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Work life “blending”

“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” – Confucius



BY TIM EMPRINGHAM

At the Conference Board of Canada Innovation Summit this year one of the speakers during their lunch was Nitin Kawale, president of Cisco Canada. He spoke about how Cisco was enabling a concept he called Work Life “Blending” and contrasted it with the age old challenge of work life balance by accepting that in a connected world “balance” is virtually impossible to attain.

At the time I disagreed—maybe because I heard the voices of my parents and grandparents in my head as they “balanced” their work and life to enable the family experiences that I remember so fondly as I grew up. But the more I have reflected on that brief talk the more I am realizing that Nitin is right—balance is unattainable today, but more importantly I’m not sure that balance was the right goal in the first place.

Balance infers that we are able to somehow disconnect our work and personal lives to allow us to focus on one at a time and that there are nice clean borders around each that we can move in one direction or the other to create balance in our life. Further, the goal of work life balance infers that only when we have found the optimal balance point between these two separate and distinct worlds are we able to achieve happiness.

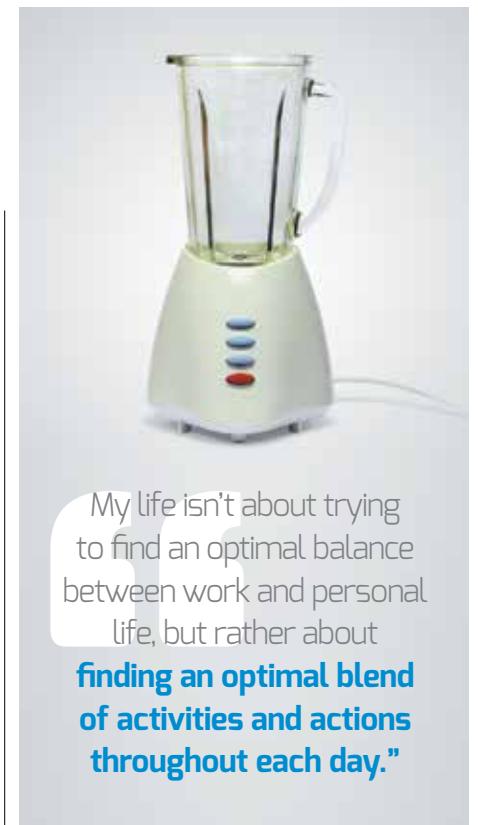
But if we look back in history (as in 500 B.C. history) we find some insight that aligns pretty well with Nitin’s “blending” concept—long before the age of cell phones and Facebook:

“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” – Confucius

It would seem to me that Confucius was making an early case for the “blending” idea. It’s not about separating our work and personal life. It’s about choosing a job that allows us to “never work” again. After all, if I love my job and love my life there is no reason that the two can’t happily coexist together rather than neatly balanced on opposite sides of a scale.

It is exactly the pursuit of “balance” that has made it so challenging for me to find the right mix of work and play in my own life. I’m passionate about both my professional growth and my personal life and family, but by trying to box them up separately and looking for an optimal balance point, I’ve struggled. I’ve never been able to keep them truly separate—even before the days of 24-hour connections and Blackberries. But that’s the problem...they don’t need to be separate.

My life isn’t about trying to find an optimal balance between work and personal life, but rather about finding an optimal blend of activities and actions throughout each day that allow me to create value all around me with family, work, co-workers, and friends while accepting and embracing



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that I don’t plan to ever work another day in my life.

I like the idea of work life “blending.” It’s liberating. **BL10**

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