



## Achieving the Elusive Work/Life Balance

In today's tough global economy, more and more of us are finding it hard to strike that perfect balance between work and life. Unfortunately, this imbalance and the stress it creates can lead to a whole laundry list of new problems at work and at home.

Whether you're just beginning to feel the pressure or you've been struggling for a while, now is the time to regain control of the situation.

First thing's first -**figure out your priorities** and stick to them. If heading up the office party planning committee isn't in your top five, don't do it. That extra hour after work could be better spent with your family or friends. On the flip side, if your child's teacher asks you to take off work to participate in a bake sale, respectfully decline; there are plenty of other

parents willing to fill your spot; your boss -and your workload- will appreciate it.

The next step is to create and **maintain boundaries** between your work and your personal life. Whenever possible, leave your work at the office and your personal life at home. This can be especially hard if you're self-employed, but it is definitely necessary. Separating these two big aspects of your life will allow you to better commit yourself to each, so you won't be distracted by work at home or vice versa.

Another way to maintain the balance is to **explore your options at work**. Does your employer offer flex time, telecommuting, or even a shorter workweek? If these aren't options at your job, it's especially important to **take full advantage of your time**

**off**. Put away the laptop and turn off the cell phone (or *at least* screen your calls) during your days off. It's also a good idea to get household chores out of the way during the workweek so that you can really relax over the weekend or during a vacation.

Finally, try to **manage your time wisely** -at work and at home. You may not be able to add hours to the day, but streamlining your whole routine will certainly make you feel like you did!

If you're being spread thin these days, follow these relatively simple steps; you, your family, and your boss will surely notice the positive impact on your work and your life.

*For more information, visit [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com) and [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).*

## Slow Down... Let Your Staff Catch Up

While the workplace seems like the perfect place for you to 'get the lead out,' there's one thing you must keep in mind: as a leader, you're already way ahead of everyone else. Granted, you probably got where you are

because you move at such a fast pace, but now that you're there, you can afford to slow down a bit. A little patience will go a long way with your staff; getting frustrated with a sluggish employee won't get you anywhere. If you're

feeling like you're always ten steps ahead of your staff, remember that it's most likely because you so move fast; not because they're slow. All that matters is that the work is done and done right.

### Inside this issue:

Achieving the Elusive Work/Life Balance	1
Slow Down... Let Your Staff Catch Up	1
Can you Learn to Stay Calm?	2
Tough Times? Whip Up Free Publicity	2
A Classic Guide to Dealing with Change	2
Buff Up Your Emotional Intelligence	3
Need Candid Answers? Try Small Forums	3
What's New in Our States?	4

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## Can You Learn to Stay Calm?

Everyone craves a stable leader, the steady hand, the reassuring voice. People view calm individuals as less neurotic than jumpy ones, which is a function of genetics. You can cultivate an even temperament. You are either calm or you can learn to be calm. "Genetically identical people can give very different outward impressions because they think differently, they regulate their emotions differently", says James J. Gross, a psychology professor at Stanford.

Between the "a" of the antecedent and the "c" of the consequences is "b" for belief. You can believe that the world is stacked against you or that you regulate your reactions. Gross offers five tactics:

1. **Avoid the situation.** Steer clear of the



trigger.

2. **Modify the situation.** Change your routine or environment so that the bad set of circumstances rarely or never present itself.
3. **Re-deploy your attention.** When you are forced to operate in the triggering environment, distract yourself.

4. **Go for cognitive change.** Dismiss the triggering person or situation as unimportant or no longer relevant.
5. **Repress it.** Focus on controlling your behavior, such as keeping your face still, not blinking, unclenching your teeth or fists, and not twitching or pumping your leg.

George Washington cussed a blue streak as a young man but controlled his temper thorough force of will, turning his worst fault into his greatest strength. On the other hand, FDR remained a cool customer. They were both great leaders.

*Adapted from Never Let them See You Sweat, Kate Zernike, The New York Times*

## A Classic Guide to Dealing with Change

Who moved My Cheese?, a simple parable about change is celebrating its 10th Anniversary and is now the best selling book of all time, according to Andrea Sachs, in her Time magazine article. What exactly is it about this small book that a basic reader can consume in 45 minutes?

1. **It is about change**, the thing we fear most. Two people and two mice

suddenly find themselves without their normal ration of cheese and they respond differently.

2. **It is about adapting to change.** The mice go looking for new cheese and find some while the people don't in the beginning. Eventually the humans discover they need to break their old habits or perish.

3. **It is about resisting change** One of the human's yells "Who moved my cheese?" and refuses to accept reality.

Critics argue that the one size fits all approach and too much change reflect not a change in paradigm but chaos created by incompetency. Still the little book endures.

## Tough Times? Whip Up Free Publicity

It's hard enough keeping existing business these days without the pressure of recruiting new customers. Luckily, there are ways to drum up new business without breaking the bank. Start by ditching the fancy public relations and using these methods of free publicity:

1. **Blog** –that is, if you can write about your work with some enthusiasm. If you're not the greatest wordsmith, recruit an employee for the task. Market your blog via email, fliers, or direct mail. To really reel them in, link the new blog to related free sites with

other helpful resources. Remember that your blog is only as useful as it is current, so update it regularly.

