

Selling Power

How to harness
the power of
total leadership

Be a Better Leader

By Kim Wright Wiley · Photo by Addison Geary

Of all the myths about success, this one might be the most pervasive: the superstar executive who has sacrificed home life, friendships, and maybe even health to get to the top. Stress and isolation are the prices paid for success, and in order to hold on to it, the executive must take on ever-increasing workloads, making sure the focus on the job never wavers.



Stewart D. Friedman,
practice professor of management
and director of Wharton
Work/Life Integration Project

Not so, says Stewart D. Friedman, best-selling author of *Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life* (Harvard Business Press, 2008). In fact, quite the opposite is true.

Friedman is the founding director of the Leadership Program at the Wharton School and has served as an advisor to leaders as diverse as former Vice President Al Gore and GE CEO Jack Welch. His latest book, the culmination of two decades of research, offers the surprising news that in order to be successful, you don't always have to make painful trade-offs between the most important areas of your life. Instead, you can win in all dimensions simultaneously and – here's the kicker – as your general satisfaction with your life rises, so does your performance.

Integrating Your Life

“Most working people experience life in pieces,” says Friedman, “with an especially wide divide between work and family. At 56, I'm not naïve on the subject – there's always going to be conflict, and nobody can be in two places at once. But through research we know that most people have the potential to have a greater sense of harmony with more cohesion than they think.” The key ingredient is leadership, and that's what makes the Total Leadership program, described and illustrated in the book, different from the standard “balance” approach. Being a leader isn't just about being a great businessperson or even about carefully balancing the time you spend at home and the time you spend at work. To be a total leader, you must perform well in all four of the key areas of your life – work, family/home, community, and personal. Friedman calls achieving success in all domains a “four-way win.”

time

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Friedman has tested the Total Leadership program in organizations around the world, and participants report increased satisfaction across the board: an average of 20 percent in their work lives, 28 percent in their home lives, 31 percent in their community lives, and 39 percent in their personal lives, which includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual well-being. By using the principles outlined in the program, participants report that they find a clearer purpose in everything they do, feel more connected to the people who matter most, and can generate sustainable change with greater skill.

“Any creative move that you take toward improving your performance in the different domains of your life is a four-way win,” says Friedman, “but to find out what these moves should be, you need to do some preparatory work. Once the groundwork is laid you can make these moves intelligently and with relatively low risk.”

This groundwork requires program participants to be more introspective than they've been perhaps in years, and Friedman says sometimes they balk at the process. “But we've found that people from all life stages can benefit from this approach; it's easy, practical, and the book takes you through

the steps. At the end of the process the reader is not only more satisfied with his or her present situation, but also has the skills to adapt to future changes as they arise.”

Steps to Success

The first step in Total Leadership is to BE REAL. What really matters to you? What sort of leader do you want to be? What impact do you want to have on the world fifteen years hence? How do you focus your time and attention now – and what does that tell you about yourself?

“You have to start within,” says Friedman. “Leaders must, like the Bard wrote, ‘to thine own self be true,’ because if you don’t know yourself, you’re useless to other people.” Charts in the book help you zero in on your core values. Do you thrive on constant challenge, change, and variation? Or is having influence and the chance to help others more important to you? Is your core value a sense of duty, or are you more motivated by recognition?

The next step is BE WHOLE. After basically interviewing yourself, the next step is to bring other people’s voices into the dialogue – but not just any people. Identify your “key stakeholders,” the most important people in your life, the ones with whom you most want to build a rich and ongoing relationship.

“None of us operates in a vacuum,” says Friedman, “and you need to know how these stakeholders view you and what they expect. The book shows you how to have fruitful conversations with these people and then put what you learn from them into the context of the full picture.” While requesting this feedback might feel awkward at first, Friedman says most key stakeholders are flattered by the request. “You’re telling them that they’re among the most important people in your life and that when you think about your future together, you want to make it better.”

Conversations with your key stakeholders are an essential step in achieving four-way wins, because Friedman’s research has shown there is often significant overlap between the domains. “Your performance as a mother affects you as a manager,” he says. “Your health affects the way you interact in the community or in the office. It’s all interrelated.”

Once you sit down and begin to talk to key stakeholders, you’re likely to learn that their expectations of you are different from what you expected. “The kind of hard-charging, ambitious people who tend to participate in my program,” says Friedman, “are likely to have really high internal standards, probably higher than what the people in their life have for them.” The conversations might bring you a sense of relief – and ideas for ways to create more four-way wins.

