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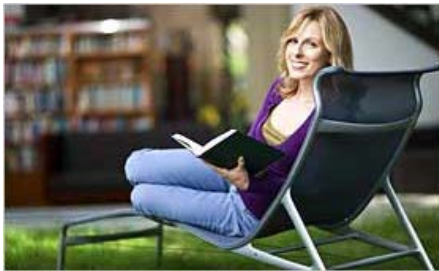
THE SMALL-BUSINESS LIFE

Think Work-Life Balance Is a Myth? Think Again

By Toddi Gutner | [Business on Main](#)

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Ask entrepreneurs about their work-life balance and the answer you're likely to get is, "What life?" Indeed, in this 24/7 information economy, small-business owners are increasingly on the hook to be available to clients, vendors and colleagues within a moment's notice. We asked a few small-business owners how they have successfully created and managed the coveted prize of work-life balance — and what nuggets of knowledge other entrepreneurs can learn from them.

Bob Knott, owner and president of SWC Technology Partners, a 65-employee consulting firm

"You need to make conscious decisions about how to spend your time. I get to work about 8:30 and leave about 5:30 every day. I live five minutes from home. I'm with my family for a couple of hours at night and in the morning, and I'm involved in all their activities. I coach all three of my kids' soccer teams.

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"The important thing for us as a company is that we all have families. It's a consulting company and we've done a good job where we manage expectations and don't have to do fire drills. Most situations I see, [employees for other companies] work crazy hours because management expects that.

"It is also really critical that you have a good management team. I bring good people here who do what they do really well, so I don't have to be in the middle of every situation. I give people more decision-making power. I envision myself as a football coach — I bring the athletes together and put people in the right position. Everybody has a role and they need to understand that role.

"Finally, it is about priorities — you have to focus on the things that really matter. You have to use your day really effectively to get things done."

Michael K. McKean, CEO and founder of the Knowland Group, a sales and marketing software and services company for the global hospitality business

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"If you're an entrepreneur and you're successful, one of the things you are good at is improvising or finding unique ways of getting things done. If you applied half the energy to figuring out how to spend the time with your family as you do on your business, then you would be happy. Doing things with less, getting over hurdles, beating the competition — spend some of that energy on your life balance. I'm still doing the hours, but I work my business around the family.

"I live on the beach. I would say that I just made some conscious decisions that would be better for my family. We needed to open a call center. Instead of going to Iowa or Colorado, I said, 'We know the area here in Delaware — let's open it up in Salisbury, Maryland.'

"When I had my first business, I didn't have a family. With the second business — my daughter just turned 4, and my son is 2 — I don't know that my working hours have subtracted. I'm up at about 3:30 in the morning every day. I get to spend about two hours of distraction-free time working with my software team in India. ... I get to spend breakfast time and wake-up time with my wife. I also make sure I'm home at a reasonable hour."

Jennifer Campisi, a former nurse and current franchise owner of Senior Helpers, an agency that provides in-home care for the elderly

"I've been a single mom for over six years, my two boys are 13 and 9, and I live five minutes from my office. To have a work-life balance, you have to be passionate about what you do, have to be in control in your business but able to delegate, give things up, and you have to have a good support system. At the

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beginning, I was a control freak, but it's being able to let go and realize you can't do everything yourself [that helps provide balance]. Also, having a good support system here is vital. I have four employees and my mother, and about 75 caregivers that we employ.

"I live and die by my calendar. The office structure is the same every day, and I feel comfortable leaving because everyone is cross-trained. Anytime there is a problem, the clients are comfortable with anyone here in the office. I make the day-to-day business decisions. As far as crisis management, my co-workers manage that.

"I also think that quality time is important — I don't have that guilt because I spend some time with my kids. We live in south Louisiana, where we can fish — and the time I spend with them is quality time."

What these balanced small-business leaders have in common:

- They make work-life balance a priority.
- They live close to their work.
- They've built a strong management team and actively delegate responsibility.
- They plan leisure time each day.

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Toddi Gutner is an award-winning journalist, writer and editor and currently a contributing writer covering personal finance for Reuters.

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