



RYP Quarterly

Leading Yourself: What's your Formula?

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The first test of leadership is your ability to lead yourself, and how you role model your formula of leadership to your family, friends and work colleagues. With the start of the calendar year, I thought it would be a good time to provide some thoughts on how to juggle the inevitable work-life leadership challenges, which need to be navigated.

Leadership is not a part time work habit, but a full-time life quest.

What follows are some tips and thoughts that may help your work-life navigation, the key is to come up with your formula.

Don't Miss What You Can't Get Back

Life is made up of many moments, the stories they create and the memories they leave. Things like birthdays, school and sporting events, key family milestones and celebrations all play a crucial part of family dynamics. These are usually known well in advance, so diarise them at the start of the year, and work your schedule around them. Being present symbolises what is important to you and your family members. Encourage your team to come up with a "Personal Calendar" for the year, which forecasts when staff need to attend a personal commitment. This should be shared so it can be planned for and managed.

Success At the Expense Of Your Family Or Your Health Is Failure

You only have one shot at life. So, managing the competing priorities in your schedule requires some discipline and leadership. A good filter is to never compromise your health or your family. Finding time to exercise, holiday, make family dinners, take time out to have lunch or critically reflect is crucial for your own mental health and family dynamics. Put family and exercise time into your schedule and share it. There is nothing embarrassing about scheduling mental health time into your week.



The Family That Travels Together Stays Together

Taking the time to have holidays with your family is time that ultimately becomes cherished in later years. It is important to incorporate holidays only with your family, this is a great way of bonding together and getting to enjoy each other. Just being together is where the magical and memorable moments take place - unscripted! Take your full complement of annual leave, perhaps not in one hit, but interspersed throughout the year. *Schools have terms for a reason.* This breaks the year up and keeps you refreshed.

Have A Fulfilled Diary Not a Full Diary

It is easy to be busy. In fact, many people think busy-ness is a symbol of status and leadership. Take a discerning approach to who you share time with and for what purpose. Life is not about how important you are, but the impact you make. You can only do this if you are positive, energised and upbeat about your life, not weighed down with the burden of how tired or busy you are. If you are passionate about life, you will be energised. Work is only one part of your life. Parenting, friendships, learning, and socialising are also all aspects of personal leadership.

Wake Up Slowly – End the Day Quietly

The morning should be your time to wake up slowly, plan the day, eat a healthy breakfast, exercise, read, reflect, and engage with the day. It is your time to set the day up for success. How you wrap and reflect on the day is of equal importance. Spending time with your family, partner, or friends to debrief everyone's day and the world around them is important, along with doing things that you enjoy (listening to music, exercise, making/eating food, reading, watching something – anything other than work). This allows you to refresh, reflect and enter the following day energised and with objective. Avoid having distractions at the dinner table and encourage conversation by having a 'TV and Device Free' Policy at the dinner table.

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Everyone Has a Front Yard And Back Yard To Lead

Your front yard is your career and “work mode.” Like a front yard it is what everyone sees and observes at work. It is the face you put on each day when you are interacting with others within the workplace.

Your back yard is your personal life. It is less often revealed to colleagues and includes your state of mind, your health, your beliefs, and emotions. It impacts your family and friends and fuels the essence of how you feel about yourself. It is the main game!



The two yards are not mutually exclusive to each other. They need to be aligned and connected. Your front yard (career) provides you with a means in life, whilst your back yard (personal) provides the essence of who you are. Both require your attention and leadership. Whilst your front yard requires time, effort, and focus, you cannot neglect your back yard. Ignore it at your own peril!

Adopt A “One Simple Thing” Policy

This is a powerful mechanism to help you and your team juggle a work-life balance.

A “one simple thing” policy provides staff with a mechanism to ensure there is a perceived permission to pursue a work-life balance week in, week out. It could be a range of things such as leaving early on a set day to pick up children, or starting later a Friday morning so they can drop children off at school, or ensuring staff get home to celebrate family birthdays or milestones or allowing a staff member a longer lunch break to exercise. The key is that it is shared, agreed, and supported by the team. Everyone in the team should have their “one simple thing.” It starts with the leader role modelling their simple thing and enforcing and supporting their team member’s “one simple thing.”

In Summary...

I have never met anyone who has cracked the perfect work-life balance formula. But I have met plenty of leaders managing their work-life balance better than others. The one common trait for those doing it better is they have their formula and the discipline to stick to it (and role model it). Too often the workplace encourages “presentee-ism,” where the unwritten culture encourages a non-flexible approach to work hours and the need to be ‘present’ at the workplace, but often not productive.

So the question that remains is, what is your formula for work life balance and whether it is effective? Good luck!

“Leadership is a full-time life quest and, as a leader, your first duty in life is to yourself.”

- Loy Stewart (thanks Dad)

Facta Non Verba – Deeds Not Words

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