



Striking a Work-Life Balance

Strategies to make your balancing act easier

By Susan Baka

If you're a typical entrepreneur, you juggle so many balls in your business that it may be difficult to find time for anything else. Is it possible to strike a healthy balance between your work and personal lives? There is no one magic answer, but there are strategies you can employ to help you carve out more time for you.

Here are some tips – gleaned from women entrepreneurs I know – on how to find that elusive work-life balance:

- **Delegate.** This includes both at work *and* at home, if you have a family. The key to successful delegation in your place of business is having employees you can trust completely so that you are comfortable empowering them to make decisions and be accountable. At home, start delegating to your kids early. Even at 5 years old, they can dust, but avoid going behind them to dust what they may miss. Remember, you can't be a micro-manager – either at home or at work – or you will undermine everyone and defeat what you are trying to achieve. Try not to pursue perfectionism in everything.
- **Learn to say 'no'.** As women, we often feel we could or should do it all. Think about your priorities before committing to anything. For example, if you have just taken on a big new contract or if you have young children, now may not be the time to take on that time-consuming volunteer board position. Save that for when your business is more mature or when your children are older.
- **Take vacations.** Remember that not taking vacations is not a badge of honour. You need downtime to get re-energized. The trick is to plan the time off well in advance, letting your clients and employees know you will be away then. If you fall into the trap of saying you'll take a break when things aren't so busy, it just won't happen because, as entrepreneurs, we're always busy!
- **Seek support.** Most successful women entrepreneurs say that a supportive spouse or partner and family are key. Don't be afraid to ask for their help when you need it. And, if money is no object, there are all kinds of external services you can buy – from house-cleaning to pre-packaged healthy meals. Having a strong network of personal friends and business contacts with whom you can discuss your challenges and possible solutions is perhaps one of the most effective ways of keeping you committed to finding and maintaining work-life balance.
- **Take care of yourself.** If, like so many women, you focus on everyone else's needs before your own, start now to think of yourself too. Sleep deprivation is too common among busy women entrepreneurs. Don't sacrifice your rest. Regular exercise, healthy eating, hot baths, 10 minutes in the morning for personal reflection, a spa day once in a while – these are just a few ways to be good to yourself.

Remember that one of the greatest benefits of entrepreneurship is the fact that you have control. Sometimes we tend to forget this. If you focus on your priorities and on changing the things *within* your control, you'll find your daily balancing act becomes a little easier.

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