

Work Life Balance Made Simple

The difficulty in achieving good work life balance is that there is more to do than there is time in a day to do it. The simple answer is to discover a way to insert more hours in each day. However, since no one has cracked that one yet, the next solution is to focus on making sure you do the important things with the limited time you have.

Children in our MindLab classes * learn a very useful tool which can help you focus and prioritise your time. Our pupils learn to distinguish between **what is trivial** - things that are unimportant and give little value and **what is crucial** - things that are extremely important and valuable.

We teach children to apply this distinguishing tool both to the board game they have just played, and to their real life situations, in our case, to work life balance.

Firstly decide who your "customers" are in your working life and in your home life. In your home life I suggest that your customers are your partner and children. In your working life, your customers are the people who employ you, such as your boss, and the people you come into contact with who bring money into the company, such as the people who buy your companies goods.

The next important step is to decide **what the activities that would delight your customers are**. These are the crucial activities you should make time for.

For example in your family life crucial activities the delight your customers might include:

- Sitting down and chatting over a nice meal together as a family
- Asking your "customers" what they think and how they feel, and listening and responding sensitively.
- Doing activities together that your "customers" enjoy and which encourage laughter, communication and warmth.

Similarly use this tool to identify what is trivial in terms of delighting your "customers" at home. Think of the many activities you spend time on in your family life that your "customers" don't notice or care about, such as cleaning, or washing up after a meal. Clearly these are necessary activities. However, now that you have identified that they are trivial to delighting your customers, you should look for smarter and less time consuming ways to achieve them.

Here are a few ideas:

Cleaning – dust and mop less often. Splurge on a cleaner every two weeks. Ask your family to share the responsibility by tidying up after themselves. Children can be asked to make their beds and keep their rooms tidy from a very early age.

Grocery shopping – use delivery services now available from all the national stores; it saves a huge amount of time.

Driving – organise more carpools for school pick ups, after school activities and birthday parties. Look into more local activities your children can walk to themselves.

Laundry – do shirts really need to be ironed? You'd be amazed what water spritzed onto a hanging shirt can do. Enlist older family members to help with the laundry, my children love to earn pocket money by folding and putting away clothes.

Cooking – can you share the job with your partner? Develop family menus that are healthy but take minimal time to prepare. Older children can help with the cooking and learn some valuable life skills at the same time.

Dishes – in our family all the mealtime tasks are divided between the children and rotated weekly, such as emptying the dishwasher setting the table, clearing the table and filling the dishwasher. Our youngest took his place on the chore rota when he was four.

The next step is to look at your working life using the same tool.

1. Create a list of your “customers” in your working life.
2. Create a list of the activities that delight your customers – that is your crucial list which you should focus and spend time on.
3. Create a list of all the activities you currently spend time on that aren’t on your crucial list. This is your trivial list.
4. Put some creative energy, even brainstorm ideas with a colleague, to come up with a variety of ways for you to reduce the time you spend on trivial activities, delegate them, or if possible, ignore them entirely.

Once you have put into practice your ideas of how to spend time on your crucial lists and reduce the time you spend on your trivial lists, you should find that you have more time available to you. This “gift” of more time should give you more control and balance in your life.

You should also find that you are spending time on the right activities and experiencing a more satisfying family life and a more successful working life.

Enjoy!

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Note to Editors:

**MindLab franchisees run a highly successful after-school programme which uses board games from around the world to develop children’s thinking, problem-solving and interpersonal skills.*

The focus is to have fun yet MindLab also helps children to build better personal relationships, improve scholastically, and relate and cooperate with others. MindLab creates a positive outcome for parents, teachers, schools and kids alike.

Over a million pupils in 22 countries internationally have benefited from the MindLab programme. MindLab is a “green field” business opportunity in Indonesia.

The MindLab after school programme gives franchisees the opportunity to make a real difference to children's development, their families and the wider community.

MindLab also provides a like-minded community to support and guide franchisees as they grow their business, and has a proven model to minimise the risk and fear of starting a new business.