



ISPI VANCOUVER SPECTRUM

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Start of a New Year

A message from the editor, Julie Case

The beginning of a new year already – those 2010 Olympic games will be upon us before we know it! So all the personal new year's resolutions have been made (and some broken) by now, but did you make any professional resolutions?

If you didn't, it's not too late. If you did and they were perhaps related to the topics of balance, change, or knowledge – then this issue is for you.

Paul Alexander Joo has been busy and generously submitted two timely articles for this winter edition of *Spectrum*. His first article exposes the myths associated with achieving a balanced lifestyle and includes tips on how you can achieve balance in your life.

Paul's second article entitled "Optimizing Uncertainty" proposes that uncertainty may simply be suffering from bad public relations. Perhaps we ought to embrace it and use it to our advantage in our decision making as he suggests.

And finally, have you heard of blogs? Or blogging? I certainly hadn't until I talked to Roberta Westwood. According to her article, "Blogged For Business, Blogged For Learning" blogs are a growing phenomena that are here to stay. So discover what blogs are by reading her article and you can say you've increased your professional knowledge! And it's not even the end of January yet! Happy blogging to those who choose to join the movement!



Balance: Mantra, Myth or Miracle

The Three Common Myths of a Balanced Lifestyle

By Paul Alexander Joo, Managing Partner, Ascent Group

A “Balanced Lifestyle.” For some it is the “light at the end of the tunnel.” For others, it’s the “pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.” So do you have to be either dying or a leprechaun to achieve it? Probably not. Reviewing our options, a single truth emerges: for something so universally sought after, there certainly seems to be no shortage of conflicting information and opinion as to what it is, why it’s so great, and how to achieve it. So let’s have a closer look, and see if we can get some clarity.

Regardless of the definition you choose, a Balanced Lifestyle delivers one fundamental value: it gives you the freedom to live as you choose. But as simple as this ideal may seem, successful people are still struggling to achieve it. So the question remains why? While there is no unequivocal answer, there are three misconceptions that are most

commonly held among all those in search of Balance. Conquering them will take you at least one step closer to living your ideal.

Myth One: Balance Is Attainable

While this statement is, strictly speaking, not untrue, it illustrates the crux of the problem: most every common definition currently treats balance as an end goal, a state to be achieved and then maintained.

The Reality

Balance is attainable, but not as a static target or destination. Treating it as such will not only rob you of any positive forward momentum in your life, but eventually frustrate you beyond reason as well. The only realistic and viable way to approach balance is to see it as a dynamic context in which you can choose to live your life.

Myth Two: It’s About Time

Even if you really could “save time in a bottle,” you still wouldn’t be any closer to living a Balanced Lifestyle. Unfortunately, for all its value as a

tool, “Time Management” is not the panacea that it is purported to be.

The Reality

Time management is potentially a very effective tool to employ once you’re living a Balanced Lifestyle. However, consistently reshuffling priorities is not going to help get you there.

Myth Three: Equilibrium is the Key

“Equilibrium?” The only place you’re likely to find it nowadays is under the carefully controlled conditions of a very well equipped laboratory.

The Reality

Achieving balance is not about “equalizing the gap” between your personal and professional lives, nor is it about pressures or even time. The fact of the matter is that when you align your priorities with your values, you’ll find there is no gap to “equalize” in the first place.

Align your priorities with your values and you’ll find there is no gap to equalize

And so we come to the \$64,000 question: is there a way to align seemingly disparate goals, find enough quality time, and avoid the mixed messages and piecemeal strategies - both internal and external - that pull you in different directions and sabotage your best-laid plans for a Balanced Lifestyle?

The answer is an unqualified "yes"....well, maybe qualified just a little. At the end of the day, your best strategy is to shift your perspective and adopt a more realistic definition of balance, one that supports your progress as you move through the various stages and different phases of your personal and professional growth, for the rest of your life.

If you can manage this, you will achieve a Balanced Lifestyle that is sustainable and it won't get knocked out of balance every time you raise the bar, be it personally or professionally.

The Bottom Line

You have a choice: treat balance as a static target and a Balanced Lifestyle will forever remain out of your reach, or shift your perspective and achieve real "success": the freedom to apply

your energies along lines of excellence, all day, every day, for the rest of your life.

