Finding Work/Life Balance in the Summer

Memorial Day is this weekend! This means, it is a three-day weekend for many of us. As you launch into summer it is important to develop a great work/life balance. A healthy balance helps you to spend more time doing the activities that you love.

The following tips can help you build a balance to enjoy your summer while working productively:

Schedule Your Day

We often fail to schedule our day or modify our schedules when we get distracted. To work efficiently, create a schedule (every day!) and stick to it. This could cut hours of work.

Tips to Schedule Your Day

1. Morning Ritual – Create a routine that makes you feel best throughout the day. Get up half an hour early to exercise or meditate. Eat a healthy breakfast.
2. Plan Your Daily Tasks- You can save time if you have a plan for the day. Know what tasks are a priority and create a Google Calendar to organize your day.
3. Plan Your Meetings in the Afternoon – Get the important tasks finished in the morning and save the afternoon for meetings and important phone calls.

Stay Healthy

Do you often miss your kid's summer baseball games or concerts in the park from working long hours? Maintaining a healthy body can help you cope with work's pressures to prevent working more than 40 hours per week.

Tips to Stay Physically Healthy

- Eat Healthy
- Avoid Stimulants
- Exercise Regularly
- Get Plenty of Sleep

Unplug After Work

Most of us are connected to our smartphones. We even use our phones as alarm clocks. However, when we are connected to our devices, it can prevent us from being present with our friends and family.

After you leave work, put your phone to the side. If you can't ditch your phone, turn off email notifications and put it on silent while you go on the mountain bike, golf game, or hike with your family.

Do not answer work calls after you leave the office. Your friends and family will appreciate your presence.

Delegate Your Tasks

We often take responsibility for tasks "just to get it done" or "because we can". Eventually, accepting too much responsibility leads to burnout. You will then get stressed, tired, and overwhelmed.

It's okay to delegate tasks. Hire a contractor to avoid the costs of a full-time employee or for temporary projects. You can hire contractors online from

websites such as Fiverr and Upwork. And if you are in Regulatory Affairs or Quality in the San Francisco Bay Area, I can help you find contract help as well.

Take a Vacation

It's summer! Have some fun! Go on that much needed vacation. A vacation helps you feel refreshed.
Encourage your employees to take a vacation also. Your employees will be more well-rested and energized to enjoy their work. Happy employees generate a productive company.

How-To Stop Negative Thoughts at Work

Stress can cause us to get distracted with negative thoughts, which impacts our work and personal lives. It's important to find a way to overcome your negative thoughts to maintain healthy relationships, productivity, and attitudes.

Learn how to stop your negative thoughts at work with the following tips:

The First Step: Recognize Your Negative

Thinking

The first step is to recognize your negative thinking. If you cannot recognize negative thoughts, you will not be able to fix the problem.

It could be as simple as someone not wiping down the table in the break room, getting called into another meeting when you have piles of work, or a customer complaint. Discover your triggers.

Changing Your Negative Thinking

Positive Self-Talk

Now that you recognize your stressors, use positive self-talk when the thought goes through your head.

Positive self-talk is not deception. Internal messages can evolve stressful situations into opportunities.

To achieve positive self-talk, write down a few messages that you can tell yourself, such as:

- Stop
- Get out of my head

Or something more colorful!

Get Around Positivity

Your environment will affect your mindset. Surround yourself with positive people. If your friends are dragging you down then decrease time spent with them. If you work in a negative work environment then you may consider changing jobs. As a Specialty Recruiter, I can help employees in the pharmaceutical and medical device industry find jobs that provide a supportive and healthy work environment.

Focus on the End Result

Accomplishing a goal can be frustrating. Keep the end result in mind to overcome hurdles that slow the process.

Why are you going through this process?

How will it help your company?

Drop the Expectations

If we have high expectations, we will often be disappointed when our plan falters. Be flexible with your plan. For example, you may have to work with a co-worker unexpectedly. Recognize that they bring different knowledge that could benefit the project.

Create a Heathy Morning Routine

Your morning routine can affect the rest of your day. Start your day with healthy choices to prevent negative thoughts. The following are a few practices that you could fit into your morning to achieve a more positive day.

- Stop hitting the snooze button
- Yoga or meditation
- Healthy breakfast
- Drink a glass of lemon water

How-To Eat Healthy at Work

Office jobs can be a major contributor to a growing waistline. We sit for hours, snack on sugary foods and break room treats, and often skip breakfast. We can easily consume hundreds more calories than we would normally.

