

## Work life balance – is it the Holy Grail for business owners?

By Kristy Howard

### The Dilemma

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It is the 21<sup>st</sup> Centaury dilemma – how to have quality of life and a successful business/career. No longer does the ‘Mars Bar’ 8 hrs work rest and play rule fit modern life. For many business owners, work is a passion and an obsession making the barriers between work and play blur. And who has 8 hours rest these days? There is just so much to do!

So how do you know if you have a good work life balance? Is it the hours spent at work and play? The amount of domestic chores you do in between picking up the kids and running the business 24/7? It is different for everyone and the only way to know if you have a good work life balance is to examine how you feel about life. Typically people with good work-life balance notice the following things about their life:

- They are happy and content
- They feel excited about their coming day
- Difficulties are often seen as challenges rather than problems
- They feel as though they don’t have to miss out on anything
- Their nearest and dearest are happy with the quality of their relationships

People who don’t have a good work-life balance often notice that:

- They feel overwhelmed and stressed on a daily basis
- They feel as though they are ‘missing’ out on something
- Difficulties become problems and dramas
- They dread the coming day
- Their nearest and dearest are frustrated with the quality of their relationships.

### Strategies for achieving a better work-life balance

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If you feel your work-life balance is out of kilter, here are some strategies that can be used to change the situation.

1. **Review your priorities and how you currently spend your days.** This can be done by drawing a circle and dividing into wedges according to the amount of time you spend in each area of your life (see attached worksheet). Take note of what you do and how you feel about it. Use it to help decided what your priorities are for the week. Pick at least one activity for each priority for that week ie family – go for a family bike ride,

exercise 3 times, partner – watch a movie together etc. Sometimes it only takes 15 mins of time to do something fun to create balance.

2. **Drop unnecessary activities.** Using the three headings **like, dislike and ambivalent**, break your pie chart (from 1) down into separate activities and put them under the appropriate headings. Then ask yourself for the dislike and ambivalent activities – DO I HAVE TO DO THEM? If not, drop them or delegate to someone else hint: kids can do the dishes!
3. **Protect your private time.** We keep doctor's appointments, meeting dates and kids activities religiously. Do we give time for ourselves the same respect? This strategy is about scheduling ME time in the diary and honouring it ie regular exercise, chill out time, time for creative activities.
4. **Accept you need help to balance your time.** All of us need help to achieve a work-life balance. This can be as simple as just talking about it with our nearest and dearest through to hiring cleaners, staff or even a business or life-balance coach to get you started. We are not islands and it is ok to ask for help.
5. **Plan fun and recreational time (and honour it).** Lastly, decided what fun (what makes all the hard work worthwhile) is for you and then plan to have lots of it from annual holidays to regular lunch/coffee dates with friends and family and even just time to watch favourite DVD's, read or listen to music, whatever makes your heart sing. What is the point of a busy life if it is not fun and there is nothing fun to look forward to?

At the end of the day, whether we achieve work-life balance is a **choice** we have and only we can make for ourselves because we are in control of our lives. We can find the Holy Grail, it is in our hands.

If attaining a better work-life balance is something you would like to work on, call Kristy Howard for a complimentary coaching session.

