

OPINION

‘Work-life balance is attainable’ And other misnomers that make life miserable

Concepts like 'work-life' balance are myths that can drive you to misery. Don't let this happen to you

BY [BERNICE ROSS](#)

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With more than 1,000 Inman posts, Bernice Ross is a long-time contributor whose [weekly column](#) on real estate trends, luxury, marketing and other best practices publishes every Monday.

Are you feeling [stressed out](#) over too much work and not enough time to do it? Do you never seem to have enough time for you?

If so, you might have fallen for one of the three biggest misery-making myths that can wreak havoc with both your business and your health.

Have you thought:

I need to get better at time management.

I should try to have a more balanced life.

Rather than paying someone else to put up the signs, fill the brochure box and install the key safe, I can do it myself.

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, it’s time to dump these three misunderstood concepts.

Myth 1: I need to get better at time management

No one can “manage” time — each of us has the same 24 hours per day. What you *can* manage are the choices you make about *how* you spend your time.



Eight ways to build the right culture for your team

Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in their book *The Power of Full Engagement*, explain it like this:

“The number of hours in a day is fixed, but the quantity and quality of energy available to us is not. You cannot manage your time, but you can manage when and how you spend your energy.”

Loehr and Schwartz argue that to increase your energy, you must first identify when your energy is at peak levels. Are you most alert in the early morning, during the day, or are you a night owl? To accomplish more with less effort, tackle your most difficult tasks during your peak energy times.

‘Choice management’ means responding rather than reacting

A better way of spending your time is to *respond* to a *specific* situation rather than *reacting* to it.

When you react, you spontaneously act without planning or considering how your behavior will impact others.

When you respond, however, you take the time to consider the ramifications of the decisions you make. In other words, you engage in “choice management.”

You can respond to something rather than react by:

- Creating and following a written [business plan](#).
- Evaluating which [prospecting](#) activities produce the greatest ROI (return on investment) for the time and money you spend.

- When someone becomes [angry](#), listen to what the person's concerns are, write them down, and search for the best possible way to reduce their anger.

Why giving yourself choices matters

Running in reaction mode is the antithesis of giving yourself choices and feeling in control.

Research from the Mayo Clinic has shown that lack of choice and feelings of helplessness create pessimism. Pessimism has been repeatedly [been correlated](#) with poorer health and decreased longevity.

Giving yourself choices counteracts this — even when it's a poor choice.

Myth 2: Work-life balance is attainable

I reviewed a wide variety of articles on “work-life” balance, and though most had plenty of tips about how to achieve it, no one had a clear-cut definition. An [article in Forbes](#) summed it up best:

“While employers can look to studies about what work-life balance means to millennials to gain some insight, it's important to remember that work-life balance will always mean something a little different to everyone.”

How can you achieve something no one can define?

Identify what's in harmony

Although no one seems to be able to define exactly what work-life balance is, you can easily identify what's working in your life, (what's harmonious) and what's not.

What's working [reduces your stress](#) and produces better outcomes; what isn't working increases your stress and yields poor outcomes.

Harmonious moments can exist even during profound chaos. For example, a loved one might be dying, and yet you can create a beautiful harmonious moment as you share fond memories of times you have spent together.

Consequently, rather than chasing “work-life balance,” focus on creating more moments where you laugh, experience the satisfaction of hitting a goal, help a loved one or solve a problem in your transaction that can save it from falling apart.

Seek emotional support

To become better at managing your energy and to have more harmonious moments, pay special attention to your personal emotional needs.

Paul Pearsall's work with heart transplant patients, documented in his book *The Heart's Code* has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of strong emotional support in terms of lowering your risk for heart disease.

To dramatically reduce your risk of having a heart attack, here are three easy steps that Pearsall recommends:

- Have dinner with those you love four times per week.
- Laugh often; five deep belly laughs per day strengthens your immune response more than running five miles per day. (Running increases cortisol levels, which weaken, rather than strengthen, your immune response.)
- [Give back to others through volunteering](#), where you worship or any other activity that helps another person.

Pearsall's research clearly shows that if you don't take care of your emotional needs, there's a high probability that your physical body will be unable to support your business needs.

Loehr and Schwartz also point to the power of giving back to others which shows:

“A spiritual connection to a deeply held set of values and to a purpose beyond our self-interest. This is the most powerful source of our motivation, perseverance, and direction.”

This concept is related to one of the tenets of the attraction principle of “you get what you give.” The more you contribute to others, the more others will give back to you.

Instead of focusing on the “numbers,” shift to focus on being of service to your customers and your community.

Loehr and Schwartz call it, “He who has a ‘Why’ to Live.”

Myth 3: I can do it all myself

The third misery-making myth is that you can and should do everything yourself.

If you earned \$40,000 or more last year, your hourly rate is at least \$20 per hour, if you work 40 hours a week and 50 weeks a year.

Any activity that you engage in, such as putting up signs, installing [lockboxes](#), filling brochure boxes or other tasks that can be done for minimum wage, means that you are working for whatever the minimum wage is in your area.

Your time would be better spent on being in front of buyers and sellers and letting someone else handle the routine tasks that can be done for minimum wage.

Moreover, while you might be able to create your own brochures and websites, it’s almost always more efficient to hire a professional to do it. They might charge more than your hourly rate, but chances are they will cost less in the long run because they can do the task better than you can.

If you want to work less, make more and have more time for you, there's no better time than now to dump these three misery-making myths.

Bernice Ross, president and CEO of BrokerageUp and RealEstateCoach.com, is a national speaker, author and trainer with over 1,000 published articles. Learn about her broker/manager training programs designed for women, by women, at BrokerageUp.com and her new agent sales training at RealEstateCoach.com/newagent.

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