According to a survey by Harris Poll, 2 in 5 Americans gained weight at work. 38% of employees thought it was due to stress eating and 24% thought it was from eating out regularly. A few simple changes can help us eat healthier.

If you change your diet, you could see your energy increase and waistline decrease. Start eating healthier at work to lose weight and increase your energy.

Eat Breakfast

Sure, you are cutting calories by skipping breakfast but breakfast controls your hunger and boosts your metabolism. If you do not consume breakfast, you often consume hundreds more calories for lunch and dinner.

The National Weight Loss Registry did a study on people that maintained weight loss for over a year. 78% of participants ate breakfast every day. 90% ate breakfast 5 days per week. Start incorporating healthy weight loss foods into your diet to help you loose weight. This means food that is low in sugar and carbs.

Reduce Coffee Intake

Our morning coffee is a habit for many office workers. However, most coffees are filled with sugar and fat from creamers and artificial flavors. Skip the morning coffee or drink it black. Doing so, can cut hundreds of empty calories from your diet.

Drink More Water

We can easily forget to drink water when we sit for hours. Unfortunately, your body cannot burn fat when it is dehydrated. Drink the recommended eight to ten glasses of water to help you stay hydrated. If you are having trouble fitting water into your lifestyle, try the following tips:

- Drink before you eat
- Replace calorie filled drinks with water

- Fit in a mid-day workout, even a walk
- Keep a water bottle with you
- Flavor your water with lemon

Prepare in Advance

Not only is eating out expensive but restaurant meals can have hidden calories that cause weight gain. Prepare your meals in advance so you know exactly what is in your food.

Dr. Oz provides a meal plan that reduces daily calories. The plan includes a grocery list and recipes. Spend your lunch break eating a healthy meal that was prepared in advance. The technique helps you acquire time to also take a walk.

Bring Snacks to Work

Most of us get the mid-day munchies. At that point, we may turn to the cupcakes in the breakroom, candy at the receptionist desk, or bring healthy snacks that fuel our energy and avoid weight gain.

Healthy Snacks

- Vegetables and hummus
- Yogurt
- Dried fruit
- Jerky
- Healthy crackers

How-To Avoid Burnout at Work

When emails pile up, project are late, and the phone is ringing, you will probably get burned out. We have all been there. It's tempting to continue pushing through your work. However, pausing to take care of yourself can allow you to refresh your body and work more productively.

Robert Epstein of the American Psychological Institute found that "25% of our happiness hinges on how we manage our stress." If you are stressed from your work day, it's important to discover techniques to prevent burnout. The following tips can help decrease stress from work load:

Schedule Free Time

43% of Americans don't use their vacation days.

Who can use your vacation days when there is so much work to do?

This is an unhealthy mindset! The human mind is not conditioned to work 10 hour shifts productively. Eventually, you will get drained.

Make time for family, friends, working out, traveling, or pursuing a hobby. Scheduling free time creates balance so you can enjoy your life and appreciate your work.

Take Breaks

We can easily develop tunnel vision when our work load is heavy. However, we need to break out of our routine to prevent burn out. Take a break. Go on a walk, meditate, take a long lunch, or work a half day.

Exercise

You have probably heard of "runner's high". This phrase is not a marketing scheme to sell athletic gear. "Runner's high" is the release of endorphins which is the body's feel-good chemical. Physical activity can help you unwind a stressful day.

According to WebMD, regular exercise has been proven to:

- Reduce stress
- Ward off anxiety and feelings of depression
- Boost self-esteem
- Improve sleep

Plan Your Day

Planning allows you to fight stress before it starts. Schedule your daily tasks to plan your day effectively. Designate time for checking emails and highlight crucial tasks. Schedule a mid-day break. A plan can help you preserve momentum and cut hours from your work day.

Google Calendar is a helpful tool for scheduling. The tool is free and can be downloaded as an app on your phone.

Sleep

Sleep is an essential human function. According to the American Psychological Association, sleep deprivation can affect mood, judgement, and memory. Without sleeping seven to nine hours nightly, you might not have the focus that your job requires.

How-To Boost Your Creativity

Every creative brain experiences occasional lulls. Losing creativity can be discouraging and can make solving some of your work problems more difficult. Before you give up, try the following tips to boost your creativity:

Collaborate with Others

Two minds are better than one when you want to foster innovative thinking. This prevents you from circling through the same ideas.

Be open minded to another person's perspective. Teams often contribute valuable feedback.

Go for a Walk

A short walking break could save you hours of brainstorming and increase the quality of your work.

According to a study co-authored by Marily Oppezzo, a Stanford doctoral graduate in educational psychology, and Daniel Schwartz, a professor at Stanford Graduate School of Education, shows that creative thinking improves while a person is walking and shortly thereafter. Creative output increased by 60 percent.

