

Work-Life balance

Striking a balance between work and the rest of your life can be challenging. Here's how to make this goal achievable.

“Making the most of life” is not a goal that needs much selling. Most of us would readily admit to not living completely fulfilled lives, especially those of us suffering from constant work preoccupation. Clients, payroll, taxes, marketing... let's face it, the demands on a CGA do not always foster a healthy work-life balance.

What does a balanced life really look like anyway? It's not the status quo, that's for sure. The average business-person spends most of his or her day in reactionary mode dealing with the day-to-day work challenges that crop up, rather than being proactive about the work they want to do. Not good. Living in reactionary mode is stressful and frustrating. It takes away an individual's sense of purpose, and causes them to lose sight of the pursuits that energized them in the beginning.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? In the business of accounting, pursuing a purpose-driven rather than reactionary-driven life may feel like you're going against the grain. Clients want you, employees want you, and colleagues want you— to the point that on some days it's hard to find 30 minutes to tackle what were your real objectives for the day. Whether it's to grow your practice, spend more time with the family, take more vacations, or get in shape... whatever your priorities are... you fill in the blank.

If you're wanting to instill more balance in your life, hear this. Finding balance does not necessarily mean working less. Balance is about choice. Doing what fulfills you. That means the freedom to do the work you want to do, rather than the work you have to do. Here's how:

1. Systemize your firm. The single most effective way to organize your practice is to develop a well-thought-out and documented business manual, containing all of the policies and procedures required for operating your firm. By documenting the systems that describe how work should flow in all areas of your practice; from new client forms, to client communication to invoicing, you can rest assured that everyone knows how things are supposed to run. These systems will provide answers and solutions to some of the challenges you currently find yourself fielding.
2. Delegate everything you can. This needs to become part of your ongoing behaviour. New work will show up on your desk on a regular basis. If you don't need to deal with it, don't. If it is important that it gets done, but someone else can do it, then 9 times out of 10 you should pass it along. If you're not used to delegating, now is the time to begin. Keep the true value of your time firmly in mind and you will more easily be able to decide if you should or should not be handling the next item in your inbox.
3. Of course, the more you delegate, the more you'll need to have competent people following through on your behalf. If you don't have a trusted team in place, spend some time to figure out what skill sets and personality traits are required for your dream team and set out to find those people. At the same time, don't forget that it's your job to clearly communicate what everyone's roles and responsibilities are and to define your

expectations. In addition to providing detailed job descriptions, you need to sit down with each member of your team on a regular basis to discuss goals, expectations, and how you'd like to work toward achieving them.

4. Finally, in order to sustain your new well-balanced life, you need to trust and believe your firm is running like a well oiled machine, even when you're on holiday or escaping to the gym mid-day. You can do this by building 'a culture of continuous improvement'. This is created by putting in place systems that foster motivation and growth in your team. Profit sharing and company bonuses can be a good start, but the goal is really to engage your people. Make them a part of the big picture by sharing your vision and giving everyone a chance to really contribute. And when they do, remember to recognize them.

It may take effort up front, but putting these fundamentals in place will steadily remove the burden of business management from your shoulders and provide you with the life-balance you deserve.