

Personal/Work Balance

“Perfect the life, or perfect the work,” demanded one critic. But in an age of 24/7 news, perfecting the work too intensely has endless personal costs. How do you keep a balance? And how does the personal balance help the work? Given the many demands of leaders, how do you choose which areas of work to emphasize in your own efforts?

Tom Johnson

Do not define your self-worth solely by your job because your job can be taken away from you. If you don't have a life beyond it [then you have trouble]. So I urge people not to make the mistake that I made as a classic workaholic for most of my life. Discover pursuits that bring you pleasure outside of work. I've tried to keep a very private list of some of the things I most wanted to do in my life. I pull it out and show it to my wife. I wanted at one point to learn to ski in my 40s and did. I wanted to take a river raft trip and took not one, but three. I wanted to take a balloon ride and I did it. The big lesson that I say to everybody is, get a life beyond your work. It took me too long to learn that lesson.

Tim McGuire

I have two fundamental touchstones. One is my family and the second is my faith. Probably the greatest moment of my life came last year when my son came home and told his mother the story of the class assignment which asks him to write a paper on [difficulties with his parents]. He sat there for 20 minutes and couldn't write anything. When the teacher inquired, he said, “I have no difficulties with my parents.” I am deeply moved. ...

I have invested a great deal in making sure that my family was always number one.



My key turning point: that was a year and a half that I spent in relative exile. There were changes in Minneapolis and I suddenly wasn't as bright as I used to be. I was very much in exile. That's when I started law school. ... I decided I needed to pursue some alternatives. Fortunately (editor) Joel Kramer came to the *Star Tribune* and I got

bright again. My career took off again. Certainly that period of exile, and the humility that produces, has been a wonderful turning point for me — to realize that we’re very subject to the judgments of other people. What we have can be very fleeting. I have treasured every moment since I have been out of exile. It’s been a wonderful learning experience.

Neal Shapiro

When I am awake at 2 or 3 in the morning, there is nobody to visit, no calls to make. So I actually find a sleepless night or two is a great chance to think and close out the rest of the world.

Jack Fuller

Getting the problem focused and then getting stuck, and then getting away from it — to something else — has always been useful to me. That’s how I get those “aha” moments.

It’s not when I’m sitting there pounding away at the problem. It’s when I get distracted. So I read difficult things, completely irrelevant to the task at hand. My fiction writing is [another] way of getting away from a problem.

You distract yourself and you can have an idea.



The hardest thing is to figure out how you balance your own personhood, your true self, with the demands of the group.

Surrender to the group and you’re useless for the job. Insist on being your own self at all times, then you’re utterly ineffective. There’s a wonderful book by John Keegan, “The Mask of Command.” It talks about the relationship between the persona of a leader and the real person. A distant relationship between those two is not a very good option. But having the real person try to be the leader in his whole selfhood [is problematic, too].

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Monica Lozano

Work can be 24/7 if we let it. I have a very rich family life, which keeps me, as a person, balanced. Beyond that, you need to have a life outside of the newsroom with people who are regular people. It sounds pretty simple, but it helps you understand what other people who are not involved in news are thinking about, are caring about, are talking about. It enriches you. It gives you ideas about how the world is changing and how you need to think differently than ... if you were only talking within the organization.

Lou Boccardi

Having a home life and a family and a wife who understands you, and is willing to keep you balanced, helps.

Mark Whitaker

Family and my job are about 90 percent of my life. But I also like to go to the gym and hit a tennis ball and hit a golf ball. I am someone who does need some quiet time all to myself. I need reflection time.

Sandy Rowe

Most of the time the best ideas I have for the next steps that need to be taken at my newspaper, or the next things I need to do, are [arrived at] by taking trips and getting away from the newsroom for a certain number of days. I can see my work there and other people's work from a perspective that allows me to come back a little bit refreshed and with some new ideas.

Arthur Sulzberger Jr.

I rock climb. Someone once described a vacation as exhausting yourself doing something different, and I'm a firm believer in that. Every weekend I try to take a one-day vacation on the rocks during the summer, spring and fall. The reason I find rock climbing and motorcycle riding, which is another passion of mine, so wonderfully relaxing, compelling, is it's about the only time in my life I cannot think about anything else.

When you're on a rock face trying to keep your balance and put a piece of gear on the rock and you're a hundred feet up, you ain't thinking about the office.

Nancy Maynard

There are times of intense work. And then there are times of renewal. It's important in the non-critical times to slow down and to think.

My theory of life is that on any given day I should be doing either what I need to do or what I want to do. On the best days I'm doing both things. But on less good days I should be doing one or the other. On the worst day I'm doing neither. I'm not getting done something that's fulfilling or that is restoring my sense of leadership and knowledge.