

The Happy Workaholic: A role model for employees

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Executive Overview

Most business leaders believe they must be role models to be effective executives. They have to "walk the talk." A workaholic executive, known to work 15-hour days, would seem disingenuous and engender employee skepticism if she claimed that her organization supports a "balanced life" for employees. Right? Well, not necessarily.

Contrary to popular belief, "Happy Workaholics," as we call them, can advocate for employees to realize both their company's goals and what matters to them in their personal lives. Happy Workaholics serve as role models not for "balance" in the usual sense but, rather, for authenticity.

Happy Workaholics closely examine their core values about work and personal life. They focus on acting in accord with these values. They know "in their bones" the benefits of expressing their values in their day-to-day actions. And they realize that not everyone's values match theirs. Armed with this knowledge, they muster the credibility needed to genuinely encourage employees to act according to their own values.

Employees flourish when senior leaders help them focus on what matters most not only at work but in all aspects of their lives—at home, in their communities, and in their pursuit of physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The happy result: committed people driving hard to achieve superior performance.

This article shows executives—whether Happy Workaholics or not—how to obtain the advantages of leading an organization in which employees freely choose to devote energy to their work and personal lives in accord with their deeply held values.

During periods of tough economic conditions, senior executives must make difficult operational and strategic decisions affecting every aspect of their businesses. Cutbacks and the press for higher productivity usually hold sway in hard times, and senior leaders typically downplay "soft issues," such as helping employees achieve fulfillment in both their work and personal lives. Indeed, human resources management expert Peter Cappelli suggests that current labor market dynamics are creating an environment in which workers are likely to lose the benefits that were starting to come to them in the tight labor market of the late '90's: higher wages, career development programs at work, and new family-friendly policies on leaves and work schedules.¹

Recent research shows that new entrants into the labor force are seeking the kind of work that allows them to fulfill personal goals while making money.² Therefore, companies cutting back on pol-

icies and practices that help employees achieve personal as well as organizational goals might well be at a competitive disadvantage in retaining and attracting talented employees. In this climate, organizations need executives who can rigorously pursue business goals and maintain work environments that recognize and support the whole person. Based on recent research and our own study, our view is that competitive advantage results from such supportive business cultures.³

A supportive work environment has policies and practices that allow employees to fulfill both work and personal life commitments. In our research we sought to understand whether executives need to "walk the talk" in their own lives in order to serve as advocates for these policies and practices. In other words, does a senior executive need to be a role model for "balance" in order to serve as a credible advocate for employee "balance"? Surprisingly, we discovered that senior executives do

not need to be role models for the traditional image of what is commonly called "work/life balance."

Take the example of Phil Laskaway, former CEO of Ernst & Young. For himself, Laskaway made choices about investing time and energy in work that are typical of contemporary CEOs, investing long hours at the office and making considerable sacrifices in other domains of his life. But this did not stop him from addressing what internal surveys revealed—an undercurrent of employee dissatisfaction. E&Y employees wanted more emphasis on integrating work and personal life, flexible work arrangements, and time off without interruption. In response, Laskaway created the Office for Retention (OFR),⁴ reporting directly to the CEO. He provided the resources to put the work-and-personal-life issue on the front burner. He championed the OFR's prototypes for new forms of work in various parts of the country. And, most important, he communicated through word and deeds his total dedication to reshaping the firm's culture to support the work and personal life commitments of employees.

Business books are filled with common-sense admonitions insisting that leaders be role models.⁵ Take the view of one of our study's subjects, Mike Phillips, CEO of Frank Russell, an investment management and advisory firm that handles investments of more than US \$1.8 trillion for clients in 35 countries. Phillips explains: "I think CEOs as role models have never been more important. No matter what you say, people look at what you do. And if you're working 15-hour days and not taking any vacation, it will be believed that emulating that in the organization is a way to success."

Is this common wisdom truly wise? How can an executive who does not have a so-called "balanced" life foster a work environment that encourages employees to pursue both their work and personal priorities? Can a workaholic executive be an advocate for something that does not mirror her own personal lifestyle choices without appearing hypocritical? These are some of the key questions we explored in our research.

Our Research Study and the Controversial Surprise

We conducted approximately 100 interviews in 25 organizations over a period of four years (1999–2002). The initial focus of the research was on six companies, in professional services, financial services, and manufacturing. A team of 20 researchers, including both academics and business professionals, designed the study and did the interviews, which lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours.

We asked questions about the firm's approach to work/life culture change, the role of senior executives in making it happen, and the challenges encountered along the way. We also asked about site-specific issues, such as implementation of a particular pilot project on flexible work arrangements.

Then we did follow-up interviews in other companies with executives and some of the people who knew them well. We asked about what they do—as individual business professionals and as corporate leaders responsible for their organizations—to cultivate companies that support employees' lives outside of work. We were looking for best practices, and we found them. Following our fieldwork we returned to the research literature to test, substantiate, and refine the conclusions we present in this article.

We were not surprised to find that most senior leaders make sacrifices in their personal lives to achieve business results. We were surprised to learn, however, that even workaholic executives, who subjugate personal priorities for the sake of their careers, are fully capable of creating and sustaining cultures in their businesses that support employees' fulfillment of work and personal life goals.