Meditate

To get creative, we need to reach our subconscious. Meditation is a powerful tool to quiet the logical mind. You can then awaken your subconscious which helps

you uncover new ideas.

Improve Your Mood

An optimistic mind is more open to new experiences and situations. When you are negative, your brain becomes more analytical and narrowly focused.

How-To Improve Mood

- Get some sun
- Force a smile
- Listen to music
- Write down the positive things in your life

Unplug

Your best ideas probably do not come when you are sitting in front of a computer. More likely, you are hiking, skiing, journaling, baking, or doing another activity that you love.

In fact, excessive screen time can damage your brain. According to Psychology Today, "excessive screen time is associated with structural and functional changes in brain regions involving emotional processing, executive attention, decision making, and cognitive control."

Step away from the screen to get inspired and document it on the computer later.

How To Achieve a Healthy Work

Environment

A healthy work environment is important to your team and can be achieved fairly easily. It boosts productivity and happiness and increases employee retention. If you have not created a healthy workplace, then it is time to make that effort, especially in this tight market for talent. Learn what creates a healthy workplace and start making improvements for the future of your company.

Offer Rewards and Incentives for Superior Performance

Rewarding employee performance is strategic. You must offer desirable incentives that fit the company's budget. If strategized correctly, rewards can lead to a more motivated and positive team.

There are many types of benefits that you can offer employees. This includes bonuses, gift cards, and event tickets. You may choose to reward an entire team or specific team member for achieving a goal.

See *20 Techniques for Acknowledging Your Employee's Good Work* for more ideas on rewards and incentives.

Choose Stimulating Paint Colors

The workplace can have a big impact on attitude, and colors can profoundly affect productivity. Angela Wright is a world-renowned color psychologist. She developed the scientifically tested color-affect system. According to Wright's research, the intensity of a color determines whether it is stimulating or soothing.

More saturated colors are best for the office place.

Wright's theory states that blue is connected to the mind, green to balance, yellow to emotion, and red to body.

The most obvious answer to a productive work place would be blue. However, you might want to incorporate green trim to create balance.

Offer Stand-Up Desks

Stand up desks have become part of many company's employee wellness programs. For example, Google provides standup desks for all employees. Facebook also has more than 250 employees using standup desks. Even I use a flexible desk to allow sitting or standing.

Research by Texas A&M Health Science Service Center concludes that employees in a call center are 46% more productive when using a standup desk.

Benefits of Standup Desk

- Improves Focus
- Increases Energy
- Reduces Back Pain

Be Flexible on Timing

Different people are more productive during various parts of the day. Some people perform better with a morning workout. Others get in early but need a 1.5 lunch break to renew their day. If your company's processes allow flexibility with timing, give it to your employees. It also helps attract people that may have a longer commute when hiring.

Allow a 2-hour window for morning arrival. You can also allow extended lunch breaks. Figure out what is right for the company and be as flexible as possible to your employee's lifestyles.

Communication Skills

The ability to communicate effectively within a company is essential. The skill prevents misunderstandings, which leads to errors and missed deadlines.

In our digital age, companies often communicate over email, text, and phone. Do not underestimate the significance of meetings to prevent confusion.

Tips to Communicate Well

- Practice Active Listening
- Use Strong Eye Contact
- Explain Tasks and Provide Detailed Handout or meeting agenda with time targets
- Speak in a Friendly Tone
- Be Open-Minded to Other Opinions
- Accept and Encourage Feedback

Improve the Lighting

Studies show that office lighting can play a role in employee productivity.

"Effectively lit and attractive environments enhance your image, help you recruit and retain high-value employees, and increase the total value of your facility." Philips Systems

To effectively light your office, incorporate natural light. If your workspace does not have windows then use broad spectrum lightbulbs. Broad spectrum produces the most similar affect as natural light.

Reactivity Versus Proactivity: How to Apply Proactivity to Your Work Day

Reactivity is often the initial response to stressful situations. For example, when it's raining outside, we are sad. When a meeting gets cancelled where we were going to announce our new business idea, we are discouraged. On the other hand, we do not have to be influenced by external behavior.

Reactivity can be detrimental to succeeding as a business leader. Learn to think proactively and you can turn stressful situations into new opportunities. There are a number of methods to apply proactivity to your life.

As a recruiter, these techniques have worked well for me to find the best candidates to fill positions. Try some in your daily routine to discover if they work well for you.

