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**Randy Johnston** • Oct. 09, 2015



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Get a Life! This was a popular saying when I was younger. I have a concern about people who can't disconnect from technology. Unfortunately, being a technology

innovator or being a Luddite has very little to do with physical age, but with attitude.

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know me for my background in the physical sciences and psychology.

In these professions, I'll have to claim that I'm a rank amateur with casual knowledge through reading other experts, and observing clients, team members, family, and myself. I'm hopeful that the observations in this column, and the resources provided in links and named articles, will make you pause long enough to help you think through your future work/life balance, particularly in light of the cloud, mobility and other technologies that have become pervasive and invasive. Some of you have seen me go off in meetings this year on a "rant." This column is not intended to offend, but simply give you a few ideas to consider that I have not seen others in the accounting profession say. It was probably motivated by an [article](#) in the July/August Discover Magazine "A User's Guide to Rational Thinking" by Christie Aschwanden, which I noted in my Twitter and Facebook feeds.

### **Vacations and Time Off, A Waste Of Time and Money, Or Not?**

Cloud technologies enable us to work anywhere, anytime on any device (AAA). However, I'm thinking that we need to have the discipline to NOT work extended hours and in so many places. [Time off](#) is important as some observations [show](#). Studies have shown a drop of effectiveness when extended hours are worked. According to the [OCED](#), the level of GDP per capita and productivity is much higher in European countries where the work week length is short and vacations are taken.

"Save the American Vacation" by Jack Dickey in Time Magazine, May 21, 2015 was another reminder of the [value of vacations](#) as illustrated by H&M. Note further Jack Dickey reports that Bart Lorang, CEO of FullContact pays a \$7,500 bonus so employees have a "paid paid vacation" with the catch: the employee must disconnect entirely from the office. No email, no phone calls. Not being disconnected during vacations or taking a minimum amount of time off have been covered in the Economist and other publications frequently over the last few years.

Earlier this year, an interesting [piece](#) called “8 Ways To Disconnect From Technology

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## What Gives You Balance?

So why this topic in this column? I'm concerned that professionals are spending too much time working, and not taking enough time for vacations, time off in the evening and on weekends with family and to enjoy friends. I'm not one to tell you how to live, but it is clear that balance should be maintained. As a lifelong learner, I've had the opportunity to meet and learn from many great people. One lesson I was fortunate to learn early in my career from Zig Ziglar was work/life balance in seven areas: Intellectual, Family, Social, Career, Financial, Spiritual, Physical, which is sometimes referred to as the Wheel of Life. The idea that you had to **choose** to spend time in each area and keep the “main thing” the main thing was a good lesson to learn early in my career.

Likewise, taking time alone and to be quiet is important to my mental health and well-being. In today's connected 100% of the time society, I believe mental health is suffering. Since many of you primarily work and live in a single location and only travel occasionally for business or pleasure, it is easy to fall into the same habits day after day, week after week. If the habits are good and fit your lifestyle, I'm particularly happy for you. If your habits don't include an appropriate balance, it is pretty easy for your life to get out of whack. Some people believe they find balance through religion, yoga, exercise, reading or other activities, but it is clear that a balance of choosing something from many areas, as pointed out above, and focusing on things important to you is a formula for personal and professional success.

For example, I know that sitting in the hot tub early Saturday and Sunday mornings with my wife is a great way for us to catch up, speaking about all kinds of things, while relaxing and enjoying each other. When I've been traveling all week, we often don't get to speak as much as I'd like. What I find fascinating, though, is that we seem

to communicate more directly and clearly than some of our friends who are together

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on, get a life! Is the electronic gossip of Facebook, or should I call it Foodbook, so important that you can't have a meaningful interaction with those around you? Instead of living life, you may be letting the electronics distract you and help you pass life by.

For vacation this year, my wife and I had the pleasure of visiting K2 Enterprise's Dr. Bob Spencer and his wife. While enjoying the beauty of the great state of Kentucky, I was amazed at how many people were engulfed in their cell phones. At Mammoth Cave, a truly wonderful national park, I'd suggest that fully 1/3 of the people spent so much time on their phones, that they couldn't appreciate their families, the beauty of the caves or the magnificent visitor center. Most insightful was the "complete darkness" experience that is often done by guides in caves where the lights are turned off so you can experience total darkness and quietness of a cave. The ranger had to ask multiple people to turn hide their cell phones even after clear directions to put the cell phones out of sight before the lights were turned off. If you've been in a plane in the past five years, you have to appreciate the frustration of flight attendants trying to get people to turn off their electronics. Now picture that same experience in a cave!

### **Pay Attention To All Of Those Around You**

So what does all this have to do with the Cloud, mobile, and work life balance? I'm sure you have thought of this by yourself before reading this article, but I believe that using technology too much of the time is hurting our ability to interact with others. Preliminary science is indicating the same thing. However, we currently have a societal trend of ignoring science in favor of the opinions of our peer group. I learned from our ranger at Mammoth Cave that a cubic inch of stalactite or stalagmite material takes approximately 200 years to form in the cave. How long does it take us

to build lasting relationships, and how quickly can we destroy them by doing the

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