

# Approach to Work-life Balance on Productivity

Philosophy meets Practicality.

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Life has a way of dictating different paths and avenues on a day-to-day basis. Leaders begin with goals and objectives and strategies to accomplish those goals and for whatever reason, life throws a curveball. In an ever-changing world, leaders must take the necessary steps to improve their mental, physical, and emotional health in addition to balancing the needs of family, while balancing the needs of the office. Working individuals can at times assume multiple roles and may suffer “role confusion” due to the demands of others, lack of understanding of economic conditions, setting unrealistic goals and lastly, simply discounting growing in a different direction.

Taking care of the mental, physical, and emotional health and balancing individual and work needs requires leaders to conduct an individualized SWOT Analysis of their individual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats constantly and strategically. Oftentimes, leaders staff many Board of Directors and cross-functional teams and are efficient in assessing the needs of their respective organizations, yet very seldom turn that assessment inward. Conducting a personalized SWOT assessment requires leaders to follow steps to ensure their actions are in line with their personalized vision for their life today. It requires them to toss out the fantasies of yesteryear and

to make honest balanced decisions based upon where they are today in their personal as well as professional lives.

Prior to conducting a SWOT assessment, one must:

- 1) Find a quiet place to meditate and listen to what the body is dictating.
- 2) Write out an honest practical vision. The vision sets the tone for that leader's life and can change periodically.
- 3) Recognize that a leader is human. Acknowledge this fact and create steps to show oneself love by increasing and implementing methodologies that guarantee good spiritual, physical, psychological, and financial health.
- 4) Leave negativity and energy drainers in the rear-view mirror and propel forward knowing that stress and negative thought patterns slow down your performance at work and in personal roles.
- 5) Be diligent yet know that when an answer does not easily come, it is time to be still and silence everything and everyone until the higher purpose reveals itself.
- 6) Embrace a wealth of love and support and if the leader discovers that there is no circle of support, it is essential to get one.

After the prior steps are executed, the leader can conduct the assessment. Leaders should not be afraid to embrace inner truth and eliminate any thought or habit that feeds fear. Productivity requires leaders to stop, honestly assess and execute with results. A clear mind, path and direction are essential. Beyond the personalized SWOT assessment, leaders must spend time understanding their professional roles against their desired roles; set realistic boundaries; learn about the current aggregate economic policy as well as the economics of their workplace and household. With these

analytics in hand, the leader can set realistic goals that provide balance and productivity. The lack of individualized personal assessments negatively impacts balance which stagnates productivity.

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Find a quiet place to meditate and listen to what the body is dictating.

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Meditation can be conducted at a park, in an office or in any space the leader carves out to block out the world. This ancient practice allows the leader to be still and awake at the same time paying attention to the external environment around you yet blocking out all stimuli to increase focus. When done properly, meditation can reduce the symptoms of mental illness, increase creativity and innovation, increase the ability to concentrate and remember events, and heighten awareness and restore emotional balance. Meditation can come in multiple forms such as spiritual mediation, mindfulness mediation and focused meditation to name a few. There are other forms of mediation to research and determine what is the best practice for you. The result of meditation should bring peacefulness and stillness. A clear mind, calm spirit and stress less mind and body are an important step in being open to honestly conduct an individualistic assessment.

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Write out an honest practical vision.

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“Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.”

-Habakkuk 2:2

Leaders flirt with the romanticization of relationships, titles and flashy assets neglecting the truths that exist underneath the fantasies: 1) the leader lacks vision and purpose; 2) the vision has faded into the background due to some level of codependency and/or 3) The vision is

Unspoken! Undeclared! Uncommunicated! —leaving the leader with no voice within the greater context of his or her existence.

It is great to know the vision of a company and the role that leader is hired to fulfill. However, it is neglectful to not assess whether the company's vision and expectations align with a leader's individualized vision plan. A leader's vision should be created around what he or she desires to achieve in the short and long run. If you accept a role that does not compliment your individualized vision plan, then your existence in that role becomes convoluted, disoriented, and extremely conflictual. It is tempting to get lost on the "why's of no vision" but focusing on the action of forging forward to create a vision plan is the most important urgency of this chapter. The vision plan affords the leader the opportunity to create a more intimate impactful relationship with self. Think of this as the first step to the introspective journey towards work life balance.