Consider the case of a divorced father of a teenage daughter who had been frantically juggling his sales calls each week in order to make it to her afternoon softball games. When he asked her what she most wanted from him, she surprised him by saying that yes, it was nice to look up and see him in the stands, but it bothered her that they couldn’t talk at the games. She would actually prefer the chance to go out to dinner with him each week and have long uninterrupted conversations. With his work schedule, dinner out was much easier to schedule than afternoon ball games, and he realized he’d been straining to meet expectations that didn’t really exist.

The next step: BE INNOVATIVE. Friedman says such revelations as in the case of the father and daughter aren’t uncommon, especially because you talk to several key shareholders and look for ways to meet their expectations in new and better ways. “This is the part where you start to get creative,” he says, “and to think of solutions that might never have come to you before. If

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100 Points Rate Yourself

Tired of the juggling act? This exercise can help you bring the pieces of your life together in a more intelligent way.

Divide 100 points among the four domains of your life – work, home, community, and personal – then allocate them in terms of importance. “If work is all you care about, it gets the full 100 points,” says Friedman. “Or if you care about all four domains equally, they get 25 points each. For most people it doesn’t work out quite that cleanly, but you get the idea.”

Four domains of your life:

1. WORK _____ points
2. HOME _____ points
3. COMMUNITY _____ points
4. PERSONAL _____ points

Then divide 100 points based on how you focus your time and attention during a typical week. Here’s where discrepancies may start to emerge. You gave family 35 points in importance, for example, but now realize they only got 15 points of your time. Then ask yourself, “How satisfied am I within each domain? How well am I performing in each domain?”

Friedman reports that when executives were retested after going through the Total Leadership program, their allocations based on importance remained basically the same. “Which makes sense,” he says, “since your core values and what’s important to you aren’t going to change significantly in four months.”

What did change was that 10 percent of their time and attention shifted from work into the other three domains. And the result is that satisfaction rose in all four domains, ranging from a 21 percent increase in work satisfaction to a nearly 40 percent increase in personal satisfaction.

Of course, not everyone is thrilled with the study results. “When I first present these findings to senior execs, they are concerned,” says Friedman. “They envision everybody tearing out of the office to pursue personal goals, but there’s more to the story. Not only did satisfaction rise, but performance did, too, ranging from an 8 percent increase in work to a 22 percent increase in personal pursuits.

The exercises in the Total Leadership program help people cut out the things that don’t matter, so they waste less time and become more focused. When people are more satisfied with how they’re spending their time, they begin to perform better in all domains – including work.”

For more information on Total Leadership, visit www.totalleadership.org.

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the salesperson has a job that requires international travel, he might find that his boss doesn’t care if he takes his teenager with him to London next summer. If you want to work with [Habitat for Humanity], you could spearhead an office project.”

Some of the changes – which Friedman suggests you think of as “experiments” – can be very small, such as shutting off your Blackberry during family dinner time, delegating more work to an eager assistant, taking a yoga class, becoming active in a

cause you support, or simply opening up more to people and letting them see all the sides of you. “You’re the scientist coming up with experiments that fit in your world,” he says, “which are entirely customized to your situation.”

Calling these changes “experiments” makes it more likely that other people will get on board. “Let’s say you’ve already sat down and talked to your manager, and you know exactly what her expectations are of you,” says Friedman. “And, because of a previous conversation with your son, you also know he would be pleased if you coached his soccer team. You could present it like, ‘Look, Boss, I have an idea. Based on what you need from me and what we just talked about, I’d like to try leaving early on Tuesdays and Thursdays for a month to do something else. I strongly believe that spending this time with my son will make me more productive, and ultimately I’ll make more sales calls per week and get better leads. If doesn’t work, we’ll go back to the old way. Are you willing to try this for a month or so?’”

Time as Your Ally

The Total Leadership program aims to break participants out of their obsession with time management. “Time is important,” says Friedman, “but it isn’t the only factor in how well you perform.” Friedman cites his study of 900 business professionals which showed that the number of hours a mother spent weekly with her child was not the best predictor of the child’s emotional and physical health. A better predictor was whether or not the mother was distracted when she was with

need
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her child. “If you’re thinking about work when you’re with your child, the child knows it and it affects him or her,” says Friedman. “Time and attention are not the same thing; there’s a big difference between physical presence and psychological presence. You can be spending time with people, but if you’re not psychologically present, you’re not doing anybody any good. Experiment with something as simple as turning off your Blackberry for an hour each night during dinner and devoting yourself totally to the conversation. See if it improves your performance at home and at work.”

Friedman calls such experiments “small, low-risk steps that benefit you and other people.” He continues, “Most of us expect a fragmented world, and we accept the trade-off mentality. But when we start thinking about ways to integrate parts of ourselves to improve performance in all of them, we not only become better leaders, but we also have richer lives.” For more on Stewart Friedman, go to www.totalleadership.org.

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