

Your Customers vs. Your Children: How Professional Salespeople can Love Their Families and Thrive at Work

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I know your time is precious so I wrote you a tip sheet.

If you want more information, go to the website www.HugYourKidsToday.com, or you can buy the book when it's released in July 2008.

Work/ Life Balance – NOT!

Forget “work/ life balance.” It is a road to insanity.

There are two problems with the idea of work/ life balance. One, the word “balance” implies that work and family are of equal importance. They're not. Work is your livelihood; your family is your life. If you lose your job, you can get another one. If you lose a child, he or she is irreplaceable.



**Mark Nichols (age 6), left,
and his mom, Michelle**

Unfortunately, I learned this lesson from life's toughest teacher - experience. In 1998, our 8 ½-year old son, Mark, died suddenly. The doctors thought he just had the flu and 11 days later, he died of brain cancer. Ouch!

Our loss motivates me to share with all my fellow sales professionals that are moms and dads the importance of hugging and loving your kids every day. It matters – to you and to them.

The second problem with trying to balance your work and your life is, since you only have 24 hours in a day, you can't keep adding to both sides of the scale. If you are already doing 25 things for work and 25 things for your family, you can't add 10 more to both sides, even if you would theoretically stay in balance.

This is where many working parents get themselves into trouble. For example, if you already have a full schedule of selling, and the boss asks you to take over another territory, account or product line for the next six months, you might be tempted to justify it by also taking on coaching your child's sports team. On paper, you are still in balance. In reality, you're risking a meltdown, heart attack or worse.

You can't make quality sales calls from a mental health facility, your hospital bed – or the cemetery. To paraphrase Nancy Regan, "Just say, 'No thanks.'"

Prioritize Your Family First and Work a Close Second

So throw out the idea of balancing and instead, prioritize. Put "spending some quality time with my family every day" as your top priority. Even if it's just a good hug before you all start your days, it will pay benefits all day long and throughout your week too – for both you and your family.

After all, whatever is #1 on your To Do list probably gets done. So why not put loving your family as #1? That way, no matter what happens, you are guaranteed to have a no-regret day and life.

To find more time for your family, remove tasks from your schedule with a low ROTE – Return On Time and Energy, since you have a limited supply of them. Eliminate, outsource, or delegate those that have the lowest ROTE.

In this way, you can get more done at work and have more impact with your family in the same 24 hour day you had yesterday with less worry, guilt, fear and stress.

When your kids are grown, if you want to increase your focus on your work, that's fine, but when they're still growing up, they need you. They need your time, attention and energy. In the Bible, it says, "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven" (Ecc. 3:1). You can have it all, and do it all, just not all at once.

10 Strategies to Free Up More Time to Hug Your Kids and Love Your Family

To free up more time to hug your kids, here are ten practical suggestions.

1. Lower your standards on tasks that aren't important. What's worth doing is *not* always worth doing well. Ponytails don't have to be perfectly straight, outfits don't have to look like they came off the runway, and meals don't have to be home cooked from scratch. Clothes and kids just have to be clean and ready for their day and meals just have to be nutritious.

2. Live close to work. Every hour spent commuting is an hour you're not spending with your family or recharging yourself. If your job requires you to fly frequently, live near the airport.

3. Consider having someone drive you to/from work - or carpool. Then you can use that time productively. Forget trying to work while you drive. It's dangerous for you, other drivers and your business. If you end up in wreck or you miss a key point on a phone call, you won't have saved any time – and you could miss a big selling opportunity while you're concentrating on finding your exit or navigating around a slow truck.

4. Automate your bill paying. Don't settle for online, go for the gold – automated. All my bills are automatically paid by my credit card (for points and rebates) or drafted directly against my checking account. This tip saves me time and worry all year around, whether I'm on vacation in Tahiti or just busy selling my brains out.

I've never been overcharged in the five-plus years of this practice. Sure, it could happen but I read my bills and I know I can call and straighten out the rare mistake. However, on a routine basis, it's like I have a free bookkeeper working for me 24/7.

5. Get rid of stuff you don't use. Getting rid of things you don't use frees up your time, money and energy for your family and fun. Get rid of clothes you don't wear, books you don't read, even ornamental towels that no one in the family is allowed to touch. Use it or lose it. And don't save it for a garage sale you'll have "someday," take it all to a charity store today.

I downsized my home from 4200 to 2400 square feet so I'd have less house to care for and more time for my family.

6. Buy less stuff and pay down your bills. The folks on Madison Avenue try to tell us we have to have enough of the right stuff to be happy. Baloney. The meaning of life is not the pursuit of stuff. Your children would rather have your time and attention than the latest gizmo.

Owing money puts pressure on you, which makes you less fun around your family. So put your credit card back in your wallet, pay down your balances and enjoy the resulting free time and reduced pressure.

7. Eat daytime meals with your kids. If your work schedule is crazy, try having lunch with your children at their school. Maybe you can bring their favorite fast food. It's a great way to have some one-on-one time in less than an hour.

Breakfast is another great meal to share with your family. Alternatively, it's a great meal to do business over, freeing you up to spend your evenings with our family.

8. Just say No. One of the most powerful words in the English language is "No." Remember, every "Yes" has a corresponding "No." If you're asked to do more at work and you say Yes, you have also said No to others who have demands on your time and attention.

If you know it's a No right away, don't wimp out and say "Let me get back to you." If you feel you need to soften your No, try, "Gee, thanks for asking me. I'm really flattered/ honored. But unfortunately, I have to say No." You don't need to add an explanation, but it's polite to give them a clear No, so they can ask someone else and stay on schedule.

9. Own every hour of your day. If you have an hour free in your schedule, you don't have to give it to the next person that asks for it. The same goes for "Rush" requests. Just because you can do something right away, doesn't mean you should.

10. Look for customers, vendors, and business partners who share your values. They take nights and weekends off, are flexible, and are pleasant to do business with. If you know they are working 24/7, you'll feel like you should too. You can easily get sucked into their round-the-clock hours. If they are grouchy or rude, you might copy their bad habits too. Look for pleasant, prosperous clients.

CALL TO ACTION

There are no do-overs in raising your kids. You only get one shot, so make it your best shot. Hug each member of your family the first thing every day. Then get out there and sell!

P.S. If you want to put these tips into ACTION, sign up for our no-charge short, monthly newsletter at www.HugYourKidsToday.com

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR for National Hug Your Kids Day
July 21, 2008 (and subsequent 3rd Mondays in July)**