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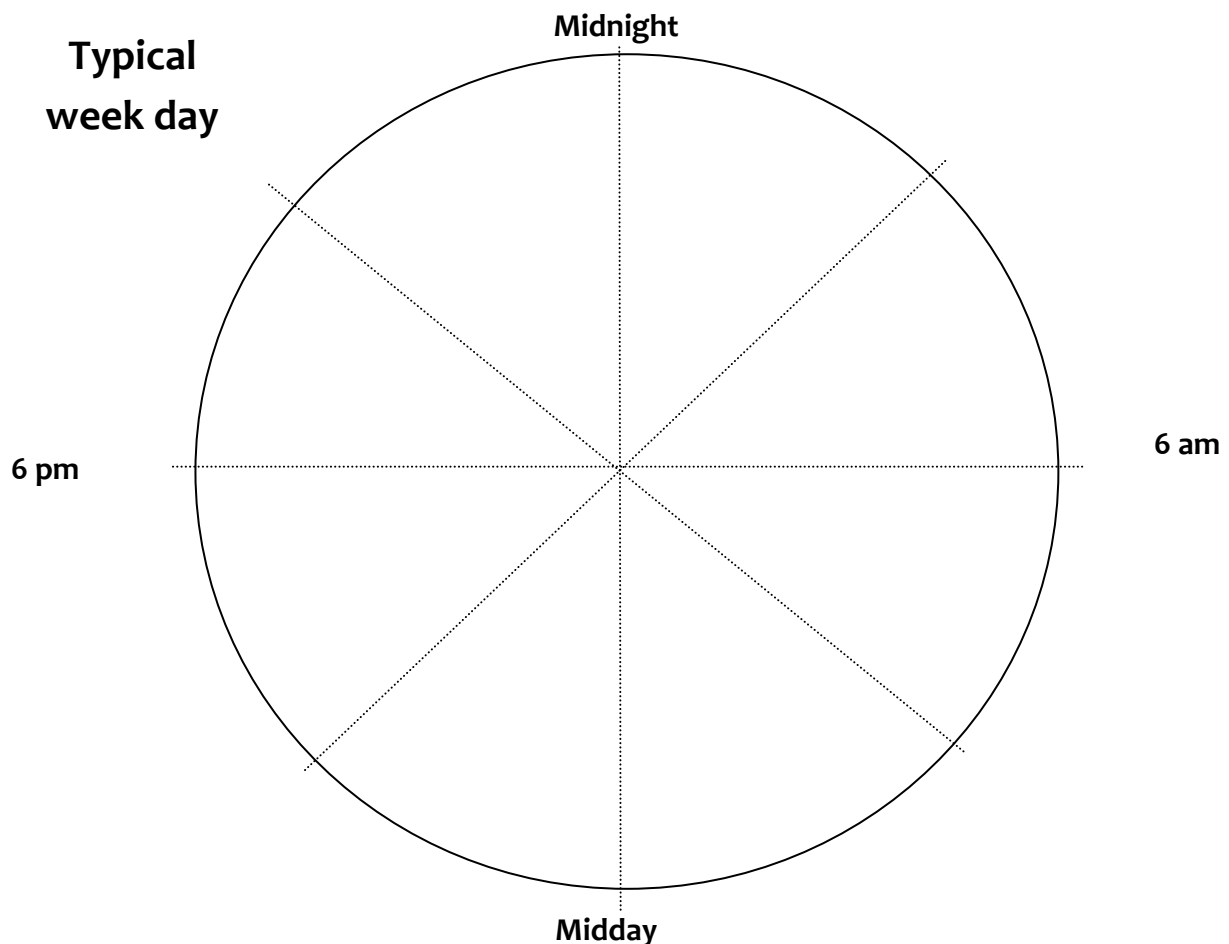
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## Work-life balance Worksheet

To work out if your work life balance is working for you, try this following exercise.

1. Divide the circle into wedges according to the amount of time you spend in each area of your life (you might like to do one for the working week and one for the weekend) eg
  - a. Paid work
  - b. Family
  - c. Household/garden duties
  - d. Exercise
  - e. Carer duties
  - f. Time for you
  - g. Voluntary work eg sporting, not-for-profit, school etc
  - h. Other





**3. Look at what you have written in the dislike column.**

For each item, ask yourself 'Do I have to do this?' Maybe someone else could do it for you (paid/barter/negotiate). If the answer is yes, brainstorm some ideas to make it more satisfying or enjoyable.

**4. Look carefully at what you have under the ambivalent column.**

Often these activities take up a lot of time and can be worth taking a closer look at. Again brainstorm ideas to make the activity more useful/fun/satisfying.