To achieve this end, they do need to be role models. But not role models for "balance." Happy Workaholics, as we call them, need to be role models of the kind of person who reflects on her core values about work and personal life, sees the benefits of being able to live those values daily, and examines critically whether she enables her employees to do the same. These executives are role models not for balance but for authenticity.

Authentic executives are able to provide the personal and organizational supports that employees need to ensure that they, too, can allocate time and energy as they choose to the various domains of their lives. Executives who are role models of authenticity can be effective advocates for achieving enhanced business results through enriched lives for employees. This article describes what they do to realize this goal.

It's About Authenticity, Not Balance

Corporate America's stance on the relationship between work and personal life is changing fast. There is now greater acceptance of the view that supportive companies—ones that encourage employees to meet commitments outside of work—have a positive effect on employee attraction, retention, morale and productivity.⁶

Along with this view, unfortunately, a one-size-

fits-all notion of "work/life balance" has emerged. In this article we define "balance" as more or less equal involvement in and investment of time and energy in both work and personal life pursuits. "Work/life balance," as the term is generally understood, carries cultural baggage that stigmatizes those who choose a work-focused, or what is derisively called "workaholic," lifestyle.

In this narrow orthodoxy, anyone who chooses to invest in work at the expense of other life activities is seen as someone who is obviously imbalanced and doesn't "have a life," someone who cannot possibly be fulfilled personally and, as an executive, set a good example for others. For example, Alex MacLeod, former managing editor of *The Seattle Times*, believes that "people who are so dedicated to work at the expense of other aspects of life don't provide the right kind of leadership."

We believe that "balance" is the wrong word to describe the variety of options for investments in work and personal life from which executives, and all employees for that matter, may freely choose. For this reason we think a better term to describe the leadership challenge at hand is authenticity: the genuine "expression of experienced feelings, thoughts, and beliefs"⁷ that results from acting in accord with personal values. People are motivated to seek out situations in which they feel authentic, and they are more likely to be committed to roles that provide them with this feeling.⁸

One advantage of the concept of authenticity over balance is respect for diverse choices; there is no one best set of personal values. An executive who values a high investment in work and lives accordingly has aligned her actions with her values and is, in our definition, living authentically. And an executive who chooses to invest more or less equally in work and personal life, reflecting his deeply held values, is also living authentically. By expressing work and personal life values through their actions, executive leaders become role models not for balance in the traditional sense of the word but for authenticity. And, if understood and communicated well, an executive's authenticity can be a positive force for constructive action and performance in the organization.

How Executive Authenticity Affects Business Results and Employee Well-Being

The simple model in Figure 1 summarizes what we discovered from our research about how executive authenticity affects performance. Authenticity enables executives to be generous and passionate in their leadership approach. Authentic executives adopt certain practices—both in one-to-one interactions with employees and through organization-wide initiatives—that enable employees to experience authenticity. As a result employees are more capable of performing in ways that both enhance business results and enrich their own lives as well as the lives and performance of those around them.

In the rest of this article, we describe what we discovered about how this happens. We focus on how authentic workaholic executives take leadership action to encourage their employees to perform well in all the domains of their lives: at work, at home, in the community, and in their development of themselves—their health, leisure, and spiritual growth.

Executive Types: Authentic or Not?

Can all workaholics effectively champion the policies and practices that create supportive and productive organizations? The short answer: No.

Figure 2 helps us understand why. It shows four combinations of values and actions. There are two types of authentic executives. The "Poster Child for Balance" values both work and personal life equally and arranges his life accordingly. The main interest of the "Happy Workaholic" is in the work domain, and he or she is primarily invested in work. One of the other two types is the "Unhappy Workaholic," primarily involved and invested in work but who would rather have a more balanced lifestyle. Finally, there is the "Unhappily Balanced" executive, compelled by social pressures to have a balanced lifestyle but who would rather be focused on work.⁹

Our research indicates that the Happy Workaholic and the Poster Child for Balance are the two types who can most effectively foster employee well-being and high-performing organizations.

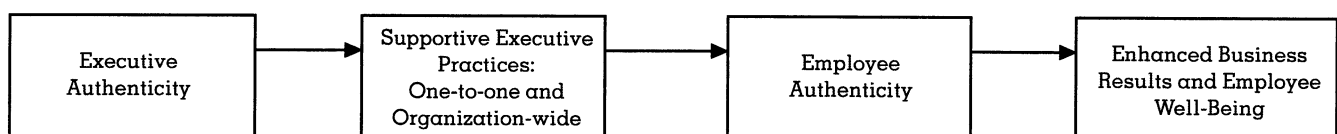


FIGURE 1

How Executive Authenticity Affects Employee Performance and Well-Being

Actions: Time and Energy Invested in Work and Personal Life	Values: What's Important?	
	<u>Balance Between Work and Personal Life</u>	<u>Primary Focus on Work</u>
<u>Equal Investment in Work and Personal Life</u>	Poster Child for Balance	Unhappily Balanced
<u>Primary Investment in Work</u>	Unhappy Workaholic	Happy Workaholic



Authentic Executives

FIGURE 2
Four Types of Executive

And, though it might seem counterintuitive, it does not seem to matter much whether it is one or the other. So, contrary to popular wisdom, we are asserting that executives do not have to be role models for "balance." Let us take a closer look, then, at what makes the Happy Workaholic a role model. As we do so, keep in mind that the best practices we describe apply as well to the executive we would characterize as the Poster Child for Balance.

