

# 60 Second Leader

## “Life-Work Balance”

### The right blend for you

Coffee shops like Starbucks have sprung up all over the place offering a place to work as well as rest. One of the major attractions is that they offer all sorts of blends and varieties of drinks.

Organisations trying to give employees as much choice and flexibility as possible, have placed a lot of emphasis on getting the work-life balance right, for example visit <http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk>. But, I wonder if this concept is a muddled one as far as the individual is concerned; muddled because it implies that **Work** is in opposition to **Life** as though work and life are separate and entirely distinct entities. To a lot of people in leadership this isn't true. Blake Nordstrom, president of US Nordstrom Shoes and Fashion talks about a work-life blend, and this may be nearer the truth.

So what should this mean for us?

### Work-Rest Balance

The contrast to *Work* is *Rest*. The issue is, 'Do I have a good *Work-Rest balance*?'

*Rest* covers several facets of life: physical (sleep, exercise etc), mental, emotional and spiritual. And what is rest to one person isn't necessarily rest to another.

Work also isn't just about paid employment, and is often hard to define, because what is work to one person may actually be rest to another.

Looking at myself I should be asking, 'Do I have the right balance between what is work and what is rest in my life?'



Gavin Brown joined Cygnet in 1998 and, as well as working with clients across the country, has responsibility for Business Development and Cygnet's Admin HQ. Over the previous 13 years he lived extensively in the Balkans involved in communication training to business and political leaders up to ministerial level, as well as running several small businesses of his own.

He specialises in all aspects of leadership, work with MDs / Chief Executives, senior and middle managers, and is also a skilled facilitator. Gavin is a Director and the Company Secretary of Cygnet. He also serves as Director of a charity which acts as a channel

## Life Balance

This is really about life priorities and asks the question, 'Am I investing my life in the right places?' For some people their employed work may be central in this, for others less so. Two public sector employees I talked to recently illustrate this. One runs a home for children in care. She pours her life into these children and works many more than her contracted hours. Another, our local refuse collector, works the bare minimum in order to earn money to invest in his passion (interestingly enough his rose garden!).

The key is to be responsible for what I give my life to. As leaders we're expected to be good at *'starting with the end in view'*, in other words I should decide how I want to invest my life and then do my best to do it. The danger is that we go on automatic pilot in our lives without thinking whether we want to travel the route the automatic pilot is taking. As Mark Oaten, whose career as a British politician recently collapsed in scandal, says, *"I didn't have the guts to get off the treadmill, I mean what on earth was I doing running for leader? Why was I wrapped up in this whole Westminster world...?"*

## Work-Rest Balance and Life Balance

So consider your answers to these two questions:

**'Do I have the right balance between what is work and what is rest in my life?'**

**'Am I investing my life in the right places?'**

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