

It's A Balancing Act

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

We have a stressful job – no doubt about it! We struggle trying to fit it all in. I was particularly struggling with finding time to address all the management duties that come with running a building, while also spending time in classrooms observing and providing support to my staff. I was spending 10 hours at work each day and still taking work home. I was losing sleep and felt drained most days. I loved my job but realized something had to change. Therefore, the purpose of this action research was to find a balance in my work/home life to make sure I was spending time on the most important part of my job, supporting students and teachers.

Statement of Your Wondering:

My concern with finding time in the day to get it all done, led me to wonder what I could do to achieve a better work-life balance.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I initially I approached this project as a scheduling issue. I began by collecting data from my 2015/2016 calendar. Fortunately, I kept one calendar with all my activities, work and home life. So I had a pretty clear picture of how I spent my time. I categorized all my activities in one four ways: management, instructional, other, and personal. The first two categories took up much of my work day. But a major concern was only 34% of my day was spent on the most important part of my job – that as an instructional leader. I knew I had to make some changes.

As stated earlier, this originally was an exercise in scheduling. My time was valuable. I needed to set priorities when scheduling my day. I wanted more time devoted to walk-throughs, observations and staff support. But I realized I needed to train my office staff so they could help me protect my time and schedule my priorities. I implemented three major changes at work.

- I was more intentional with my schedule, blocking out times each week for the priorities in my day.
- I trained office staff to screen phone calls and walk-ins while still making sure we were welcoming to parents and families.
- I became more organized by handling things once and only once and devoting certain times in the day to respond to email

Along with the changes at work, I implemented a few changes at home that allowed more time and energy for family, friends, and fun!

- I placed my phone on Do Not Disturb from 7:00 PM to 6:00 AM.
- I streamlined tasks like shopping and cooking by utilizing Kroger Clicklist
- and Hello Fresh.
- I used an APP called SleepWell.

I collected data from my calendar after making the changes at work and at home and found that my time on instruction increased from 34% to 47%. That is a significant change and will allow me to be a better support to the students and staff at LPE.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, I learned:

- Prioritizing my activities during the day and scheduling my time accordingly and training my staff to protect my time, allowed me to be a better leader and be in classrooms more often.
- Implementing a few changes at home provided a better work/life balance.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

As a result of this action research project I agree with Stephen Covey that "the key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities". I will continue to focus on prioritizing my daily activities to allow me to be in classrooms and with students. I also realized that I am not delegating as much as I should. My next action research project will focus on effective delegation.

References:

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