

Work-life balance: It's an individual choice

By LeShane C. Greenhill

What is this thing called "work-life balance?" We've all heard about it, either through lecture or casual conversations with friends. Some of you reading this may currently struggle with it.

I will not attempt to tell you what is best for you; however, my goal is to shed some light on how it can be achieved from an individual point of view.



First, let's consider what it is not. Work-life balance is not a perfect blend of everything with which you are involved. Attempting to divide your time and attention equally with all facets of life is a recipe for unhappy living.

There is no "one size fits all" when determining work-life balance. We as individuals must understand that this delicate balancing act is an individual choice that cannot be modeled on someone else's behavior. At the end of the day, there are four main areas that comprise life:

1. Self
2. Family
3. Work
4. Recreational activities/socializing

Because no two people will ever have the same experiences in these areas, everyone's work-life balance is personal and unique. The sense of happiness and achievement you gain from the four above areas will ultimately determine whether you feel balanced. No two people will devote the same amount of time and energy to these four areas. Also, you can expect that, as you grow older and your priorities shift, you will need to reassess your work-life balance accordingly.

The starting point in finding your perfect work-life balance is determining what you want out of life. But more importantly, I believe, is what are you willing to give to life? Here are four steps to help you get started:

1. Assess your current situation and available resources
2. Determine your happiness in the four areas listed above
3. Make the necessary changes

Steps one and two are relatively easy; however, in step three, the process becomes more difficult. After assessing your current situation and determining your happiness, you may realize certain areas of your life need to be shed in order to make room for other areas that benefit you and help you grow.

The difficulty arises because each area of your life involves some type of relationship, whether personal or professional. By choosing to shift the focus of your life's balance, it may mean adjusting or even eliminating one of these relationships. Eliminating or altering any type of relationship is probably the hardest act of change we all encounter. However, you must consider the situation, the impact it has on your life, and carefully weigh all the variables.

The next time you feel overwhelmed in a certain area, assess not only what that area of your life means to you, but also the relationships that form that environment. You can then determine the best fit for you, evaluate ways to balance your happiness and achievement, and consider the relationships you have built as you grow.