



GET THE BALANCE RIGHT

**Do you build your business around your family or your family around your business?
The choice is yours.**

by Rich Thawley

One of the questions I get most regularly from associates throughout our company is “how do I build a successful business and maintain a quality family life?” I don’t believe there is one perfect answer to that question because people’s circumstances and attitudes on this subject can vary substantially. I do think, however, there are some common sense things which my wife, Cindy, and I have done over the years to give us simultaneously a great family and business life.

First, you have to decide which is your top priority: your family or your business. That sounds like a simple question, but many people haven’t totally committed to a quality marriage and family life. Once you determine your family is your absolute priority then you will always build the business around your family life and not your family around your business life. After making that decision, it is a matter of communication between spouses, and structuring and planning your time.

For years Cindy and I worked side by side in the office. Prior to the school years, we had our children there with us. As we worked on different things we would hand them back and forth to each other. When the kids were at the office during the day, we had a play area for them and they had a thousand aunts and uncles on the team who helped us with them. Even though I was in the field on weeknights and Saturdays, Cindy was very diligent in keeping me in the loop about every aspect of our children’s lives. Regularly she would tell me when I needed to take some time with any of our three children. I was always willing to move appointments around or otherwise clear some time to keep our family happy and well. Anyone who tells you that you can’t build a big business and have a great family life is wrong. It won’t always be easy but what worthwhile thing is?

Someone once told me that some things in life are critical and other things are important. The business is important, but your family’s welfare is critical. I love and enjoy the insurance and financial services business, but nowhere near as much as our faith or our family. It’s easy to get caught up in the competition, the desire for recognition, making money, and think that is really important, but nothing contributes more to personal happiness than a great family life. A powerful and true story I heard at a church conference was of a father-son fishing trip. The father was a busy and successful businessman and cleared a day to be with his young son. Several days later, his wife read their individual journal accounts. The father’s entry said words to this effect: “I went on a fishing trip with my son, waste of a perfectly good day.” The son’s entry went like this: “I went fishing with my Dad today, probably the best day of my life.” Our time here on Earth is short and our time with our children is even shorter. With all the stress and fast pace of life today, it is vital to keep in mind how much quality time means to our loved ones. You have to schedule it and do whatever it takes to make it happen. It will often mean far more to them than you realize.

One word of warning about striving for perfect balance, you'll never quite get there. Don't put so much pressure on yourself. Just keep working on it from day to day. Learn from your mistakes and experiences and just remember to keep your family first. With that priority as your true North you can weather the storms and crazy times that come when you commit to build an excellent life. Work hard and make it happen!

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