2. **Keep an eye on current events** and form your ideas accordingly.
3. **Learn the value of seasonal marketing.** Center your promotions around a particular season, holiday or the weather. There's a month or a day to celebrate almost everything– take full advantage!
4. **Know what makes your business unique** and relay that message to

potential customers.

5. If you see a story on the news that's related to your business, **call the news editor** and offer additional information or perspective. It might get you a free on-air mention!
6. **Write letters to the editor** of a publication read by your target clientele. Remember to keep it relevant.

*Adapted from Executive Warfare, David D'Alessandro, © 2008 McGraw-Hill*

## Buff Up Your Emotional Intelligence

Yale psychologists John D. Mayer and Peter Salovey found that the ability to think dispassionately about your own passion is linked with success. This finding opened up a whole new field: emotional intelligence.

Many in the real world needed an interpreter, who turned out to be Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*.

"Being a 'tough person' no longer is a winning strategy in organizations," Goleman says now. "It works in the early days of a start up or when people do not have other choices. But even then it does not work all that well."

As smart, well educated people move up the ranks, their emotional qualities begin setting

them apart. Unfortunately, poor empathy and self-management may not become apparent until leaders rise to leadership positions, where their inability to control their emotions can create havoc.

What to do? The answer seems to lie in something called "mindfulness", which means becoming more aware of your thoughts and actions.

"Leaders who make the best decisions," he says, "are those who spend time by themselves reflecting. Meditation helps one get into the mode of mind where the background information processing, which is the wisest part of the mind, can rise to the surface, and you get the 'aha' of decisions you have been pondering.

Lesson: Set aside time to reflect. Do a little reading on the subject, and be mindful of others.

*Adapted from* Tea and Empathy with Daniel Goleman, *Lawrence M. Fisher, Strategy + Business*.



## Need Candid Answers? Try Small Forums

Want to know exactly what your employees are thinking? Try getting them together in small groups for an intimate discussion. Such a format will allow employees to feel that they can be open and honest; plus, they'll have the support of the group, making them feel more at ease when raising an issue.

Small forums are especially useful when you've just taken a leadership position at a new company. You'll be able to learn exactly how the company's different departments

and employees work so that you can explore new, more effective ways of getting the job done. Even if you've had the same job and the same staff for years, a small forum can be a great way to reconnect and re-evaluate the way your team functions.

When arranging a forum, be mindful of the group size. Make sure that the group is small enough that everyone has the opportunity to speak up.

Be sure to respond to suggestions in a timely and fair manner. Your small group

discussions won't get very far if employees feel that you aren't listening or that you're playing favorites. Earn your employees' trust, and you can be sure that they'll keep coming back to you when they need to voice their opinions.

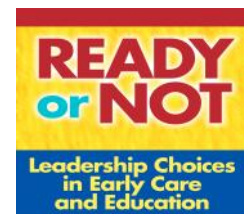
*Adapted from* Creating Magic, *Lee Cockerell, © 2008 Broadway Business*

### Leading for the Future of Early Care and Education

Stacie Goffin, author of *Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education*, is conducting research for a new book to be published by Teachers College Press. This new book, *Leading for the Future of Early Care and Education*, will include a compendium of leadership development programs and initiatives across the country that is focused on advancing early care and education. If you are involved in an early care and education leadership development program or initiative, please e-mail Stacie directly at [eceleadership@gmail.com](mailto:eceleadership@gmail.com) and provide the following information about your program:

- Program Name
- Target audience
- Location
- Telephone number and e-mail address of contact person
- Web site address.

She will contact you personally with follow up questions. This research is being supported by a grant from the McCormick Foundation.



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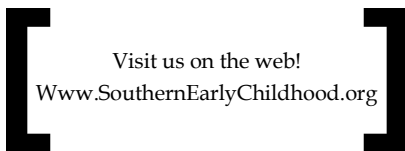
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Promoting Quality Care and Education  
for Young Children and Their Families

*The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:*

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*
- *Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.*



## What's New In Our States

### **Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System Will Expand Statewide This Year**

Child care centers across Mississippi will begin advertising their "stars" in the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System this year. The rating system enrolled centers in most parts of the state during a four-year pilot phase and will expand throughout the state in 2009.

In addition to the prestige and marketing advantage of quality ratings, centers that earn 2-Star to 5-Star ratings and participate in the Mississippi Child Care Assistance

Program receive increases of 7% to 25% in monthly certificate payments. The Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch of the Mississippi State Department of Health and the Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network also recognize quality ratings in their online databases for parents.

To earn stars in the voluntary quality rating system, centers must meet standards in the areas of the learning environment for infants through four-year-olds, staff qualifications, family involvement, and business administration. Trained evaluators measure

the learning environments using standardized surveys of how teachers interact with children, the quality and variety of learning materials, and the physical design of classrooms.

The Office for Children and Youth of the Mississippi Department of Human Services contracted the Mississippi State University (MSU) Early Childhood Institute to administer the system. For more information, call Connie Clay (601-853-3972) or go to [www.earlychildhood.msstate.edu](http://www.earlychildhood.msstate.edu).