

Balance, Crash or Leave... Companies Influence their Employee's Choice

- Marcia Hughes, President, Collaborative Growth

"The more I hurry the more behind I get. I can't catch up and it's draining me."

This lament, or its equivalent, is one of the most frequent cries I hear from people in every type of organization. In today's uncertain business environment, corporations and individuals are seeking keys to maximize performance and career passion. Yet when the organization's answer doesn't respond to the whole person and allow even a bit of time for creativity, they miss the boat. A report in November '05 in the Denver Post indicated that while most companies will face staffing shortages as baby boomers retire, they don't understand what it takes to recruit, motivate and retain good employees.

Workers young and old are demanding flexibility and creative opportunities. In short they're seeking work life balance. Men are joining women in this insistence on a saner lifestyle as reflected in a November article in Fortune magazine. 84% of men in their survey said they want to develop their professional and personal aspirations. 73% believe senior positions can be restructured to meet this goal. My research validates this belief – 2% of our time focused unconventionally, accompanied by reflective thinking, and implemented with committed regularity, makes a world of difference. That's why I wrote my book, *Life's 2% Solution*.

Employees are voting with their feet to maintain control over their time and to create a work life balance which provides them an opportunity to develop their personal life and fulfill their creative yearnings. While the old way of thinking is that today's work world has to center around long hours and doing more with less, businesses are finding that the productivity is often less as well. It's a simple fact of life that we must nourish ourselves to perform at our best, and the need for a healthy environment doesn't stop at the entry to the office building.

My research with business professionals has led me to radically redefine Pareto's law – the 80/20 Rule that 20% of our actions produces 80% of our benefits. The Rule holds that 20% of your top performers are likely responsible for 80% of your results. 80% of your challenges are likely to come from 20% of your employees. The same can hold true with how we invest our time. Yet, few of us have 20% of our time available to redirect. That's the power of the 2% solution! When I ask an organization or individual if they can take 2% of their time, I get their attention. Now, that's possible. 2% equals 30 minutes a day or 3 ½ hours a week. I know that even this amount of time regularly committed to what is very important, but not considered urgent, can be hard to come by. Yet the rewards can be vast for the individual, team or business.

Businesses can provide this simple gift of respect in several ways. They can make information available to their staff about finding their own 2% solution – even if they do it on their own time; I consistently find that employees are grateful when they're encouraged to take care of themselves. Or a business might provide a team with permission to take 2% of its time to do whatever they've been longing to do, but haven't because it wasn't on the urgent list. Companies can give employees 2% of their time every day. When I discussed this with my colleague, Mary, a Vice President at a large financial institution, she immediately calculated that if her company gave their staff 2% of their time to spend in whatever way they choose as long as it was intended to be personally nurturing that it'd be 10 minutes a day. "Ahhh" she sighed, "I'd take my 10 minutes, shut the door, turn off my phone and reflect. I'd take time to integrate and breathe." Imagine the increased productivity available when one takes a few minutes to reflect on what's truly important. Improved decision making is an immediate outcome.

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