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**Sandra Wiley** • May. 30, 2012

In your firm today, an increasing number of staff members – from the partner level to the administrative staff – are experiencing burnout, low productivity, dissatisfaction and stress related illnesses...due in large part to a lack of balance between their work and personal lives. It is time for your firm to look at how they can create greater balance between work and personal lives of the number one asset in your firm – its people.

This is not an easy issue to address, since what looks like balance to one person may differ for another because individuals have different goals, values and definitions of success. A good place to begin to understand the issue of work and life balance is with a common definition:

- Having a sense that there is enough time in the day to effectively accomplish work-related tasks.
- The ability to get through our daily work and family responsibilities without feeling drained.
- Having the ability to participate in activities we enjoy on a regular basis.

At the heart of successful work-life balance is:

- Accomplishment: getting the stuff we need to get done (and)...
- Enjoyment: having the time for loved ones, fun, rest, exercise and hobbies.

Although the concepts of achieving balance are simple, actually creating a balanced life isn't easy; but it is definitely worthwhile.

Here are some steps to help you on the journey toward life balance. It's a process so don't look for "perfection" and remember to be patient with yourself.

1) Begin your balance journey by figuring out what your values and priorities are.

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2) Identify your balance “blockers”. Balance blockers are those things that we either think or do that stands in the way of achieving balance. It's basically a perspective we hold about why we can't pursue balance-related goals. Some examples of blockers are:

- Living for the expectations of others at work and at home
- Consistently putting the needs of others before your own
- Fear of change
- Hung up on appearances
- Perfectionism

Once you identify your blockers, pay attention to when you use them as excuses to justify why you can't achieve balance in your life. Explore ways to accomplish your goals in spite of your particular balance blockers.

3) Balance your mind. The key to balance is all in your head. Begin to think differently! So many accountants feel guilty about focusing on work-life balance or they believe taking time out for themselves – away from work – is an unproductive use of time. I'll tell you what I tell my clients, GET OVER IT! Most times, we treat our cars better than we treat ourselves. What's the first thing we do when we notice our car is low on gas? We fill our tanks! Well, living a more balanced life is about filling your tank. Those initially cynical accountants who reluctantly committed to living a more balanced lifestyle now report that they are more relaxed, have more time for themselves and haven't sacrificed their jobs or their level of professionalism in the process!

4) Create “non-negotiable” time blocks in your schedule at least 2 times per week. Non-negotiable time is personal time that you set aside for yourself that you absolutely cannot and will not reschedule, cancel or postpone...it's simply non-negotiable. Devote at least 30 minutes to these time blocks. Write the non-negotiable

appointment in your palm or day planner as you would for any other appointment.

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positive. This is primarily because familiar patterns are hard to break. The bottom line is; we all need someone to talk to. Not a significant other, colleague or friend, but someone whose only job is to help you plan your career, manage your life and set goals to keep you on track. That is the job of a Professional Coach.

6) Create a Vision. Having a vision of what you want to accomplish is a powerful tool to help you achieve any goal. Write down your vision of a more balanced and fulfilling life style. In creating your vision consider: If your life was more balanced than it is today...what would you have time to do? What would you no longer do? How would your career improve? What impact would a more balanced life have on your relationships and your quality of life?

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