

ACTIONS FOR ACHIEVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Action: Email only during the workday

The executive director and staff and the executive and board/board chair should agree upon expectations for email turnaround time during and after work hours. I recommend stopping at 5:30pm and, on the weekends, unless something really is critical, let it wait until Monday. (*Radical idea!* Don't have work emails sent to your cell phone. I know executives who adhere to this policy and it has made a difference in their lives.)

Action: Take vacation time

Executives: model good behavior by taking your vacation and holidays. Many employees do not feel comfortable leaving on time or scheduling vacation when the boss is constantly working. Actively encourage your staff to take holidays and vacation time and periodically check in to make sure they are following through. Board members: expect your executive to take time off and support them in doing so.

Action: Incorporate fun into the workplace

Plan a staff fun day *during* the workday and consider inviting families: box lunches in the park or a local preserve, canoeing, or a beach day. At least annually, do something fun for a few hours together away from the office.

Action: Plan for a marathon, not a sprint

Nonprofit leaders are passionate and mission driven; marathon runners know how to pace themselves and conserve energy to give a big push at the right time. Direct your efforts to top priorities and learn to say "no." Continually evaluate if what you are spending time on is propelling you and your organization toward its strategic objectives. If not, maybe the task doesn't need to be done or can be scheduled for a future time. (Of course, don't do this in a vacuum...communicate with bosses and board chairs about the "nos.")

Action: Adhere to best practices for the board/executive relationship

The board and executive sets goals together; boards should stick to the best practice of having only one boss and refrain from asking executives to juggle directives from different board members. Use the one voice, one boss best practice.



Action: Anticipate your organization's workflow

Communicate with your team, including your board, about work cycles and workloads. Maybe the end of the year is busy, but August's workload is light? Discussing what times of year the staff is in a crunch mode can alleviate anxiety on all sides. Plan for how staff can take time off during the week if additional time is required beyond working hours for special events, etc.

Action: Examine tendencies to micromanage

Scrutinize your management style—it is hard to be a micromanager and have work-life balance. Shift away from being exacting about details toward effectively communicating your expectations about quality of work. Then let your staff determine the best way to accomplish a task and meet their personal and organizational goals...without micromanaging the details.

Action: Delegate wisely and build your team

If you try to do everything in your organization, you'll be so buried in work that you'll probably drown in it. Determine the tasks that only you can do well and focus on those. Part of being a good leader is building your employees' skills. If you think you have to "do it all," it is going to be next to impossible to find work-life balance. Invest in building your team's skills and then delegate responsibility, keeping in mind everyone's workloads.

Action: Set realistic deadlines

If you have planned your week and something gets dropped on your plate, unless it has a real deadline (like a grant opportunity), be realistic and communicate honestly about your workload and priorities. Come to an agreement on timeframe—schedule a task for the following week or shift around lower priorities to allow for a time-sensitive matter.

Action: Take responsibility for your own work-life balance

It is OK to say no; it is OK to establish a realistic deadlines; it is OK to put an away message on your emails. All the tips in the world won't help if you don't make work-life balance a priority for yourself. Let's get started being more balanced. If you have questions, call or email me M–F, before 5:00pm CST.