### *Create and Implement vision.*

- 1) Write it down, make it plain. If you are a visual individual this can be accomplished by creating a vision board to depict your short- and long-term goals over a span of time. Depending upon the individual, this can be forecast in increments of one year, three years or five years. Vision boards can be created using a Microsoft PowerPoint deck or an old fashioned posterboard with illustrated images or magazine clippings. You will find that this activity is not only fun, but enlightening and informative. Your board may go into a different direction than which you envisioned; this is perfectly okay. This journey can cause the "light bulb" to go up over your head and direct you to a new path. If you are not a visual person and prefer to map out your strategic plan utilizing steps, feel free to do so. Write down your vision and what you seek to accomplish at the end of

the intervals. Whether you choose to create a visualized board or step by step strategic roadmap, be sure to take a moment to reflect on what you really envision for your life absent the variables that exist in your current roles. While roles may overlap, it is essential that your vision board/plan is created based upon the honest conversation you have will feed the SWOT analysis.

- 2) Create a strategic roadmap of the individualized direction detailing the tasks, resources, alliances, and relationships needed to execute each component of the vision plan. For example, if you intend to fulfill a role that requires a certain level of expertise or credentials, your roadmap should contain certain steps such as researching the requirements of the role, attainment of credentials or educational path, identifying the specific program(s), and taking the steps to enroll or register, covering the costs and so on...
- 3) Implement vision “language” into everyday activities and conversations. There is power in declaring, speaking, and communicating with boldness the paths you envision for your life. Do not allow anyone to script your story—become your number one absolute narrator.
- 4) Make sure that all your actions, activities and gestures are in line with your vision.
- 5) Surround yourself with individuals, habits, and positions that “level you up” bringing the vision into fruition. The pieces must fit to bring about synchrony and synergy.

The vision sets the tone for the leader’s life and can change periodically, depending upon present day circumstances. Just like a business plan, the leader’s vision plan should adjust to personal and business events which stagnate and/or change that leader’s perspective, ability, and capacity to execute the vision. In 2020, we experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and all the consequences and rewards that came with this tragic event. Many lives were changed and the way that society operates, communicates, and executes has changed. With change, comes additional opportunities. As you assess your paths and create or improve your vision, be sure to consider foreseeable events that may alter your thought patterns, perspectives and personal and professional goals and

processes. As mentioned earlier in this section, truths exist beneath fantasies, but what is the definition of a fantasy? Google's English dictionary, provided by Oxford Languages describes that definition as "the faculty or activity of imagining things, especially things that are impossible or improbable." Formulating a plan, attaining the resources and relationships to implement that plan, and ensuring that capacity, ability, and conditions exist within you to strategically execute the vision plan is essential to executing your vision and guaranteeing accomplishments. Under this scenario, the fantasy is morphed into truth through the skilled and strategic execution of certain steps that are guaranteed to manifest vision into reality.

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Recognize that a leader is human.

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Leaders are not invincible. To become or remain a successful contributor in life, a leader must love self, first. Words are meaningless if works do not follow. If you ask random individuals the question, "Do you love yourself?" Many may respond within a second with a yes, without first considering the action that love requires. Leaders must own who they are by implementing daily steps to care for their bodies, minds, spirits, and environments to the best of their abilities. Perfectionism is unhealthy and mistakes are inevitable. Adjust your lens to see mistakes as opportunities for improvement. They are learning pains and leaders will have a lot of stomach aches as they progress on the journey from novice to expert. The journey teaches best practices, strategies and pitfalls associated with surviving in the office, workplace, or virtual work environment, while balancing the needs that the individual's holistic self requires. There is an internal sensor that alarms the body or the mind of situations that bring imbalance. A successful leader trusts that internal sensor and changes paths when necessary. A healthy leader first

acknowledges, “I am human.” Then, creates daily steps to show oneself love by increasing or sustaining healthy activities and implementing methodologies that guarantee good spiritual, physical, psychological, and financial health.

