

*In today's workforce, the pursuit of greater work/life balance is gender-neutral, with more households requiring two full-time working parents and wanting to be equal partners in most aspects of parenting at home. To better manage personal and professional calendars, many CPA dads are taking advantage of work style adjustments and following some important principles to help steer down a path to healthier work/life balance.*

## CPAs In Search of Work/Life Balance: How Men are Finding More Time to Be Dads

The very idea of workplace flexibility - or the work/life balance issue - was once considered a uniquely female consideration. Many women in the workforce continue to search for ways to structure their careers so they can spend more time with their children, stay home with them when they're sick and attend their dance recitals.

But in today's world, the pursuit of greater work/life balance is gender-neutral. With more and more households requiring two full-time working parents, there is a heightened need for mom and dad to be equal partners in all aspects of parenting. Indeed, recent studies seem to indicate that the work/life balance issue is now a generational theme.

The CPAs in the modern workforce come from very diverse backgrounds and have different expectations. Recent college graduates and new hires in the accounting profession have made it very clear that they value balance in their lives, with workplace flexibility being featured as the key component, and yet employers do not appear to be getting that message.

For example, Spherion's 2007 Emerging Workforce Study found that 65% of all workers cite "time and flexibility" as an important consideration in whether they will remain in their current organization. Meanwhile, only 35% of employers who were surveyed perceived those factors to be important when it comes to retaining talent. Additionally, a CareerBuilder.com survey found that 37% of all working dads say they would consider taking a new job with less pay if it offered a better work/life balance; one in five would accept a pay cut of more than 5% and one in 10 would even accept a pay cut of more than 10%.

To better manage personal and professional calendars, many CPA dads say they have taken advantage of work style adjustments such as flexible schedules and telecommuting. If you're a CPA seeking healthier work/life balance, here are some basic tips to help you navigate the road ahead:

- **Do some prioritizing:**

Track everything you do for a week, both on and off the job, and then decide what is necessary and what is most satisfying for you. Anything on your list that doesn't make it into those categories can be cut, delegated or at least de-prioritized.

- **Prepare to make your case at work:**

Before you approach your supervisor about implementing a more flexible work arrangement, you have to earn the right to do so. Work hard and establish yourself as a top player for the company so the employer sees the value you consistently deliver.



- **Explore your options:**

When the time is right, take your concerns to your employer and find out if they are amenable to flex hours, a compressed workweek, job sharing, telecommuting or other workplace flexibility options that might help you find a healthier balance in your life.

- **Settle on a smart schedule:**

Most CPAs tell us that they would prefer to work one late night and arrive home on time every other day that week, rather than work long days four nights a week. Remember that nothing is perfect and you'll need to sacrifice something to get what you want.

- **Learn the art of saying "No":**

Whether it's a co-worker asking you to lead an extra project because it will look good to the management or your child's teacher asking you to manage an extra-curricular activity because of your unique talents with kids, remember that it is perfectly acceptable to politely decline such flattering requests. Too many dads take on extra obligations because of guilt that they're never quite doing enough to satisfy everyone at work or at home; when you learn to say No without feeling bad about it, you'll make room in your life for the work-related and non-work-related activities that you bring you the most satisfaction.

- **Organize and manage your time:**

It's tough for busy accountants to stay in control of their schedules, so set aside one night a week (or a month) to get yourself really organized at work. Then try to be as diligent in managing your scope of responsibilities as you are about meeting your clients' filing deadlines. A weekly family calendar of important dates coming up will also help you avoid panic on the home front and better manage your time there as well.

- **Make time for family fun:**

Set aside one night each week for some sort of family recreation time. Unplug the phone, power down the laptop and cell phones, and turn off the TV. Making time for activities that you enjoy doing with your family will go a long way toward rejuvenating you and helping you feel a healthier balance in your life.

- **Get involved:**

If you haven't done so already, introduce yourself to your child's teacher and ask for email updates on his/her progress. Volunteer your time where you can spend it with your kids - whether it's joining Scouts or coaching a team or participating at a school function. By investing part of yourself into the areas of importance in the lives of your children, you'll have a profound impact on how they perceive your priorities.

- **Nurture yourself:**

This is a tough one for a lot of CPA dads who tend to leave everything at the office and squeeze out whatever energy is left for their families at nights and weekends (if they're not at the office). But it's important to set aside some time once a week for something you personally enjoy (exercising, listening to music, reading, etc.) so that you are in a better state of mind.

These tips are challenging, but at least making some progress on a few of them will help steer you down a path to healthier work/life balance. And while you're at it, remember there is nothing as stressful or less healthy than trying to do it all while you're sleep-deprived - so don't forget to get plenty of rest along the way!