Paul Alexander Joo is the founder and Managing Partner of Ascent Group, as well as Board Advisor for several entrepreneurial enterprises. With 18 years of Advisory experience in North America, Asia, and Europe directing successful strategies in business development, design and management, he has effectively collaborated with professionals, executives and organizations to sharpen their perspective, performance and maneuverability.



You can contact Paul to learn more about how to achieve a Balanced Lifestyle by phone at 604.899.4005 or email at ascent@pushthelimit.com. Or visit the Ascent Group website at www.pushthelimit.com



Optimizing Uncertainty

By Paul Alexander Joo, Managing Partner, Ascent Group

In today's challenging economic climate, uncertainty is an inescapable fact of life. Here are some practical tips on how you can embrace uncertainty to improve your business performance, perspective, and maneuverability.

Traditionally, leadership roles have always included a degree of certainty: choose a destination, chart a course, and try to guide your crew there safely and smoothly. Naturally, the greatest perceived threat to the success of such a plan has always been uncertainty; it has been labeled as a thing to be at best avoided, at least mitigated. But is this really so? Or is uncertainty simply suffering from bad PR?

In a business climate characterized by constant, rapid, and inexorable change, the only reliable constant today seems to be uncertainty. Consequently, the role of the leader has undergone a metamorphosis, calling for increased levels of agility, adaptability, and initiative. Today's leaders have to take substantial risks and leaps into the unknown not once in a career, but on a day-to-day basis.

So how can you adapt to this paradigm shift and make it work for you instead of against you? While it takes both constant and rigorous discipline, you must choose to embrace uncertainty as an ally rather than avoid it as an enemy.

"Maturity of mind is the capacity to endure uncertainty."

Let's take a closer look at uncertainty. Whether internal or external, it causes tremendous pressure - to compete, to

perform, to succeed - and often some measure of fear, which of course no one likes to admit.

So how do most business people react to uncertainty? Typically, they tend to fall into one of three common traps:

- **Cautious Reaction:** They wait until all the cards have been dealt, and then try to make the best of the situation, by which time it is usually too late.
- **Knee-jerk Reaction:** They act immediately based on an emotional response, investing neither time nor energy in the analysis or appreciation of the consequences of their reaction.
- **Willful Indecision:** Those that are even less proactive simply sit on the fence of indecision, getting caught up in analysis paralysis or ignoring the issue in the hope that it will just go away.

The remainder - an unfortunately small percentage - respond to the pressures of uncertainty with calculated strategies.

"If you choose not to decide, you've still made a choice."

So what are the results in each case? Based on our experience, for those who approach uncertainty as unsettling, unpleasant, and just plain dangerous, namely those leaders who "react" or choose to remain undecided, the result is completely subjective or arbitrary decisions.

Not surprisingly, a direct consequence of this is complete abdication of maneuverability. The result? Loss of control over their environment and a whole host of sub-optimal outcomes such as poor performance, dismissal, and E&O liability issues, to name but a few. And to add insult to injury, they are perceived as "emotional, weak leaders, and not in control."

But what about those who choose to respond, rather than react, to their challenges? Well, they make informed decisions with maximum maneuverability, resulting in managed control of their environment and optimal business performance. Moreover, they are perceived as "in control, strong leaders and strategic thinkers."

"Circumstances are the rulers of the weak; they are but the instruments of the wise."

Here are a few guidelines that will help you take the initiative to not only endure uncertainty, but embrace it to both your individual and corporate advantage:

- **Choose Clarity Over Certainty** – Invest in Enterprise Performance Measurement solutions (EPM) to gain enterprise-wide access to timely and accurate information, facilitating proactive business management even in the face of uncertainty.
- **Be Prepared To Recognize & Take Advantage Of Opportunities** - Rethink, and if necessary revise, your strategic planning process to factor in scenario planning as one means of leveraging uncertainty to catalyze strategic thinking at all levels of your organization.

- **Develop The Personal & Organizational Discipline Required To Enable Measured Responses** - Become the consummate "lead by example" leader by creating an environment around you that guides everyone to live by the mantra: "Calculated response is the critical path to success".

"Uncertainty is an inescapable fact of life: live by it or die from it."

You have a choice: wait until situations unfold and then react to them - and forever remain a victim of uncertainty. Or take uncertainty in stride and make a conscious decision to shift your organizational culture and create an environment that both supports and rewards calculated, responsible risk-taking and initiative. Ally yourself with uncertainty as one of the few remaining sources of opportunity that you can truly count on, and you will be poised for greatness indeed.

