

Mastering the Balance: Boundary Management Strategies for Career Succession and Work-life Equilibrium

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Introduction

“Balance is not something you find, it’s something you create” - Jana Kingsford.

In the ever-changing landscape of the modern workplace, where the demands of career and personal life intertwine, a pressing need arises for a nuanced exploration of the delicate balance between work-life and the pursuit of professional growth. As we delve into the dynamic interplay of these elements and strive to advance in our careers, we often grapple with the daunting need to achieve work-life harmony. While it is true that work-life balance can be greatly influenced by organisational policies that support individuals in achieving a healthy equilibrium between personal and professional life, employees themselves also play a crucial role by taking a proactive approach to defining boundaries to maintain a balance that works for them ([Boundary Theory](#)). This article embarks on a journey to outline some boundary management strategies that support individuals in progressing in their careers and navigating personal life milestones with resilience.

Unlocking the Power of Work-life Integration

You might have heard the term work-life integration many times, but the question is, how frequently do you pause to contemplate the true essence of this term and its relevance to your own life? This isn't just a trendy phrase; it should be considered a guiding principle. Striving to [integrate](#) work-related and personal life activities throughout the day in a conducive manner yields numerous benefits, ranging from fostering better and more meaningful connections to enhanced career opportunities and prospects.

The Struggle of Juggling Career Progression and Personal Milestones

In the contemporary landscape, the rapid changes in the work environment and technological advancements have resulted in an 'all-time on' culture. Additionally, the gig economy and changing nature of career paths demand adaptability, often making it difficult for individuals to control their schedules ([Majini 2023](#)). The pursuit of career progression may [contradict](#) personal life milestones, to name a few: elderly care, starting a family and parenting. There are real consequences due to the conflict between work and family that affects career progression and quality of life for both men and women. The impacts on women include career choice constraints, the need to opt between career or marriage and children, or narrow career progression and development opportunities in the workplace. Conversely, men may struggle with trading off personal and career values while searching for ways to make dual-earner families work. For these work-life conflicts, time constraint is not the only reason.

The psychological impacts and interference of home on work and work on the home run much deeper. Due to this interference, people find it [challenging to cultivate pursuits](#) outside work that may help to improve their quality of life. Additionally, it increases the likelihood that individuals' well-being will suffer and be compromised ([Gemmano 2023](#))

Healthy Boundaries for Work-life Harmony

Boundary Management Theory, or simply Boundary Theory, provides significant insights about sustaining a thriving career while navigating personal life milestones. This theory highlights practical grounds on how individuals navigate and manage [boundaries](#) between their personal and professional lives. It is initiated by defining clear boundaries between work and professional life and actively negotiating these boundaries to maintain work-life harmony and, above all, fulfilment in both domains.

Being unsuccessful in defining boundaries from the outset is not only exhausting but drags you into a continuous cycle of [heightened standards and expectations](#) that can be exasperating, unsustainable and demoralising. Individuals can apply *Boundary Management Theory* to establish strategies in order to integrate their personal life goals with career aspirations. Here are some approaches to consider.

Create and Communicate Boundaries Clearly: Designate specific spaces and hours for work-related activities and stick to them. Sheryl Sandberg, the founder of LeanIn.Org, who served as a Facebook COO until August 2022, emphasised the value of prioritising personal lives and was known for leaving the office at 5:30 pm sharp to spend time with her family. Research revealed that supervisors showing more segmentation behaviour to detach home and work are perceived to be work-life-friendly role models, and employees under the supervision of such supervisors feel less disengaged and exhausted ([Koch & Binnewies 2015](#)).

It is important to be assertive in conveying your limitations as well as needs while fostering open dialogue to ensure mutual understanding and respect. Be [mindful](#) of the use of technology by creating and maintaining boundaries around how and when you will utilise it for work-related objectives. Digital technologies today are powerful but powerfully distracting, too. [A study on Mindful Tech](#) outlines the strategies and exercises that allow us to examine our use of technologies attentively and craft a more advantageous approach to utilising them.

Unleash Efficiency through Task Prioritisation and Wise Delegation: Prioritise tasks based on urgency and importance. Give consideration to tasks that are time-sensitive or have close deadlines. To prioritise and delegate, it is essential to assess the potential impact, level of complexity and desired outcomes associated with each task. Think of delegating tasks that do not require significant oversight and lighten your workload for personal activities. Richard Branson, the founder of [Virgin Group](#), recognises the importance of [delegation](#), so as to have more time to focus on something big and to maintain a smooth balance between work commitments and personal life.

Schedule Regular Breaks and Revitalise: Based on your concentration level, workflow and the nature of the specific task, determine short and regular breaks. Keep in mind your personal preferences while [deciding on some break elements](#), such as the length of the break, location of the break and break

activity; this will help you recharge and revitalise. Schedule the breaks strategically between tasks and use them as opportunities to practice mindfulness and self-reflection that will promote overall well-being, leading toward career progression.

Devise a Blueprint for Career Harmony: Consider various factors, such as growth potential, progression opportunities and workplace culture, to make sure that your career aligns well with your personal values while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Do a careful [self-assessment](#) by reflecting on your weaknesses, strengths and long-term career milestones; this will equip you with the art of selective opportunity pursuit. You must make informed decisions about your career path by thoughtfully weighing the pros and cons of various choices. Sandberg, in her book *Lean In*, emphasised the importance of leaning into one's career by actively pursuing career ambitions and goals with determination and commitment while also creating space for personal life.

Reassess and Adjust Boundaries Regularly: Regular boundary evaluation and adjustment can be a game changer for career progression. Stay aware and receptive to recognise when the right time is to [modify your boundaries](#) to cater to the evolving needs and circumstances of work-life balance and career advancement. Oprah Winfrey, a famous media proprietor with multiple successful ventures, advocates for evaluating and updating boundaries continuously to align with current needs and levels of growth. Some [elements to consider for boundary reviews](#) could include time allocation, emotional energy, professional growth and external demands. Not paying attention to updating boundaries can lead to stress, burnout and impaired decision-making, which can have a negative impact on work-life harmony and career advancement.

Our Take-Away

Balancing a flourishing career alongside personal life milestones is akin to walking a tightrope stretched between the towers of career ambitions and personal life events. It necessitates a mastery in equilibrium with a clear awareness of the opposite forces tugging from different directions. Through this article, we have discussed evolving perspectives on work-life integration and professional growth with a focal point on creating boundaries. Career growth and clear boundaries are on equal footing and go hand in hand. Sustaining a fulfilling and progressive career trajectory starts with work-life harmony, and thus, it is crucial to create boundaries between work and professional life that protect your emotional energy and strength. Additionally, continuous self-assessment and boundary adjustment aligned with evolving circumstances can help sustain long-term success and well-being.



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