Contrary to popular wisdom, we are asserting that executives do not have to be role models for "balance."

Foundations of Executive Authenticity

Happy Workaholics take their first steps toward authenticity when they do the basic groundwork of recognizing their personal and work priorities. Lloyd Wilky, director of human resources for the Specialty Wax & Additives Divisions at AlliedSignal, talks about how "there isn't any pill. You've got to be willing to get quiet and listen and find it. Nobody else is going to deliver it to you." Self-awareness enables executives to identify priorities and to ensure that their allocation of time and energy reinforces these priorities.

Knowing what you truly care about and devoting your attention and activities to these ends is often referred to as "following your passion." Borrowing from researcher Bill Kahn, we refer to this as "authenticity." Kahn's research shows that when people at work experience authenticity, they are able

to contribute ideas and effort, be open and empathetic, grow and learn, and be more productive. Authentic executives and employees behave in ways that benefit people and organizations.¹⁰

Authentic leaders, whose actions express what is most important to them, approach their work filled with passion and commitment to their people. According to Kahn, "This is a different level of effort altogether, one less easily measured. It is the effort not of calibrated machines but of people who are able to bring more and less of their personal selves to their roles. . . . People who are present and authentic in their roles help to create shared understandings of their systems that are equally authentic and responsive to change and growth."¹¹

Having this sense of freedom and control enables Happy Workaholics to act generously in ways that help others achieve authenticity in their work and personal lives.¹² "Being a leader requires a number of leader behaviors," says Gary Cappe-line, former president of Specialty Chemicals at AlliedSignal. "One is to manage the entire person that works for you. You're offering support to a person who has to live a whole life. *To the degree that you can add fulfillment to the whole life, you're helping them add value to their employer.*" [Our emphasis.]

By contrast, when work and other activities do not reflect their values, people feel alienated.¹³ According to Gecas, "Alienation refers to the feeling of self-estrangement produced when the products of work are no longer reflections of the self."¹⁴ Kahn asserts, "When role identities pull for behaviors that feel inappropriate to their preferred self-

images . . . people are likely to insert distance between themselves and their roles by being absent rather than present in task situations."¹⁵ If given a choice, people avoid situations that do not allow them to live in accord with deeply held values. If required to invest more than they wish to in a role, people "split off and absent aspects of themselves."¹⁶ As a result, they feel alienated. They check out psychologically even if they are present physically.

How would an executive know she is experiencing authenticity? There are several clues. First, Gecas has argued that people have a *motivation* to experience authenticity.¹⁷ In other words, people actively seek out situations that enable them to feel authentic. Second, individuals feel fulfilled by expressing a consistent philosophy of life in all the roles they play.¹⁸ Goldman and Kernis developed an Authenticity Index that measures the "unobstructed operation of one's true or core self in daily enterprise."¹⁹ They found that authenticity is related to high levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Further, people who are able to express core values about work and personal life in their actions experience less conflict between work and the rest of their lives.²⁰

People actively seek out situations that enable them to feel authentic.

Because of their values, Happy Workaholics—who willingly invest more in work than personal life—are not likely to feel much conflict between work and personal life.

In summary, we have argued in this section that:

- To achieve authenticity Happy Workaholics must strive continually to know what's most important to them in their work and personal lives.
- Research indicates that people are motivated to experience authenticity because they find a sense of fulfillment from being true to themselves.
- Authentic executives know that when employees feel fulfilled in all aspects of their lives, then they are better able to add value to their companies.

Best Practices in Working with People One-on-One

Now let's review what we found about how authentic executives create supportive cultures. First we look at four practices that they take up in one-to-one interactions with their people. They respect

diverse choices about work and personal life, talk to employees about what matters most, help employees take responsibility for their choices, and foster trust. Then, in the next section, we discuss system-wide executive actions that we believe are best practices.

Respect Diverse Choices

A key finding from our research is that Happy Workaholics do not need to model balance, but they do need to model authenticity. A major corollary: it is possible for executives and employees to be mismatched in their values about work and personal life *without* being in conflict. This is not the contradiction it might seem to be because each party appreciates the value of being authentic. Both realize the importance of acting in accord with what might be different priorities about work and personal life.

Happy Workaholics accept that each employee brings a diverse set of experiences, priorities, and challenges to the workplace. Gary Cappeline told us, "I missed my sons in their championship basketball games a few years ago. Both boys were playing championship games that weekend—and I was away on business. It wasn't imposed on me; I imposed it on myself. In my case, it was clear to me that what I had to do that weekend for the company was more important than my sons' basketball games. Would you make the same decision? I don't know."

Executives and employees may have different values, and one's values likely change during the course of a working life. Moreover, dynamic circumstances make it impossible to always devote time and energy in accord with personal priorities. For example, when Sandy Beach Lin, former vice president and GM of Specialty Wax & Additives at AlliedSignal, told her boss that she needed to leave early from an important meeting because of a commitment to her daughter at school, he told her to go but added, "There are times when I may have to tell you that you can't do that." Sometimes tradeoffs cannot be avoided, no matter how supportive a boss might want to be.

