

Time and Balance

The term “work-life balance” originated in the United Kingdom in the 1970s, defined as “a comfortable state of equilibrium achieved between an employee’s primary priorities at work and in their private life.” For a long time, the way to achieve this balance was to promote efficiency by preventing the two spheres from overlapping, hence the need for time-management tools.

However, thinking that “time management” requires only a set of good technological tools is like thinking that a good set of knives and high-quality ingredients are all that’s needed to cook a delicious meal. Time management is fundamentally linked to clarity of priorities and making decisions about what to do and how to do it in our daily lives.

Some of the tips for cultivating habits of efficiency that we come across most frequently are:

- Break projects down into smaller, schedulable activities so they can be managed realistically.
- Organize tasks by categorizing them as important/unimportant and urgent/non-urgent. Although you’ll start with the “urgent/important” tasks, it’s the “important/non-urgent” ones that should take up the most time in your daily schedule, since they’re usually the ones that define the purpose of your role.
- Schedule activities and share the diagram with the relevant stakeholders.
- Group similar tasks together, since completing them in a single block of time helps you maintain your rhythm and focus before moving on to a different task.
- Divide your time into short work intervals alternating with breaks to maintain focus and concentration, as suggested by the Pomodoro Technique.

Undoubtedly, following these guidelines will allow us to be more effective in our day-to-day work and, as a result, achieve a better balance in our workday. These tips are invaluable on a tactical level, but they aren’t enough if we think about the long term and the integration of all the aspects that make up a balanced and healthy life.

Work-life balance has long been at the center of discussions, and with the shift in work formats, it has intensified, even becoming one of the key



expectations of the new generations entering the workforce.

While reviewing personal stories, I came across two very distinct cases: that of Juan Ignacio, who served as an IT leader for many years. Some time ago, his department was restructured and transferred to a regional services operation based in Manila. In an effort to retain him, the company offered him a radical change in role, covering his training costs and providing an attractive benefits package to entice him. Even so, the satisfaction he felt from this recognition wasn’t enough to ease the sadness he felt about leaving the position with which he strongly identified. He loved his team and his day-to-day work.

On the other hand, we have Mora, who, at 24 years old, already holds the position of coordinator in the quality department. Her appointment is recent; there is much to do and much to learn. Taking on this challenge means working overtime, putting aspects of her social life on hold for a while, and focusing entirely on understanding her new role. When speaking with her, you can sense her satisfaction, her enthusiasm, and her genuine desire to dedicate herself 100% to succeeding in this new challenge.

Seen in perspective, the outcome seems obvious, but when we’re playing our own game, it’s not so easy to see. When it comes to achieving work-life balance, a critical factor emerges that defines our approach: a sense of purpose. Thinking about balance requires not only methods and tools but also the ability to identify with what we do.

Perhaps the best advice I can offer at this point isn’t a new app to download, a new way to use your time, or mindful breathing—but rather the advice to take time for yourself to identify what truly gives meaning to every minute of your day and to set aside time in your week to do it.