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**ACCOUNTING**

# Life-Work Balance — Myth or Reality?

Darren Root, CPA, CITP, CGMA • Feb. 13, 2012



There's one question that continues to linger in the profession: does life-work balance really exist? Or is it a myth? As I look back over my thirty-year career, I recall enjoying periods of life-work balance, while other times seemed like utter chaos. Like

the popular 70's song says, "To everything, turn, turn, turn, there is a season..." (The Byrds).

These lyrics represent the stages of life—bringing to light that there is a time for everything. And while this column may be over-simplifying the deeper meaning of this historic song, it hits my point that we all go through stages in life—some balanced and some chaotic. Overall, however, we strive for the reality that life-work balance can be achieved most of the time.

Life is made up of a series of stages. In brief, my "stages" included marrying my wife Michelle (30 years and going strong), graduating from college and starting my career in the profession, and raising three children—and all while trying to make my mark in the profession. The next big stage was starting my own firm and trying to grow a successful business, while trying hard to maintain a healthy relationship with my wife and kids. At this stage, life-work balance seemed like nothing more than a far off myth.

After years of building a Next Generation Accounting Firm, I started to see life-work balance as a reality. I implemented the right technologies, enhanced processes, got the right people on my bus (staff), and continued to improve and tweak operations to continually increase efficiencies. I also worked hard to build strong relationships both in the office and within the community.

I now own a business that I can work "on" and not "in." In fact, I'm taking two weeks off in the fall to explore Paris and Italy's Amalfi coast with my wife. Right now, I have my balance. Of course, this doesn't mean I still won't experience stages of chaos. That will always happen, but I know that balance will always come around again...turn, turn, turn.

Over the past thirty years, I've learned that the question of life-work balance being myth or reality doesn't really have an answer. It's not something that we obtain permanently, but stages we enjoy while on the journey. And hopefully, if you are doing things right, those stages of balance last a little longer each time, while the chaos lightens up a bit with each turn.

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