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## TECHNOLOGY

# Saying Yes is Also Saying No

Part of Our Work/Life Balance Series

Aug. 01, 2009

*Exclusive online content from the August 2009 Issue*

Last month, I discussed that to improve your work/life balance you needed to examine your current practice, learn how to fully utilize your current technology, learn from other industries, and learn about current technology solutions focused on the accounting and technology field. ([Click here](#) to see last month's article.) Now that you have completed all of those steps in a matter of 30 days [grin], what's next?

By now, you are the techno-geek of your practice and you have learned about all the cool applications and gadgets that promise you more productivity and efficiency. But in reality you are being stimulated every waking hour of the day. How can you achieve work/life balance now that you have all these gadgets on your computer? You are now a member of all the social networks (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo, etc.) and your mobile phone is a computer in your pocket. In addition to receiving phone calls, emails and text messages, you can now open and edit files on your "new phone."

You fired your assistant because she is now automated with technology, and your office phone now forwards all calls to your mobile phone after the fourth ring. And to top things off, the 3G network coverage in your area is awesome. You can't get away from your office unless you throw your mobile phone

into the lake, but your contract only allows for a replacement phone once every 24 months. At this rate, you will not be alive in 24 months. You're thinking you may just have to move to Alaska to get away from this mess.

I feel your pain. It seems all of the efficient technology only makes us more inefficient and distracts us from focusing on the tasks at hand. In the past, one of my favorite parts about going to the beach, besides hanging out with my family, was the lack of quality mobile phone or mobile broadband service. You could actually take full days away from work without your phone buzzing all the time. Yes, it took me three days to return all of the phone messages and emails once I returned, but it was worth it.

The only way to maintain a work/life balance with all these distractions is by guarding your time just like you guard your money. It's been said that time is money. Well, in my opinion, you can always earn more money, but you can't ever get back the time that you lost/wasted. It is gone forever.

When you say yes to something, you are also saying no to something else.

So how do you guard your time? You manage it just like you manage your money and finances. You spend time managing it, determining what you want to do with it in the future, how you have managed it in the past, what you have wanted to get done but haven't, what you have accomplished that you thought you would not. Sounds just like reviewing your finances, right?

You have to write down your priorities in life. Put them in two separate buckets: business and personal. Then, prioritize them. Understand what is really important to you, and the list of "things" you want to accomplish will become very clear. See, yes means no.

Now that you know your goals, allocate your days, weeks and months to those tasks. As you are reading this, you are probably thinking that this theory is the same stuff that you already know to be correct, but the secret is execution. That is what I will talk about next.

Every day is different. Unexpected events occur. Our daily plans get changed, and we become distracted. We have all been told that we should not overschedule our day. We shouldn't schedule more than 50 percent of our daily activities. This will allow us time to react to the unexpected events of the day and still complete our priorities for the day. If you are like me, I am easily distracted

with the Internet, email, Twitter, Facebook, phone calls, office visitors, etc. In order to manage these items, you need to schedule time in the day to address them.

We all need little breaks in the day, so why not allocate some time for those breaks. You might as well plan for a little goof off time since you are going to do it anyway. But the key is to leave the “distracting” items alone during the rest of your day. Just because someone calls you on the phone, emails you, etc., does not mean that you have to answer it at that moment. Let the phone roll to voicemail. Email was invented to allow us to communicate when we are available to communicate. Use it that way. If you know me, you now know why most of my calls roll to voicemail. If I answered every phone call and email when they arrived, I would never get anything done. Set your phone to busy and turn off your email notification. You will be amazed at how much work you can get done.

Also, set your instant message status to busy. Instant messaging is good in theory, but people don't need answers instantly. If you are available all the time to give instant answers, then people around you will not learn to think for themselves. You will get abused.

Now that you have mastered technology in the workplace and learned how to manage the electronic distractions of the office, go home and spend some quality time with your family and friends.

For the other articles in the Work/Life Balance Series see below:

[Good Work/Life Balance Comes From Good Workflow](#)

[How to Maintain Your Equilibrium](#)

[Whistle While You Work](#)

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