



# Taking the **Lead** Globalization and Technology— Their Impact on Life Balance

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**R**ecently while vacationing in Arizona with a couple of friends, five horses, and a mountain view, I realized how amazing it was to be “unplugged” for seven whole days. I was able to shift the expectations of my clients and activate auto responses for incoming calls and e-mails. One of my traveling partners was

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less fortunate. In a business with immediate and crucial demands she was drawn to answering her phone, responding to her voice mail, and e-mail. By not answering she ran the risk of missing an opportunity that may have translated to increased business and profits. Consumers know that in our world of intense competition and immediate accessibility through technology, if we’re not available, someone else will be.

A young woman walks down a city street on the phone, disengaged and distanced from her walking partner and the baby in the stroller in front of her. On a 15-minute break from a training workshop, an executive strolls to the rest room while e-mailing on his PDA. He’s oblivious to who or what’s in front of him. Instead

he takes this 15-minute window and fills it with a glimpse of the demands that await his return to work tomorrow—adding to his stress level.

In the middle of the night a young mother rises from bed in order to participate in a conference call taking place on a Tuesday afternoon in Hong Kong. An exhausted man sits at a conference table in Sydney after traveling from the States for a two-day meeting, and he can’t quite seem to get it together. A project manager in NYC starts his day at 4:30 a.m. in order to participate in a conference call with his staff in India.

The very technology and global trends that provide us flexibility and limitless opportunities also have the potential to affect our well-being. In fact, just being seems to be difficult to accomplish these days. As the boundaries blur between foreign marketplaces, and between office and virtual office, so do the lines between work and leisure or family time. What long-term affect might this have on our lives as human beings? What long-term affect might this have on our ability to be profitable—to offer our best and successfully compete in the global marketplace?

Minimize burnout and validate the importance of life and work balance.

Some organizations are recognizing the importance of reinforcing the value of work/life balance. However, it’s become such an acceptable trend to work extreme hours to meet increasing demands and compete that it seems we’re sometimes at

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a loss as to how to turn it around. Here are just a few of the small-step leadership strategies you can take to minimize burnout and validate the importance of life and work balance in your organization:

- Be cautious about contributing to an “everything is urgent” mentality. Work with your managers regularly to decipher the difference between true immediate priorities and negotiable demands.
- Ensure that your managers are well coached on effective delegation and require that they consistently do so.
- Be a role model. Avoid sending requests or e-mails that carry a nighttime or weekend time/date.
- Avoid language and inferences that encourage and accept extreme hours as an acceptable norm in your organization.

Research tells us that Millennials—our future leaders who were born in the 1980s and 1990s—site well-being as a core value. Perhaps there’s hope for us after all.

**BSM**

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