**5. What does your ideal day look like?**

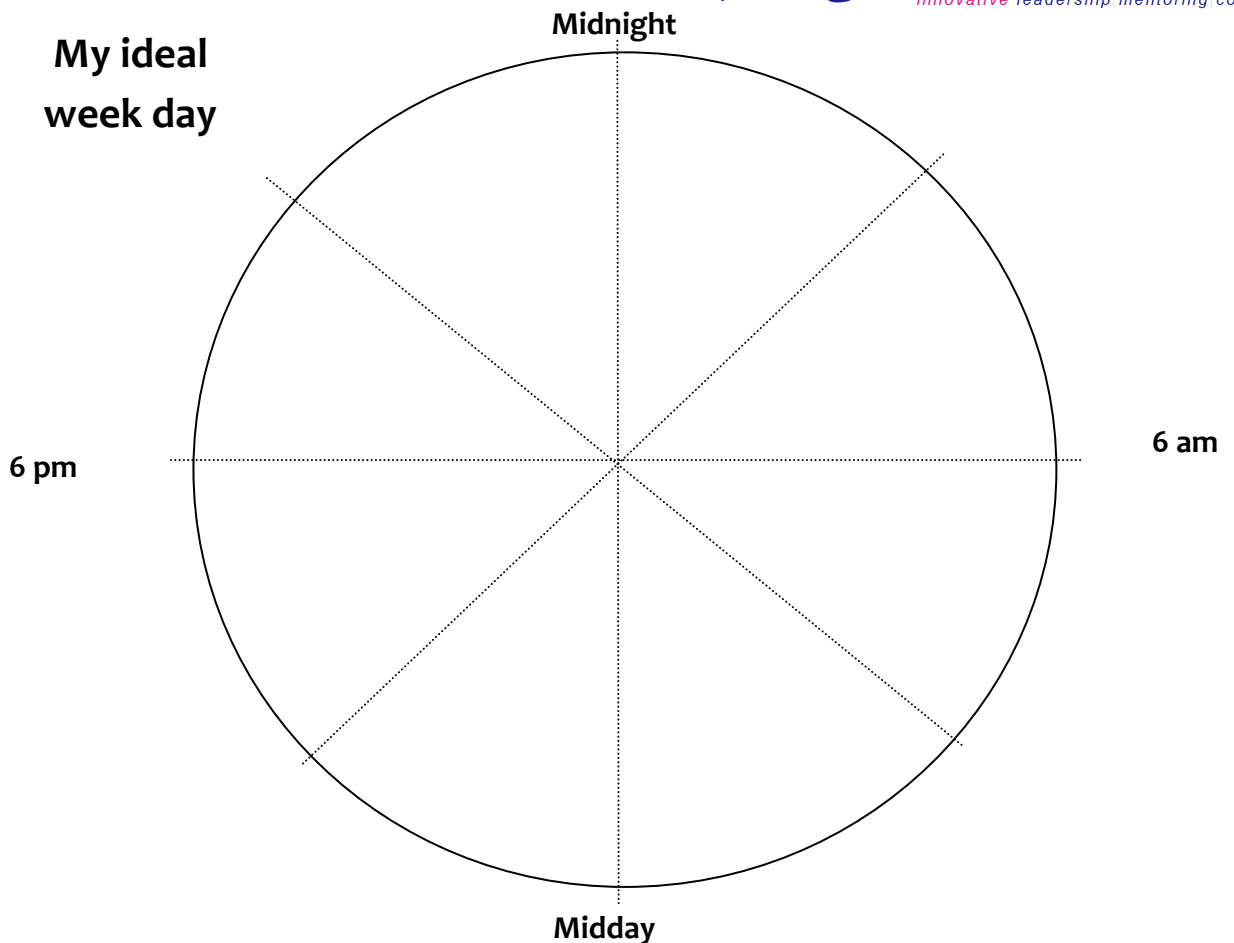
Take a moment to plan your ideal day/week. Sometimes 15 mins on a activity that you love is enough to give you some internal satisfaction and the feeling of balance.

Alternatively, 15 mins spent on a task you don't like doing is sometimes enough to break the back of the task and get it out of your brainspace.

My ideal day/week would include the following activities.....

- Work
  
- Partner/spouse
  
- Family
  
- Household/garden duties
  
- Exercise
  
- Time for me
  
- Carer duties
  
- Volunteer

**My ideal  
week day**



**My ideal  
weekend**

