



The Customer Communicator Web Extra



Work to keep a better work/life balance

Don't let the constant "busyness" of working in customer service get the better of you. Here are some ideas for keeping your balance.

"People are going crazy trying to keep up," says Dr. Alan Zimmerman, a performance management consultant. Reps are trying to do a good job, taking more calls, putting in longer hours, helping coworkers, and trying to manage personal and family life at the same time. In fact, says Zimmerman, "Whenever I talk to various groups, one of the top issues they want to talk about is maintaining a work/life balance."

The goal, of course, is to attain a balance so that personal life and family time keep one energized and revitalized so that you can remain healthy and productive for the long term.

Here are some of Zimmerman's recommendations for maintaining a good work/life balance.

■ **Learn to compartmentalize.** "What this means is that when you go to your job, you're focused on the job, and on customers, even though you might have had a disagreement with your spouse or your kids that morning," says Zimmerman. "You can't do anything about that right now, so just focus on those calls and those customers."

And likewise, "If you've given your best during the day, close that door when you go home in the evening. Refuse to think about work-related issues. You can't do anything about it now, so focus on your family or personal goals," Zimmerman says.

■ **Don't take pride in "busyness."** "People often talk like, 'I'm so busy. I don't have time to see my friends. I don't have time to do this or that,'" says Zimmerman. "And it's as if they get a sense of pride or self-esteem from being so much in demand." But busyness is an illusion, he suggests, and "there are

plenty of people who are busy but who get nothing done." Instead, "your sense of pride should really come from progress, productivity, results — not just from being busy." Pride in your work is something that you can take home to your family, pride in "busyness" is only going to take time away from your personal and family life.

■ **Schedule your personal time.** "If it's not on the calendar, often it doesn't happen," says Zimmerman, so schedule time for recreation, time for friends, and time for yourself. "What I mean by that is if you have certain friends you'd like to see more often, or if you'd like to get to the theater with your spouse, you've got to schedule it, or typically it won't get done. And these are the kinds of things that will help you to decompress and reconnect."

Zimmerman adds that you should also put personal things on the calendar. "Maybe you add going for a walk three times a week, or time for you and your spouse or you and your family — but put the things on the calendar that are going to help you to decompress from the stress, reconnect, and reenergize," he says.

■ **Pay attention to your body.** "Your body is a great communications system and a great early warning system, and it will always tell you when you are off-balance or when you are under too much stress," Zimmerman says. "When you get the headaches or the up-set stomach, that's a sign that there's too much going on. And we tend to medicate the symptoms without paying attention to the underlying cause. So pay more attention to those body signals and find a way to de-stress or take time off if necessary."

Contact: Dr. Alan Zimmerman, www.drzimmerman.com.

