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Life & Work – Patricia's Success Story

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Can Balance Really Exist Between the Two?



What do you do when two dreams collide? How do you determine the best way to balance both and be successful? For many professionals, parenthood is just as much of a dream as career suc-

cess. However, often one finds oneself having to sacrifice one for the other. Employers like to refer to this constant

reshuffling of priorities as “work-life balance,” but many like the benefits or support too much to keep a fair balance between life and work. Is there a solution? Is balance between work and home life even possible? How can it be obtained? Here’s how one woman rose to the challenge and was able to introduce balance to her life:

Patricia had worked for ten years in a big corporation and felt experienced enough to move to a small, privately held company in the same metro area where she landed for an additional 15 years. Knowing this privately owned company needed lots of work, she got used to putting in long hours and trained everyone who would listen about how to handle certain situations. She gave much more of herself than was requested, and she grew to feel like the company was one big family. Going from a 2,000-employee atmosphere to less than 100 was quite an adjustment, but it fit her lifestyle.

After years of dedication and feeling that something was missing, Patricia decided to start a family. Now, faced with little backup and used to handling many issues over the course of a day, she stressed about how to announce to the company she would be leaving and how they might react to her good news. Patricia had laid the foundation for her department and built her function within the organization to the point that many relied on her. She now needed to deal with the difficult task of transitioning this role to another who needed not only to be able to maintain her work but also to continue to develop the organization into the future. After all, this job was very much Patricia’s “baby” for some time now, and she had become personally invested in ensuring its continued success. How could she

prepare all those that relied on her while at the same time equip a new person to maintain the momentum she had created?

She actively checked in with people to get a pulse on how they felt about dealing with each other and became more of a 'mother-hen' over time where people would randomly come to her office for advice. Her challenge: not everyone wanted to admit or remember how much she helped them. However, Patricia was smart and kept an 'event diary' at home by person, so she usually came well prepared to speak with someone she needed help from. The company began to understand her value, but they still tended to try to save their money.

She decided to take Monday off for a course four weeks in a row. She had all emails forwarded to her staff and asked them to jump in. Knowing that they would call her for information, she showed all the calls to the owner after he commented that it looked like they handled things well while she was out. He came to realize just how vital she was. This developed into a cycle. He got the value proposition. After a while it became clear, they needed Patricia and couldn't survive without her.

Patricia started to wonder if there was perhaps an alternative to entirely leaving her position. After all, she had proven her worth and value to the organization. Could she find a balanced arrangement between work and home? As her pregnancy entered the final stages, Patricia started working from home one day, then two days a week and proved that she could handle things remotely. She knew she had to give more even though she wasn't there and worked to perfect her skills through career coaching. At

this stage in her career, Patricia felt she would gain more from intensely focused sessions over classes and, although this method was more costly, this made the best use of her time. She completed training in Negotiation, Conflict Management, and Politics with small privately held companies. All tailored to her specific needs.

In the end, Patricia stayed home for four months, but three months were paid due to her meticulous development and appreciation of herself. What she gained most of all, however, was the development of the best perception of her by her employers and, most of all, of herself. After four months and actively blogging about her activities, she had another company pick her up, and she worked between two different companies, her original employer and a new up and coming organization. She maintained both roles for a year and made much more than either could compensate her for if she had worked full-time. Eventually, she fully transitioned over to the new company and supported them for another two years. She then joined a consultancy practice in 2011 and has been with them on a limited time basis, allowing her to continue her career while still finding time for her two children and husband.

Stories like Patricia's are still somewhat rare these days. Many career-minded people feel there is no alternative to maintaining both work and home life. In the end, one or the other may be compromised. In Patricia's case, she knew her value to the organization and used it to her advantage with the help of her dedicated coach.

Demonstrating the value you add to an organization can very well be the ticket to the working solution that fits

your life. If faced with a situation like Patricia's, don't give up on either dream. With some strategic planning and determination, you can find a true sense of balance in your life.

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