Gary Cappeline admits, "When I joined AlliedSignal, I told them they would hear me say all these wonderful things about work/life balance, but they would observe that I don't live them. 'I'm a maniac,' I told them. 'I understand that I am. But don't you be if you don't want to.'" Hypocrisy? We don't think so. Effective Happy Workaholics recognize that achieving authenticity is a personal challenge that must, therefore, be taken up in countless different, individual ways. That is if

you agree that there is no one best set of personal values.

To summarize, two best practices for Happy Workaholics to demonstrate acceptance of diverse choices are to:

- Steadfastly resist imposing a specific lifestyle choice on anyone.
- Encourage employees to be authentic.

Talk to Employees About What Matters Most

The Happy Workaholic executive realizes that part of the leadership responsibility is to help employees align their values and actions. Alex MacLeod, former managing editor of the Seattle Times, told us: "It is a part of leadership to help people assess who they are and make decisions accordingly."

Executives must get to know their employees on a personal level. They must know something about employees' lives beyond work. Happy Workaholics make it possible for employees to express what matters to them without fear of reprisal. They initiate dialogue with employees to resolve problems. Marianne Carson, an executive at WRQ, an enterprise software development firm in Seattle, explained: "It is my responsibility to make sure that I know the priorities of people who report to me. *If you treat people as whole people, listen, clarify expectations, and make sure they have what they need to maintain their priority list, you foster loyalty and commitment.*" [Our emphasis.]

Executives must get to know their employees on a personal level. They must know something about employees' lives beyond work.

Other executives spoke of adopting an open-door policy, making it clear that anytime is a good time for employees to talk about how to integrate work and personal life as a way of improving business results. Some keep a file on how much time they spend with direct reports, including pertinent information about the lives of those employees outside work. Other executives make it a point to discuss the impact that promotions and transfers have on an employee's life situation (spouse's career, children's education, etc.) prior to making any business commitments.

Eric Reisenwitz, senior vice president for Life and Employee Benefits, CIGNA International, understands that employees have to be able to talk with their managers about personal priorities. "I may not always be able to help, but no one should

ever feel any pressure about raising an issue of conflicting work/family matters to me—whether they need to leave early to pick up a sick child, reschedule a trip because of a family commitment, or any other issue."

Summing up: To foster useful dialogue about what matters most in employees' lives, Happy Workaholics:

- Assume responsibility for helping employees act on their values and priorities.
- Make it easy for employees to discuss personal life challenges when necessary.
- Get to know people on a personal level.
- Record notes on employees' personal priorities and ask about these priorities.

Help Employees Take Responsibility for Their Choices

Employees, too, need to do the groundwork of analyzing their values and seeking to act in accord with them. As Lloyd Wilky said, "There isn't any pill" for getting clear on one's values and priorities. Employees need to take responsibility for identifying what they care about and for assessing whether their actions follow accordingly. Fortunately, tools are available to help individuals in this process.²¹

Pam Roach at Allied Signal noted that it takes courage to set boundaries and say "I can't come to this meeting, or I can do this under these conditions, as opposed to going along with what everyone is doing." Many companies call into question the commitment of a person who challenges work norms because of personal values. Therefore, a talented employee must be prepared to argue the business case for her request and, with skill and allies, negotiate expectations about when, where, and how results are produced. Because of their genuine interest and their credibility, authentic executives can coach people on how to do this to generate win/win scenarios.

Some executives in our study observed how certain employees blame company culture even when the company doesn't require them to deny their personal priorities. For example, Mike Phillips, CEO of Frank Russell, said, "If somebody comes to me and says, 'I'm traveling too much,' I say, 'The reason you're traveling too much, my friend, is because there's something inside you that's making you travel too much. It's not me. You can delegate more to your people and have them travel more, or just decide you're not going to do it. And I won't cut your bonus for doing that.'"

Happy Workaholics leave such choices up to em-

ployees, and they make sure that employees can genuinely exercise choice. As Gary Cappeline said, "When I find people [who are workaholics] the first thing I try to do is ascertain why. Is it self-imposed, or is it a perception that the company is demanding it? What I've found is that in nine out of ten cases—and I mean that literally—it is self-imposed. Maybe the employee is happier outside the home. If that's the case, then that's the employee's business. I don't legislate morality. But if it's that one out of ten where they perceive that the company requires it, I straighten them out, because I am the company."

Happy Workaholics can encourage employees to make independent choices about work and personal life priorities by the following best practices:

- Be clear that executives do not require particular personal priorities.
- Provide coaching and tools for self-assessment and negotiating expectations.
- Know the business case for supporting flexibility and control of work arrangements.

Foster Trust

In some work situations, employees might be afraid to reveal that they can't handle the stress of a particular project schedule, or might worry that if they don't work instead of attending a child's school play they risk losing a promotion. Through an environment of open, honest, and fear-free communication, Happy Workaholics help unlock their employees' freedom to raise and resolve such concerns, with better performance the result.