Applying Proactivity to Your Work Day

Be Aware of Your Reactive Behavior

The first step of applying proactivity is becoming aware of your reactive behavior. Notice how you react when your clients confront you with a problem. Do you take problems as an opportunity for company growth or is it a source of frustration? Don't judge your behavior. Just watch.

Alter Your Language

You are your biggest cheerleader! If you are telling yourself, "I can't" then you will probably never be able to accomplish the task. Change the way you talk to yourself for a more proactive approach.

Words to Incorporate

- I will…
- I can…
- I want to…

Start a Healthy Morning Routine

Alarm goes off – hit the snooze – alarm goes off again – roll out of bed – shower – coffee – drive to work.

Sound familiar? Many of us have a similar routine. Your morning routine can set the tone for your day. Start your day with healthy habits to influence proactive habits.

Healthy Morning Routine

- Exercise for 30 Minutes
- Meditate or Journal for 10 Minutes
- Eat Breakfast
- Full Glass of Water with Lemon

Plan Out Your Day

Without a schedule, it's easy to get to the end of the day and realize you accomplished nothing of importance. This problem escalates when you act reactively. As the saying goes, people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan.
Develop a proactive approach by planning your day in a planner or Google Calendar. Even if it's only to list the top 2 or 3 things you MUST get done today.

Cross off each task as you accomplish them. At the end of the day, you may find that you accomplished more.

Make Commitments

With family, work, and hobbies, making more commitments can seem overwhelming. However, commitments can help you develop a proactive approach toward improving your business success. There are many business groups that you can join through your city's Chamber of Commerce or through professional associations. Many groups meet once a month and can provide you with new insight, motivation, and inspiration to meet your goals.

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5 Methods to Avoid Fatigue in the Office

Our best efforts can easily crumble when we are tired at work. It's important to find remedies that make us more energized throughout the day. A clear head can work more efficiently. Discover what routines are right for you and include them in your daily routine. You may find some of the following tricks helpful for you:

Brief Office Exercises

The average American spends 13.9 hours per day sitting. The number of hours

can increase if you have an office job. Sitting all day has many disastrous side effects, including fatigue and loss of concentration.

The best option to beat sitting all day is a stand-up desk. If you cannot purchase a stand-up desk than you can always perform office exercises. Taking a walk is one of the best ways to clear your head and regain focus.

Office Exercises:

- Brief Walk
- Squats Behind Office Chair
- Calf Raises
- Push-Ups Against Desk or Wall
- Tricep Dip

Snack on Healthy Foods

There is nothing wrong with treating yourself to an unhealthy snack occasionally. However, your body craves nutritious foods. Eating unhealthy often is going to leave you tired for your daily tasks.

Replace the chips with carrots and hummus when you get a craving. Your body will feel more replenished to stay energized to get your work done.

Healthy Snacks at Work

- Carrots and Hummus
- Baked Corn Chips and Salsa
- Almonds
- Plain Oatmeal Packets
- Dried Fruit
- Low Sodium Jerky

Drink Water

Dehydration can leave you drained and fatigued. Drink enough water that your urine is light colored and you do not feel thirsty. Try to go to the water cooler three or four times a day. That will also help you get a small dose of exercise that

regains your focus.

Listen to Music

Listening to music at work is not for everyone. Some people say music is distracting. Others are more engaged with Beethoven plays in the background.

Before writing off music completely, bring your pair of headphones to work. Play a song with minimal lyrics to avoid distraction.

Music for the Office

- Sounds of Nature
- White Noise
- Classic Music with No Lyrics

Write with a Pen and Paper

Start thinking on paper. This technique might sound old school. However, you are glancing away from the computer screen which can be strenuous on your eyes.

Writing down your tasks is also an excellent productivity technique. You can visualize, adjust, and move your tasks.

Before resorting to caffeine every day, try these tricks! You may find an extra glass of water and a daily walk to be more powerful than your coffee.

How-To Improve Your Health at Work in 2018

With 2018 approaching, many people are inspired to create health related New Year's resolutions. If you are an office worker, you may sit at a computer for hours at a time. Eventually this can take a toll on your body.

According to Microsoft, the current amount of jobs today that require a computer is over 50% with an estimated growth of 77% by 2020.

If you are among that statistic, you could be facing serious joint and back pain, weight gain, or fatigue. Make your 2018 New Year's resolution to improve your health at work to improve your quality of life.

Use a Stand-Up Desk

Sitting too much can be detrimental for your health. Stand up desks allow you to mount your computer to a standing platform so you work in adjustable settings. Standing while you work has various physical and mental health benefits. I've recently started using a stand up desk and do tend to get more done when I'm standing vs sitting. Plus I do feel like I have more energy.

