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Balancing Expectations

BEST PRACTICES

Written by: Craig Vosper, Chief Delivery Officer

How do we achieve balance in today's world and support our employees in doing the same? Over the past two years, striking this balance has become significantly more important. Attaining a work-life balance has gone from an eyerolling HR talking point to something people are actively pursuing.

One of the most effective ways to establish balance, in all endeavors, is to set proper expectations and identify what it will take to achieve a goal. Far too often we say 'yes' without thinking through what is being asked of us and what we have already committed to. This leads us to overextend, resulting in poor balance and often a poor outcome.

To avoid this, we must set expectations before others set them for us. This means we must break the habit of simply saying 'yes'. Last year I talked about this in my article titled *"Disappoint Early"*. It is far more valuable to set proper expectations and achieve them than it is to set a poor expectations and fall short.

How exactly are we meant to set these expectations properly? There are two things required to do this well. First, an understanding of the actual **ask**, and second, a **plan**.

Understanding an ask is of the utmost importance. The key to this understanding is a clear definition of success – what does success look like and what outcomes are expected. This can be as complicated as defining success measures for an entire project or as simple as defining the purpose of an individual ask.

Once you understand the ask, you need to plan your approach. An appropriate plan considers the effort and complexity of the ask and where it sits in priority against your existing efforts. With these two elements in mind, you can commit to the new request and communicate how other activities will be impacted by the request.

These simple steps will ensure that you know what success means and when you can achieve it. It puts you in the

driver's seat of when and how you can complete your work. It provides the first step in helping you and your team lead a balanced life. It will improve your performance and keep your stakeholders happy as well!

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