

## Busting the work-life balance myth

Many of my executive clients say they want work-life balance. You might find what I'm about to say a little contrarian. I want to encourage you to turn your back on the myth of work life balance and go for everything you want.

When busy executives aim for work-life balance they often get stuck on how to measure success. When asked how they'll measure their goal they don't know. They can't answer. Or they reply with vague notions of fitness, health, family time. Sometimes they state their goal in the negative

“I don't want work to sap all my time, creativity and energy”.

They report feeling resentful towards their job for seeming to 'rob' other aspects of their lives. They know they don't want yet another year where that happens again. When pressed for a goal stated in the positive they say by New Year they will be energised and fulfilled by their work and non-work lives. What's wrong with this goal? If you don't know what you're aiming for you never know if you've achieved it.

The very notion of work-life balance is compromise. It is the idea that we can't have it all and we have to let go of some things we want to get other things we want. This trade-off-mentality is a glass half empty approach that will leave you feeling empty at the end of the year. Sound unrealistic? Think about this; when I ask my clients what it is they really want they state goals that sound like this:

- Bill one mill
- Yoga every week
- Sunday dinner with the family every month

The best goals are short (less than 5 words) stated positively (what you are aiming for) and measurable (high achievers always seek out crystal clear goalposts – so listen in for this when you are interviewing for the next high achiever on your team).

Here are some goals that my clients have set this year after we had the 'work life balance' chat. They got clear on exactly what they wanted from work and exactly what they wanted from their family life, social life, health, fitness and other goal areas.

- Grow the team to 35
- 2 weeks in New York
- Surf every week

These people are setting themselves up for a very rewarding year. They have primed their brains to seek out opportunities that will facilitate achievement of these goals, they will have an easier time deciding what work and non-work commitments are serving others needs and not their own. It's easy to say no (very sweetly of course) when you are clear on what you are aiming for.

Think about your satisfaction levels right now. Do you want to spend another year pulled in all directions and satisfying everyone else's goals and not your own? Do you want to use your end of year break to reflect on the resentment you have at work for not allowing you 'balance'? Or do you want to chase some clear, meaningful goals that represent a satisfying life for you?

Good luck getting clear on what you're after this year and good luck getting it!