



BALANCING ACT



Sean Butler explains the importance of creating and maintaining a good work/life balance, and how that will positively affect your business

These three words are important. Read them twice and ask yourself: 'Do I have a good work/life balance?'

What is the recipe for a successful work/life balance? Most of you reading this article will be business owners, landscapers or designers, some of you will be one-person businesses and others multiple-person, but the answer is the same for everyone: a culture of good communication.

One day a long time ago, a good friend of mine who works in the city as a fund manager said to me, 'you haven't got a business unless the business runs itself.'

Good communication starts with you, even if you're a one-person business. It's easier to start good communication at the beginning of a new process and not halfway through – people resist change, so starting as you mean to go on is the best way forward. You set clear boundaries and manage expectations.

Take time to explain to every new client how you operate, down to the stage by stage process of how you work. Creating and maintaining a good work/life balance takes discipline and time management. It's all too

easy to try and fit everything in, but you

end up sacrificing what you set out to do in your downtime. A good business is always busy, so don't worry about trying to clear your workload – you've set up your business to work in your favour and give you a great work/life balance.



IS THIS YOU?

The phone rings. "Hello, Mr. Client – yes, I can come this evening (as you, Mr. Client, work all day). Yes, I can come Saturday (as you, Mr. Client, work all week)."

DO YOU WISH THIS WAS YOU?

The phone rings. "Hello Mrs. Client, thank you for calling us today. I would be more than happy to come over and see you – I can do any Tuesday or Thursday between 10am and 3.30pm, 3.30pm being my last appointment. No, I'm sorry – I don't work weekends."

You've organised your working week into time managed days. Mondays are for site visits, meeting key staff and office essentials, Tuesdays and Thursdays are for client meetings, Wednesdays are for designing and on Fridays you're in the office or doing whatever you do that gets you organised.

First is good communication, setting out your stall here to manage client's expectations, and saying that you have an organised approach to business and that you are not available 24/7. Filter this down through your business. With calls, emails and texts constantly within arm's reach, it can be difficult to avoid working 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Some of my most creative ideas are often thought up whilst cooking, relaxing in the garden or training for my next triathlon. Without a work/life balance and that crucial time and space to think, process and recharge, our work ultimately suffers. We need to avoid burning out.

Enjoy your work with a healthy balance. The happier



Sean makes time for what he enjoys with the same energy he puts into his business

you are, the more creative and productive you are, and the more committed you can be to your work.

ABOUT SEAN BUTLER

Sean Butler is a landscape designer and director of Cube 1994. With a background in civil engineering, Sean has an in-depth understanding of the design, construction and maintenance of the physical and naturally built landscape.
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