Unfortunately, there are leaders who say that this is their approach, and, at the same time, exhibit no real sensitivity to employee concerns. Marianne Ransom, director of employee and organizational development at WRQ, was critical of people who give inconsistent messages—for example, telling somebody to go home and at the same time telling them to turn in a report in the morning. According to Kevin Cashman, a leadership coach and author, "We found authoritarian leaders who were authentic that were outperforming and had engendered more trust in their organizations than participative leaders who lacked authenticity."²²

Happy Workaholics we interviewed recognize the value of respecting and encouraging employee choices that may differ from their own. They are aware of what they're doing and what signals they are sending. Surprisingly, a Happy Workaholic executive is even likely to challenge an employee's alignment of action and values if these appear to

be out of synch.²³ "I'm often the first one in the parking lot in the morning," says Michelle Clements, a senior vice president at Eddie Bauer. "But I'm the first one to go out and preach to my team that they better get out of here. If their parents are coming to town, I might ask: 'What part of the week are you taking off?' If they are at work all the time, I tell them 'At 5:00 Friday, I want you out of here. You need to go to a movie. Go to a ballgame. Take a walk in the park. Sleep until noon.'"

A direct report of Sandy Beach Lin, former vice president and GM of Specialty Wax & Additives at AlliedSignal, recounts how Lin has come to speak with her on several occasions about how she doesn't need to spend so many hours at work. "She tells me it would be a good idea if I went home, and I know she means it," says the employee, who voluntarily opts for the long hours because, after only four months on the job, she is learning a lot and trying to make a contribution at the same time. In this example we see a Happy Workaholic employee telling her boss that her choices are voluntary. And the employee appreciates Lin's willingness to let her choose.

Happy Workaholics foster employee trust when they:

- Challenge employees to see if they are living in accord with their values.
- Build a track record of open, honest communication that allays fears of reprisal for expressing different preferences, values, and choices.

Best Practices in Working with Organizations System-wide

Now let us explore what we found about how authentic executives engender support for the whole lives of their employees through system-wide actions. They broadcast their advocacy for authenticity; tell their own stories publicly; question basic assumptions about how, where, and when work gets done; actively encourage innovation in the design of work; focus on results, not process; and change performance management systems to support authenticity.

Broadcast Advocacy for Authenticity

It is not enough for a senior executive to be an advocate with employees on a one-to-one basis. A senior leader must broadly communicate the importance of living in accord with one's values. "When I make presentations, I talk about what is important for people, how much families are important to employees, and how to make decisions

that build on that," says Larry Harrington, an Aetna vice president of customer service, responsible for 3,500 employees.

The Happy Workaholic executive can advocate widely for authenticity. Further, according to Pat Phillips, president of Card Services for American Express: "Happy Workaholics can be the most compelling, powerful advocates because they are taking the position on behalf of *others*. They deliberately set out to create a great place to work."

One of the Happy Workaholic subjects in our study, former CEO Laskaway of E&Y, was highly visible in the firm's initiatives to re-think the structure of work, so that employees could better meet their commitments outside of work. He chaired the Gender Equity Task Force, which brought together senior leaders from across the firm's practice areas to sponsor initiatives for change in work culture. He included this and other retention-related issues in his periodic firm-wide voice mails. He attended leadership meetings with other senior leaders in the firm to solicit their involvement and ideas. In the words of one area managing partner at E&Y, "Phil made this a personal priority."

Laskaway made a big investment in transforming the culture at Ernst & Young, and he sent a message that is a key principle for any senior executive who wants to lead an organization that draws the best from his people: I care about your life outside work. Mike Phillips, CEO of Frank Russell Company, echoes a similar point: "We're a knowledge-based company. And if we don't look after our people, they won't look after our clients."

Best practices we observed in Happy Workaholic executives who successfully advocate the business case for authenticity:

- In the organization's mission statement, vision, operating principles, and management practices, incorporate support for employees in making choices that reinforce both work and personal life priorities.
- Use a variety of forms to communicate, so the entire target population is reached.
- Survey employees and share results organization-wide.
- Tell stories of employees who have achieved work and personal life goals to show real examples of how it can be done.
- Provide the resources, financial and political, needed for successful change efforts.
- Sponsor discussions that address the impact of the organization's culture on the expression of diverse core values with respect to work and personal life.

Tell Your Own Stories Publicly

Pat Phillips says that one of the ways Happy Workaholics can serve as advocates is to make it OK to discuss what once was "undiscussable" in the workplace. "I find that you have to weave in your own personal examples to the things you say, in your talks, presentations, and so on. Employees need to see that you are faced with the same crazy things they are: life challenges, teenager problems."

Happy Workaholic executives enhance credibility about their commitment to authentic expression of core values when they:

- Tell stories in public of their own struggles to align actions with personal values.
- Discuss work and personal life priorities in staff meetings on a regular basis.

Question Basic Assumptions About How, Where, and When Work Gets Done

Happy Workaholics find that they have to challenge long-held beliefs about work patterns. For example, allowing schedule flexibility so that employees can devote the desired time and energy to non-work pursuits requires work teams to creatively re-think traditional work practices. You can't be flexible with where and when work is done without challenging how it gets done. Here, again, a primary focus for Happy Workaholic executives is on what they communicate. Says John Lechleiter, senior vice president of Pharmaceutical Products at Eli Lilly, "I try to encourage a work environment that allows people to speak up and challenge how the work is done. I model being able to accept confrontation and disagreement."

