less stressed, more satisfied with their jobs, and overall happier and healthier [2,3].

In assessing your ability to maintain work/life balance, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I able to disengage from work at the end of the workday?
- Do I set a positive example for work/life balance in my organization?
- What strategies can I use to maximize my productivity at work?
- Do I give my full attention to activities that I am pursuing?
- How can I incorporate breaks and time to unwind into my schedule?
- Which tasks can I delegate to my direct reports?

Improve Your Work/Life Balance

You can be passionate about work without being a "workaholic": Enthusiasm for and immersion in one's work can be healthy, reflecting drive, engagement, and a sense of fulfillment. On the other hand, "workaholics" feel compelled to work excessively hard, which is detrimental to their well-being and interpersonal relationships[4,5]. Be aware of the distinction between being dedicated to work and experiencing impairments in areas of life due to work.

ΣSIGMA®
ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS INC.
Your Future. Down to A Science.

www.SigmaAssessmentSystems.com

2

SIGMA Leadership Series: GREAT LEADERS HAVE BALANCE

Set a positive example in your organization: As a leader, you set the example for your employees. If you are putting time in on weekends and always responding to your work emails outside of normal business hours, your direct reports will feel pressured to do the same. On the other hand, demonstrating that you value work/life balance shows employees that you care about their well-being and fosters a healthy workplace culture. Consider how you can establish and maintain boundaries for your availability outside of work hours.

Work smart, not hard: If you maximize your productivity during the workday, you can reduce the perceived pressure to work outside of your business hours. One strategy is to avoid multi-tasking. While it may seem like you are progressing towards multiple goals at once, research shows that multi-tasking actually increases both task completion time and the risk of errors[6]. Instead, improve your focus by listing and prioritizing your tasks in order of importance, and taking steps to minimize distractions and interruptions. Besides helping you stay more organized, keeping up-to-date lists can help you walk away from work at the end of the day, knowing you can easily pick up where you left off.

Start Doing These 3 Things Now to Better Balance Work and Life

The following steps can help you improve your work/life balance:

1. **"Unplug" when away from work.** While it may be tempting to check your work email or take calls outside of your business hours, it can reduce the quality of your leisure time. Give friends, family, and hobbies your full attention by avoiding responding to work-related communications outside of emergencies. Likewise, try to "leave the work behind" at a reasonable time each day, even if you have unfinished tasks. Unless there is a critical deadline, it can wait—there is always more work, and rest and relaxation are the keys to maintaining productivity in the long-term.

2. **Incorporate "breathing room" into your schedule.** Activity and rest need to be balanced, especially for individuals in high-stress, fast-paced environments. When you're too busy for downtime due to competing demands and commitments, you risk burnout[7]. Try slowing down by practicing mindfulness, going for a walk, reading for pleasure, or unwinding in other ways. Keep in mind that your balance may look different from someone else's, depending on your circumstances in and outside of work. What's important is that your work/life balance allows you to both engage in focused, productive work and dedicate quality time to hobbies and relationships.

3. **Delegate less important tasks to your direct reports.** You do not have to do everything yourself. Make a list of tasks that need to be completed and identify which ones can only be completed by you, and which ones could be completed by someone else. This may involve teaching your direct reports new procedures or skills. While it may seem faster to just do it yourself, in the long run, delegating will reduce your workload and free up your time while developing the abilities of team members in your organization.

Resources

watch [Off Balance on Purpose: The Future of Engagement and Work-Life Balance](#)

read [6 Tips for Better Work-Life Balance](#)

develop [Develop](#) your work/life balance by taking advantage of SIGMA's coaching services.

Contact SIGMA for coaching on developing your skills as a leader.

SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.
Email: support@SigmaHR.com
Call: 800-265-1285

References

[1] Balducci, C., Avanzi, L., & Fraccaroli, F. (2018). The individual "costs" of workaholism: An analysis based on multisource and prospective data. *Journal of Management, 44*, 2961–2986.

[2] Clark, M., Michel, J., Zhdanova, L., Pui, S., & Baltes, B. (2016). All work and no play? A meta-analytic examination of the correlates and outcomes of workaholism. *Journal of Management, 42*, 1836–1873.

[3] Talukder, A. K. M., Vickers, M., & Khan, A. (2018). Supervisor support and work-life balance: Impacts on job performance in the Australian financial sector. *Personnel Review, 47*, 727–744.

[4] Di Stefano, G., & Gaudiino, M. (2019). Workaholism and work engagement: how are they similar? How are they different? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 28*, 329–347.

[5] Hakanen, J., & Peeters, M. (2015). How do work engagement, workaholism, and the work-to-family interface affect each other? A 7-Year follow-up study. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 57*, 601–609.

[6] Ophir, E., Nass, C., & Wagner, A. (2009). Cognitive control in media multitaskers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States, 106*, 15583–15587.

[7] Dugan, G., & Barnes-Farrell, L. (2017). Time for self-care: Downtime recovery as a buffer of work and home/family time pressures. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 59*, e46–e56.