### *Others*

As you encounter other leaders, vendors, subordinates, or colleagues, recognize that they too are human and struggle with interoffice and interpersonal dynamics that exist outside of their brief encounter with you. Discover ways to become assets and partners towards the elevation of those in your space. A happy healthy space creates a happy healthy workplace. If you possess certain skillsets or have access to best practices that can lighten another’s workload, share the wealth of information—resist the temptation to harbor the data.

Allow others the room and space to grow into their calling, fostering a healthy environment for those individuals to voice their vision with confidence. Remember your journey and empathize with the journey of others and always orchestrate your words, strategies, and behaviors to align with that of a leader who encompasses humility, compassion, and knowledge. It is imperative to eliminate outdated practices and perspectives by being vulnerable in all areas of life. The psychology of vulnerability in the workplace is a foreign concept for some. However, integrity requires a certain level of vulnerability. To ensure honest healthy feedback and behaviors that increase efficiencies, performance and profitability, leaders must actively employ, implement, and reward efforts to create a peaceful thriving sustainable work environment where human capital and the transformational process is essential to the survival of the company, a department or division, cross-functional teams and most importantly, the individual employee or colleague.

When a leader loves inward that love illuminates their outer environments. Establishing work-life rewards for employees and taking advantage of the work life rewards available in the workplace such as company fitness centers, nearby walking trails, snacks, cafés, and group lunch meetings, etc. sends the message that “humanism and holistic nurturing is important”.

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Leave negativity and energy drainers in the rear-view mirror.

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Disconnect from life draining activities. Discontinue negative thinking and reactions. Take charge of your actions, protect your space and flow into the direction that your spirit guides you, while learning to become the architect of your own thought patterns. Obey your positive voice and love you for the good you represent. This can be harder than it sounds so I invite you to embark upon a journey of transformation which requires you to implement daily affirmations centered around positive thinking, positive conversations, and positive behaviors. To leave energy drainers in the rear-view mirror, this requires the active silencing of naysayers, complainers, and victims. A leader’s mind must be clear to create and inspire. Too much consumption of another’s issues can bring traffic congestion into that leader’s mind. For example, when driving on a freeway, if there are minimal vehicles on the road all driving in a synchronous manner, this creates a clear path for the driver to reach his or her destination. However, the introduction of reckless drivers, excessive cars and accidents create barriers and stagnate that driver’s journey. If you apply this analogy to the personal paths of a leader, then you can safely conclude that issues, drama, and the “violin” moments of the lives of another can create a congestive distracting situation. This is not to say that the leader does not lend an ear to someone in his or her supportive circle, but that leader must cautiously discern when the messenger of the information has taken a turn down a negative street



and that communicator (driver) is stuck going down a one-way lane in the wrong direction with no desire to turn around and reposition themselves into the correct direction. Unfortunately, this reality exists in the minds of those who do not change, desire to learn a different way or who thrive through co-dependency. Being a leader requires owning one's space, time, and spirit, which fortunately requires the leader to terminate negative communication and encounters by setting boundaries with others and only allowing information and behaviors that bring about healthy positive outcomes. The removal of negativity leaves room for productivity and additional time to focus on improving self.

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When an answer does not easily come, be still.

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Distractions produce mental and physical noises which prevent leaders from discerning direction. When you do not have an answer that addresses the next steps of your personal or professional journey, be still, silence everything and everyone and seek that inner guiding force diligently with purpose. Humans possess the internal resources to succeed. However, distractions and too much movement can keep us from hearing the inner voice and the requirements communicated by our spirits. Often, a good night's rest, vacation, yoga or meditation, time with God (if you are a believer), or just a day of stillness is all that the mind and body needs. Leaders are encouraged to reset and listen to the inner guidance within. Internal messaging can sound staticky and different when there are too many distractions in place. At work, timeouts come in the form of paid time off, vacation leave, holidays, and mental health time off days. Many leaders work long exhausting hours never taking the time to stop, pause, breathe, and verify. There must be a checks and

balances between what is occurring and what is right for your inner spirit or the consequence can be dire sending the leader into a spiral of wrong decision making.

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Embrace a wealth of love and support.