Benefits of Stand-Up Desks

- Lowers your risk of weight gain and obesity
- Improves mood and energy levels
- Reduces back pain

Drink More Water

Increasing your H2O intake seems simple but has many health benefits. Roughly 60 percent of your body is made of water. It helps with the transportation of nutrients, digestion of food, and regulation of body temperature.
Water can also be very beneficial for weight loss. When you consume water, you

can feel fuller therefore consume fewer calories. Try keeping a water bottle next to you everyday at work. You may also want to flavor your water with lime or lemon.

Take Periodic Walks

Your body was made to move. Consistent walks fight fatigue, chronic diseases, and weight gain. Dr. Mercola recommends to avoid sitting for more than 50 minute increments.

Specialized cardio equipment has also been created for office workers. Cyclers might enjoy the Stamina Mini Exercise Bike which allows you to workout your lower body from your desk chair.

Bring Healthy Lunches

You are what you eat. I am sure that you have heard it before. However, it can be easy to resort to unhealthy snacks while working. Your coworkers might also bring snacks to the office and the company parties rarely have healthy options. Eventually, you have gained 10, 15, or even 30 pounds.

Bring your own lunches and snacks to work so you do not feel pressured by the sugar in the break room. See these healthy lunch ideas from Eating Well Magazine.

Bike or Walk to Work

We live in a rushed society. Slow down and take the extra time to walk or bike to work for your health. That might not be an option if you have a long commute, but try to carve out some time for a walk during your day or a bike ride when you get home.

Benefits of Walking or Biking to Work

- It's efficient. Not only are you commuting to work but also exercising.
- It's cheap. You don't pay any gas or parking when you commute on foot.
- It's healthy. If you are heading to an office job then you will most likely be sitting for hours. Start your day with exercise by commuting to work.

- It's environmentally friendly. Biking and walking does not pollute the atmosphere like an automobile.

Make your health a priority in 2018! Your body deserves it.

How-To Manage Stress at Work

If you have had a job, you probably experienced work-related stress. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 40% of workers report their job at "very or extremely stressful." In these severe situations, a person's lifestyle can become compromised. The following are a few common reasons why Americans experience stress at work:

  - Low Salaries
  - Excessive Workloads
  - Few Opportunities for Growth or Advancement
  - Lack of Social Support
  - Work that is Not Engaging
  - Conflicting Demands or Unclear Expectations

Do not let stress overwhelm you. Learn to manage your stress before it takes a toll on your life.

Take a Deep Breath

When stress chemicals overwhelm our body, we experience the "fight or flight" response. Breathing deeply relaxes you muscles and allows fresh air into your lungs that helps relax your body. Next time you feel stressed over a surprising email or overwhelming amount of projects, practice the deep breathing relaxation technique. You can practice deep breathing without even leaving your desk.

1. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
2. Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should move very little.
3. Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your stomach should move in as you exhale, but your other hand should move very little.
4. Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

Eliminate Interruptions

Interruptions can add hours to your work day. You may have blocked out time for an important task. However, if phone calls, emails, or co-workers interrupt your schedule, your task could take hours longer than planned. It's important to find ways to prevent interruptions from disrupting your focus.

The first step is to plan for expected interruptions. Notify coworkers that you do not want to be disturbed within a certain time period. Turn off email notifications and send all phone calls to voicemail. Eliminating interruptions can help you get your work done faster and more thoroughly.

Eat Right and Sleep Well

I am sure you have heard of the phrase "stress eating" before. When we are

stressed, we seek high fat, sugary, "comfort" foods. Often, these foods stress out our body chemistry leading to fatigue, trouble sleeping, weight gain, and other diseases.

While a sugar rush might be appealing after reading a nasty email, long-term rejuvenation derives from an early bedtime and tall glass of water.

Identify Self Imposed Stress

Many stresses can be alleviated from simple lifestyle changes. For example, focus on your level of self-confidence rather than seeking approval of others. Procrastination can also lead to high amounts of work stress. Make sure your perception of work is not tainting what your work actually is.

Prioritize Your Work

Most jobs encounter deadlines. Prioritizing your work can help you complete difficult projects. The Liquid Planner Blog explains how to efficiently prioritize your work. Follow these steps to start meeting your goals every day. Find more information within their article.

1. Collect a list of all your tasks
2. Identify urgent vs. important
3. Order tasks by estimated effort
4. Be flexible and adaptable
5. Know when to cut
6. You do not have to live with chronic work stress. Managing your stress can help you enjoy daily life.