Happy Workaholic executives invite all employees to contribute to the dialogue on improving work practices. In doing so they provide legitimacy for innovations that allow employees to pursue what is most important to them, even if what they value doesn't directly mirror what others hold most dear. "You have to communicate clearly—and people need to know you mean it—that people have a choice on how to configure their work," contends Lechleiter. "If there is no choice, or they feel they have no choice, they have to be able to challenge that."

Happy Workaholic executives actively question basic assumptions about how work gets done and they:

- Empower employee teams to take ownership of operational aspects of their work.
- Involve employees, clients, and customers in the process of designing flexible work arrange-

ments and encourage them to review work practices continually.

Actively Encourage Innovation in the Design of Work

Happy Workaholic executives encourage employees to seek innovative solutions that benefit both the business and the lives of employees, with no fear of recrimination. Many of these leaders have discovered that work/life conflicts can become catalysts for identifying work inefficiencies. We observed that even the best leaders unknowingly create excessive and low-value work. One Happy Workaholic executive described how she came to work on Saturdays and spent time wandering through the office building thanking employees for working so hard. When she entered the elevator to go back up to her tower office, the employees would quickly and quietly leave to return home. She unknowingly had been encouraging employees to come to work briefly just to be seen by her. When a colleague brought this to her attention, not only did she encourage them to stay home, she brought her misstep to the attention of the senior management of the company. The senior management group began looking for ways to challenge their own behavior, particularly behavior that encouraged inefficient and unproductive practices on the part of employees. They shared these discoveries with the management team and their employees and then changed their own behavior.

Even the best leaders unknowingly create excessive and low-value work.

The issues of "perfectionism," "overly precise," and "constant fine-tuning" come up again and again. Lechleiter of Eli Lilly explains, "I found that a group of people was working every weekend from January through March. I got them together and asked them to find some better, more simplified ways of getting the work done. . . . I'm amazed at how many people at my level don't know what we are asking of our employees." This openness to self-critique and innovation is motivated by the Happy Workaholic's interest in continual improvement and personal growth. When employees are encouraged to identify traditional work practices that interfere with meeting their personal as well as organizational goals, the result is a win-win for the organization and the employee.²⁴

Here, then, is a summary of best practices we observed in authentic executives who encourage

their employees to create innovative work practices:

- Make sure everyone feels free to speak up about new ways of getting things done.
- Recognize and reward employees for identifying inefficient work practices.
- Ensure that workloads are manageable.
- Create a specific objective for each employee to eliminate unnecessary work.
- Tell stories of the bureaucratic practices they have identified and eliminated.

Focus on Results, Not Process

Happy Workaholic executives want freedom of choice, for themselves and their employees. They consistently tell employees not how to do things but what the outcome must be. By focusing on results, they give employees the flexibility to deal with personal issues and priorities beyond work that may affect work. They set the high-level business direction and give employees choices about how to do their jobs.

Cappeline of AlliedSignal explains: "All I see is output. When that output occurs is quite immaterial to me. That doesn't mean I'm going to be relaxed with less profit at the end of the quarter. But I'm certainly relaxed giving as much leeway as I can for people being out of the office during the normal course of a working day." Similarly, Mary Lynn Podolak, senior vice president and director of the Capital Markets Group at First Union Bank, says, "I'm not interested in how the schedule is implemented, but rather that the job is getting done."

Tom Gerrity, former chairman and CEO of the Index Group, Inc. and former dean of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, successfully built and led Index for 20 years by focusing on results. The hallmarks of his approach were explicit and continual emphasis on pursuing the company's values, combined with flexibility in how results were achieved. "What I had to model was the values. Everyone has their own unique way to contribute. It's in your interest as a leader to reinforce innovation. If the work can be accomplished by working at home, or on a three-day-per-week schedule, that's fine. The important thing is to align on both values and high-quality results."

Effective Happy Workaholic executives focus on results, not process when they:

- Spend time on vision, strategy, and talent management—not micromanagement.
- Make corporate values, goals, and expected outcomes very clear.

- Hold employees accountable for results, not face time at the office.

Change Performance Management Systems to Support Authenticity

Some executives in our study have taken steps to create new paradigms for performance management that incorporate employee priorities beyond work. Doug Lennick of American Express created a system he calls "Woody Woofle" which sounds out the acronym WDYWFYL, for "What Do You Want From Your Life?" WDYWFYL is a voluntary process for setting personal objectives that are integrated with the performance of the business. The manager works with an employee to develop objectives to meet a personal life ambition. The personal objective becomes part of overall objectives, and progress is reviewed in a session along with the business objectives. This process involves the manager in documenting life goals as part of employee development plans, establishing project work plans and calendars that incorporate personal events such as birthdays and anniversaries, and using programs that give employees flexibility to deal with personal life demands. In a similar vein, Bill Harrison, CEO of JP Morgan Chase, describes how in his firm "we work to measure success by looking at the whole person, their personal interests, and how they contribute outside the office, as much as the work part of the equation."²⁵

Training is essential to sustain a culture that supports authenticity. Larry Harrington of Aetna explains, "The training department's top priority is to train and coach the supervisors to work through employee work/life issues. We use live examples of day-to-day work/life issues. We talk through how they were handled and what could have been done differently."