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One of the greatest desires in life is love. Leaders become married to their businesses and jobs fulfilling their needs with processes, accomplishments, and overrated goals. You deserve and should require love and support from individuals in your life. It is acceptable to leverage your circle of support to assist in making your load lighter by helping you with tasks and responsibilities in your personal and professional lives. However, often, leaders operate in silos missing the opportunities that collaboration and support brings. Embracing a wealth of love and support requires vulnerable communication and an honest assessment of one's needs. If the leader does not have an inner circle of support, it is imperative to get one as soon as possible. This can happen by joining networking groups found on reputable social media sites and seeking like minded individuals who are seeking the same. Do not be afraid to communicate your expectations and what support looks like for you. On the contrary, be prepared to let go of self-destructive behaviors and tendencies that bring harm to your relationships. Any expectation you put forth will be required of you. Tap into additional resources available through worship venues, life coaching venues, and professional development associations.

Allow others to come into your circle and open yourself up to experience authentic love and support in your personal and professional life. Delegating certain tasks and responsibilities frees the leader up to focus energies on other activities that take precedence.

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## Individualized SWOT Analysis

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The gig is up. Goals do not exist outside of the present moment. A mindful leader remains in the moment allowing choices to follow a transformative path dictated by their physiological needs. We live in a world where decisions are not static. With the development of an app, technological device or advanced methodology, our perspectives, and the way that we think, do business, and live evolves into a dynamic phenomenon that we never thought possible. Endless possibilities seem in reach.

### *Who Am I?*

As we evolve, transformation requires the leader to think and act outside of the box to lead today's workforce. The mindset of yesteryear no longer applies in our daily lives or day to day operations in the office. The evolution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century business minded professional requires flexibility, diligence, commitment, and discipline. Leaders must possess the tenacity to stay in the mix despite struggles, pandemics, and lifestyle changes. Amid these changes, we change. So, it is imperative to assess who you are today and are becoming. Your answer may differ greatly from the juxtaposed assessment of the past.

### *What do I want?*

Fulfilling multiple roles on life's journey leaves many not knowing or being willing to have the honest conversation within ourselves first and communicate our wants to others in a way that is acceptable. Too often, our family, close friends, and colleagues box us into the versions that is most comfortable for them and we often play along and find ourselves in a never-ending cycle of complaining and feeling used and unfulfilled. Mainly because we shy away from articulating that which we want in our lives. Wants are different than needs because its life's special reward for a

job well done. When one denies the inner wants and settles for the status quo, the only being to blame is self. People are not mind readers and leaders must resist the need to intertwine a work persona and the desires that others have for them into their own personal reality. Doing so, leaves an empty hollow pit filled with animosity, discontentment, and ambivalence.

### *What do I need?*

What do I need is the most important question that you can ask yourself! Sometimes, an individual's needs conflict with their wants and the wants others envision them fulfilling. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct a needs assessment on your spirituality, mentality, physicality, financial positioning, and relationships that you have built. We often invite behaviors, mindsets, attitudes, and individuals into our lives that are around past their expiration date. Assessing your need requires you to take a step back to identify the activities that bring joy, sustenance, and sustainability to your life. If an activity or individual is consistently and constantly withdrawing from your life and never making any impactful deposits, then its time to rid your life of these distractions. A leader's home and work life may fall into this category and it may be imminent to choose a different path or bring a novel experience into your existing path.

### *Do my desires match up with what is feasible for me in this moment?*

There is an old saying, *"people want what they can't have"*. Unattainable wants leave many leaders chasing dreams and completing limitless tasks that lead to a dead end. We see, we covet, we desire, we want that which is not in the cards for us to have. This dynamic exists, mainly due to circumstances beyond our control and those that are within our control, do not match up with what is attainable and maintainable. Sustainability is a topic that should be at the forefront of every decision made by a leader. You cannot keep what cannot be maintained. This is the number one reason why people lose assets, jobs, titles, and personal and business relationships. It is

important as leaders to take a step back, assess, reassess, and conduct an individualized SWOT Analysis and Assessment of their individual journeys. The results of said assessment may be dramatic, leaving the leader awakened, yet uncomfortable. Uncomfortability breeds revolutionary change created out of the inner revelations rendered by the leader's inner psychology and spirituality. Many may choose to go in a different direction while others may opt to move forward with a different perspective. The SWOT should be used as a tool to assess feasibility today and the near future. If one does not possess the Strengths or see opportunities, this renders them into prisoners of their weaknesses and threats. This is often called a stronghold. Strongholds prevent leaders from grabbing hold of their true destinies and doing what is best for them versus fulfilling the requirements of ascribed roles.

