

Executive Challenge #1:

“I Have No Work/Life Balance!”

What are the biggest challenges facing successful business people today? In my work as a certified executive coach for C-Suite Executives, Directors, Managers, and Entrepreneurs, there are many recurring themes that seem to surface. One at a time, I'll be sharing with you 12 of those top challenges along with hints, tips, and steps you can take to avoid or eliminate altogether these key issues that might be holding you back from achieving the kind of success you are aiming for.

Challenge #1: “I have no work/life balance!”

I consistently hear this comment from executives, but I'll tell you the truth: I've never really liked the phrase “work/life.” It makes it sound as though our totality is reduced to: (a) work, and (b) the rest of life. Think about it: A two-legged stool would never be able to balance! No, in reality, “life” includes so many things... relationships, health, finances, home, family, hobbies, and on and on. After all, “work” is just another part of “life,” right? So, because we are multi-dimensional, I believe true balance comes from keeping *all* key areas of your life in optimal shape. That's why I use the phrase “wheel of balance” instead.

How's *your* wheel of balance doing? Here's an exercise to try: List out what you consider to be the six most important areas in your life. For example, they might be: Work, Relationships, Home, Health/Body, Finances, and Hobbies. Looking at each area from a big-picture standpoint, how well is each key aspect of your life going for you right now? On a scale from 1-10, with 1 representing “terrible” and 10 representing “fantastic,” score each of your six areas.

Next, draw a circle, and place a dot in the center. Draw six evenly-distributed spokes from the center dot to the outside of the circle. Label each of the spokes with one of the six areas of your life that you've chosen. Then, plot your responses between 1 and 10 for each of the six areas, with ‘10’ being the furthest point away from the center, and ‘1’ being the dot in the middle. Last, draw a line from one dot to the next until the ‘circle’ is closed.

Sit back and look at the outcome. What shape is your wheel? Is it a solid round circle with all six elements at an optimal ‘10?’ Or, does it not even come close to resembling a circle? Would you like to put this wheel on your car and take a trip? Or would your wheel make for a very rocky ride?

Creating a Smooth Journey

If your wheel is clearly out of balance, don't worry. You can absolutely do something about it.

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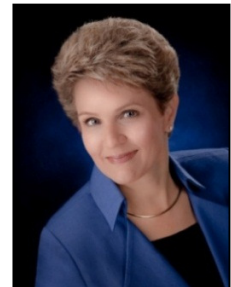
Focus on one area to start – the one that is most important to you – and take small steps to improve in that area during the next month. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is it that makes this part of my life less than a '10'?
2. Of what I've listed, what is within my control to change, and what is not?
3. Of the things that I *can* control, what is preventing me from achieving what I want?
4. What are one or two small steps I can take right now – starting today - to make the biggest difference in this area, moving my score closer to a '10'?
5. Once I achieved those small steps, what could I do next? And after that?

Set some mini-goals around each of the small steps you've defined for yourself. Enlist someone to help keep you on track – a spouse, friend, mentor, or coach. Once you do this, if you work on each of your core life areas a little bit at a time, you will be able to create a fuller, rounder wheel with all areas of your life at 10 or very close.

Of course, the process can take as much or as little time as you want depending upon how determined you are. But it absolutely can be done. I have watched coaching clients fill out their wheels in remarkably short periods of time once they realize what's holding them back, what's possible, and what's within their control to change. If they can do it, so can you. A full and balanced life is definitely within your grasp.

Brenda S. Bence is an internationally-recognized branding expert, Certified Executive Coach, dynamic trainer and Certified Speaking Professional, and the author of several award-winning books, including the *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo* personal branding series and *Smarter Branding Without Breaking the Bank*.



With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda's career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries.

Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development. Brenda's client list includes companies such as Citibank, Microsoft, Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse, Deloitte, Hershey's, KFC, Kraft, Johnson & Johnson, Mattel, and Sheraton Hotels.

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