Some executives use evaluation systems to reinforce the goal of creating supportive environments. Ford Motor Company's 360 process includes assessment on the extent to which managers support employees in meeting personal objectives as well as work objectives. In one section of this process, the highest rating goes to a manager who "demands a work environment that ensures employee well-being and maximizes flexibility in helping employees meet family and community obligations." Similarly, at Dupont, employees nominate managers who enable direct reports to meet their personal objectives to receive awards at a banquet attended by representatives from senior management.

To change performance management systems to support authenticity:

- Measure success by looking at the whole person.
- Offer coaching and training for finding creative solutions to work/life challenges.
- Evaluate managers on how well they develop employee capacities to produce business results and live richly.

Employee Authenticity and Its Impact on Performance and Well-Being

For all the best practices that authentic executives might adopt, does it really matter? A recent study of business school student attitudes found that graduating MBA students believe that clashes between their personal values and those of their future employers will be very stressful. Moreover, they anticipate that instead of trying to change the organizational culture, they would opt to leave the organization.²⁶ Even before starting their post-graduate jobs, they are aware of the costs of values conflict.

Another recent study found that employees who work longer hours or more days than they prefer for reasons other than personal motivation (Unhappy Workaholics in our nomenclature) feel excessively overworked.²⁷ When people feel overworked, they make more mistakes; they feel angry towards their employers; they resent their coworkers who don't work as hard as they do; they lose sleep; and they feel less successful with spouse or partner, children, and friends. Since people who voluntarily decide to work more hours or days (Happy Workaholics) do not feel overworked, they are less likely to report these negative personal and organizational outcomes.²⁸

As with executives, authenticity enables employees to feel a sense of integrity about who they are and how they act. By contrast, in one organization, a member of a product-development team confessed that she felt like a "bad person" because the team's work processes (including operating in continual crisis mode) prevented her from "giving back to the community" as much as she wished to do. By reorganizing the work to allow employees blocks of uninterrupted "quiet time" and by other changes in work processes, these employees achieved an on-time launch of a new product as well as several excellence awards.²⁹ When the culture helps employees identify and declare their priorities, work teams can collaborate to adapt project tasks and schedules so that all team members can successfully meet their priorities—in and out of the workplace. Internal studies of the WDYWFYL process, for example, show that it is effective in building emotional competence and the well-being of individuals; benefits that the com-

pany, in turn, reaps through better performance from more motivated and focused employees.

Executive Authenticity on the Rise

We found that Happy Workaholics can be effective advocates of policies and practices that help employees achieve personal and organizational goals. Since workaholics come in two forms, happy and unhappy, the only exemplary workaholic is one who consciously examines her values and actions, decides that she is acting authentically, and conveys to others that it is her decision to act in ways that are most consistent with her values. Because of her self-awareness, as well as her understanding of the business benefits of authenticity, she is not likely to demand that employees deny their personal needs and values. Indeed, she is likely to exercise enough self-discipline to avoid sending conflicting messages. The satisfaction that she gets from living in accord with her values generates respect for the rights of others to do the same.

But is it not true that you have to be one of the two types of workaholic to become a senior executive in the first place? In today's typical company, this does indeed seem to be the case. Very few CEOs fit the Poster Child for Balance profile. Harry Kraemer of Baxter International is among them. He encourages the people in his organization to live full lives, and he maintains clear boundaries that allow for more investment of his time and attention to his family than the typical CEO: "I never get in to the office before 8 o'clock. And I will tell you, as strange as it sounds, very rarely will I ever be in the office after 6. We have dinner at 6:30, and if I'm not traveling, I'm home for dinner with the family. Now, between 6:30 and 10, you would never, ever try to bother me at home because that's when we're either into our athletics, or we're doing our homework, or we're going to the park, or going to Borders and reading."³⁰

There are others,³¹ but they are surely the exception to the rule that one must sacrifice one's personal life to achieve high rank in Corporate America. When ambitious employees look up the ladder for role models, mostly what they see are workaholics. Are employees today willing to sacrifice authenticity in their career lives for the sake of career advancement? Less willing than their parents were. Are they not likely to feel pressured to forsake their personal priorities, just as the preceding generations were? Of course they are, but more and more employees are looking for alternatives.

As the values of senior executives continue to evolve rapidly in response to changing social and economic imperatives, we believe more executives

will adopt the kinds of principles and practices described here as authentic. In one-to-one dialogues we are likely to see more executives demonstrating respect for diverse choices about work and personal life, interest in what matters most to employees, support for employees taking responsibility for their choices, and actions to build trust. We expect to see more authentic executives supporting the whole lives of their employees system-wide by broadcasting their advocacy for authenticity; telling their own stories publicly; questioning basic assumptions about how, where, and when work gets done; actively encouraging innovation in the design of work; focusing on results, not process; and changing performance management systems to support authenticity.

A new generation of senior executive men and women is on the rise. They represent greater diversity in the choices executives make about how they lead their lives at work, at home, in the community, and for themselves. Our bet is that the market for talent will favor organizations with the highest proportions of authentic executives and, increasingly, of Poster Children for Balance. Which type dominates your organization?