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## SWOT Assessment

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### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

#### **Strength**

*the quality or state of being physically strong.*

*the capacity of an object or substance to withstand great force or pressure.*

#### **Weaknesses**

*the state or condition of lacking strength.*

*a quality or feature regarded as a disadvantage or fault.*

#### **Opportunities**

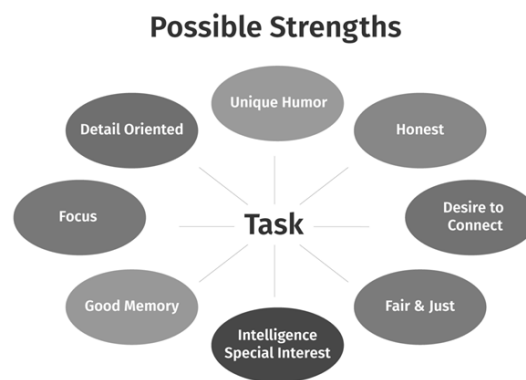
*a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something.*

#### **Threats**

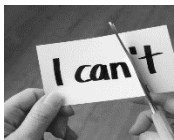
*the possibility of trouble, danger, or ruin.*

## Individual Strengths: Questions to Ask Self...

- How has God qualified you?
- Describe Your Strengths
- What are you good at?
- What comes natural to or for you?
- What resources do you have access to?
- What makes you positively unique?
- What makes you a good employee, leader, or business owner?



## Individual Weaknesses: Questions to Ask Self...



- How are you keeping you from fulfilling your destiny?
- Are you a believer or a conceiver?
- What is your mindset about failure?
- What are your perceived limitations?
- Detail your weaknesses.

## Individual Opportunities: Questions to Ask Self...



- How can you improve you?
- How can you improve your environment or surroundings?
- How can you position yourself towards self-sufficiency and self-efficacy?

## Individual Threats: Questions to Ask Self...



- How is your spirituality?
- How are your finances?
- How are your relationships?
- Are you comfortable within your own skin?
- What are some social, environmental, and economic factors that can wipe you out?

As threats arise, ask yourself, “*How can you remove or mitigate those threats and turn them into opportunities?*”

This last section should be approached as a periodic exercise. In life, leaders add to strengths and opportunities and all the assessed areas change depending upon the era and immediate social, economic, and political environments. When assessing strengths, weaknesses,



opportunities, and threats, verify that the assumptions are rooted in fact. For an opportunity to exist, ability and capacity to execute must exist. Think about ways to offset your weaknesses. The same is true for threats. Is there a role, expectation, dead-end job, marriage, friendship, or family structure dooming your progress and canceling out the vision that you have created for your life.

Whatever truths you discover after the SWOT Analysis and Assessment, know that you are the makers of your journey and each day represents a brand-new start. You are not boxed into a depiction in a movie or a description of how others define you. The beauty is that you can choose to take charge of your life, actions, and destiny by simply removing yourself from any stage that does not bring the balance and love you deserve. A friend of mine used to say, "If you don't like the drama, get off the stage." That one statement changed my perspective and how I move in the world.

Leaders must identify and assess daily to ensure that the vision has not changed and that you are fulfilling your vision. Embrace change and different perspectives; enjoy the lessons that the journey brings and humbly, yet boldly be open to forge in a new direction or improve your existing path. Productivity increases when the leader consciously creates a plan to guarantee balance between personal and professional existence. Change is evident in every stage of life. There are many that do not achieve their fullest potential in life because they refuse to change. Stepping out of your comfort zone may be a little awkward at first, but you will find that change takes you to the next level of your journey. Write your reality and experience the overflow. You can measure the results of your assessment by your level of peace.