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Endnotes

¹ Cappelli, P. 1999. *The new deal at work*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

² Aspen Institute, 2002. *Where will they lead? Student attitudes about business and society*. New York: Aspen Institute.

³ For a study of how work and family can positively affect each other, see Friedman, S. D., & Greenhaus, J. H. 2000. *Work and family—allies or enemies? What happens when business professionals confront life choices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also Endnote 6.

⁴ The Office for Retention has been renamed the Center for the New Workforce. In March, 2003 Ernst & Young received the Catalyst Award given to outstanding companies implementing innovative, effective, and measurable initiatives to advance women. For a detailed case study of the OFR, see Friedman, S. D., et al. 2000. *Proving Leo Durocher wrong: Driving work/life change at Ernst & Young*. Case study. Wharton Work/Life Integration Project, University of Pennsylvania.

⁵ See, for examples: Bennis, W. 1989. *On becoming a leader*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley; Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. 1996. *The leadership challenge: How to keep getting extraordinary things done in organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Nahavandi, A. 1999. *The art and science of leadership*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall; Shriberg, A., et al. 2001. *Prac-*

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⁶ For a review of these findings, see Lobel, S. A. 1999. Impacts of diversity and work-life initiatives in organizations. In G. N. Powell (Ed.), *Handbook of gender and work*: 453-474. Thousand Oaks: Sage. See the online Sloan Work and Family Research Network Resources for Teaching: Work and Family Encyclopedia for a review of the measurement of organizational outcomes resulting from work/life initiatives at: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/wfnetwork/rft/wfpedia/wfpMOOent.html.

⁷ Kahn, W. A. 1992. To be fully there: Psychological presence at work. *Human Relations*, 45(7): 321-349. Other researchers have explored this concept as it bears on life and work in organizations. For a recent study of authenticity in the lives of executive women, see Ruderman, M., & Ohlott, P., 2002. *At the crossroads: Next steps for high-achieving women*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁸ Gecas, V., 1986. The motivational significance of self-concept for socialization theory. *Advances in Group Processes*, 3: 131-156.

⁹ It is important to note that this chart is incomplete. It does not address people who value non-work pursuits—family, community, or self—more than their work or careers, nor those who are invested more in these non-work pursuits than in work. Certainly such people exist; however, for the most part, the executives in our study reported that they are rarely seen. For example, Gary Capeline, formerly of AlliedSignal, said: "To be honest, at the end of the day, we're here to serve the shareholders as well as our children. And if a person is consistently showing imbalance towards the home front, we have to react. I've been supervising people since 1976, and I have never had to say to somebody, 'Gee, you're really imbalanced away from the company and towards your home front.'" Making the same point, another former AlliedSignal executive, Sandy Beach Lin, told us: "I've never seen someone end up on the family or non-work side of the scale. And with our emphasis on results, we couldn't afford to let that go on."

¹⁰ Kahn, op. cit., 321-349. See also W. A. Kahn. 1990. The psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4): 692-724.

¹¹ Kahn, 1992, op. cit., 331.

¹² A recent article shows how this process occurs in particularly challenging times for executives: Dutton, J. E., et al. 2002. Leading in times of trauma. *Harvard Business Review*, January: 54-61.

¹³ Caute, D. 1967. *Essential writings of Karl Marx*. New York: Macmillan.

¹⁴ Gecas, op. cit., 46.

¹⁵ Kahn, 1992, op. cit., 334; and E. Goffman. 1961. *Encounters*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.

¹⁶ Kahn, 1992, op. cit., 336.

¹⁷ Gecas, op. cit.

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²² Cashman, K. 1998. *Leadership from the inside out*. Provo, UT: Executive Excellence Publishing.

²³ Similar findings are reported in Friedman, S. D., Christensen, P., & DeGroot, J. 1998. Work and life: The end of the zero-sum game. *Harvard Business Review*, November-December: 119-129.

²⁴ For a comprehensive approach to work redesign, see Rapoport, R., et al. 2002. *Beyond work-family balance: Advancing gender equity and workplace performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

²⁵ Solutions, 2002. Executive spotlight: William B. Harrison, Jr., Chairman and CEO, JPMorgan Chase. *Solutions*. Watertown, MA: Bright Horizons Family Solutions, Winter: 4-5.

²⁶ Aspen Institute, op. cit.

²⁷ Galinsky, E., Kim, S., & Bond, J. T., 2001. *Feeling overworked: When work becomes too much*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

²⁸ Lobel, S. A. 2003. "It would even be good for business." In J. deGraaf (Ed.), *Take back your time day handbook*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler: 178-184.

²⁹ These observations were reported in Rapoport, R., & Bailyn, L. 1996. *Re-linking life and work: Toward a better future*. New York: Ford Foundation.

³⁰ Anon. Baxter's Harry Kraemer: "I Don't Golf" BWOnline, 28 March 2002.

³¹ See, for example, Jim Goodnight of SAS Institute, the focus of Bankert, E., Lee, M. D., & Lange, C. 2000. *SAS Institute*. Case study, Wharton Work/Life Integration Project, University of Pennsylvania.



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