Paul Alexander Joo is the founder and Managing Partner of Ascent Group (www.pushthelimit.com).

Paul can be contacted at 604.899.4005 or via email at ascent@pushthelimit.com. You can learn more about Paul in the biography accompanying his earlier article ("Balance: Mantra, Myth or Miracle") in this issue of Spectrum.



Blogged For Business, Blogged For Learning

By Roberta Westwood, President, Westwood Dynamics

Blog:(n.) Short for Web log, a blog is a Web page that serves as an individual's publicly accessible personal journal. Typically updated daily, blogs often reflect the author's personality. (v.) To author a Web log. (Source: Webopedia.com)

Weblogs - more commonly referred to as blogs - are a growing phenomena that demand attention.

A blog is essentially an online journal, updated frequently and organized chronologically. The best blogs are searchable and allow readers to post comments. While used extensively for many years for personal and social purposes, blogs have gained increased use in business settings.

The best way to think about blogs is to follow a few that capture your interest. For several years, I have

followed Maish Nichani's blog, elearning post (<http://www.elearningpost.com/>), and Jay Cross' Internet Time blog, (<http://www.meta-time.com/blog>). Between these two blogs, I keep largely current on what is happening in my specialty, corporate learning and development.

Jay Cross is actually an excellent example of spectrum blogging (the process of authoring blogs). Cross keeps his ear to the ground, his eye on the horizon, and shares it all in various blogs. Besides his Internet Time blog, he publishes a personal blog (<http://www.internetttime.com/jayblog/index.html>) and blogs with several other thought leaders in ASTD's Learning Circuit's blog (<http://www.meta-time.com/lcmt/>). Cross's insightful and incredibly practical, tell-it-like-it-is style is refreshing.

Bloggs Find Versatile Use In Corporate Settings

More recently, the corporate world has increased its use of blogs in a variety of ways. Organizations can use

them to keep the content on their public web sites fresh or to make the thoughts of key leaders publicly available. For example, Lindow.com's CEO, Michael Robertson, shares his views on the software industry in his blog, Michael's Minutes (http://www.lindow.com/lindow_michaelsminutes.php). At Groove Networks, not only the CEO, but VPs and developers, blog publicly; they even provide links to their customers' blogs (<http://www.groove.net/default.cfm?pagename=Blogs>).

Corporations also use blogs behind the firewall for internal communications. "[Blogs] help small groups communicate in a way that is simpler and easier to follow than email or discussion forums," cites Blogger.com, a leading provider of Weblog tools (<http://www.blogger.com>). "Use a private blog on an intranet to allow team members to post related links, files, quotes or commentary." The site adds, "A blog can help keep everyone in the loop, promote cohesiveness and group culture and provide an informal

'voice' of a project or department to outsiders."

Take knowledge management (KM) as a case in point. Blogs are emerging as a powerful KM tool, and range from open, free-form blogs to more structured KM applications. Picture a project team blog to which all members can jot observations, challenges, and learnings as they emerge. No more lost issues or fading intellectual capital when the project team disbands or the consultants move on.

Other applications might include an internal CEO's blog, a department blog or blog tools used as a corporate communications vehicle. Blogs also have tremendous potential in corporate learning and development.

However, the journey to corporate blogging is not straightforward. All sorts of thorny issues emerge such as copyright and ownership of content posted on corporate blogs. Appropriate use is also a contentious issue, although you can generally adapt most corporate email and internet policies to include blogging. While these issues require some

thoughtful planning, the challenges should not stand in the way of innovation. Blogs are here and it looks like they are here to stay.

Blogs In The Virtual Classroom

The use of blogs, or weblogs, in learning is growing. To date, the best examples come from higher education; this sector has climbed onto the blog bandwagon faster than the corporate world has although, interestingly, teachers use blogs quite a bit in kindergarten to grade 12. Corporate use is emerging.

You can include blogs in courses that are entirely online or in ones that blend face-to-face and online components - but how exactly?

Instructors can keep in touch with their students by posting new content, observations and suggestions in the course blog, or use it to post assignments. This method demonstrates an effective way to use blogs actively, which can serve as a successful model for those who want to create their own.

Learners can use blogs in several different ways. For example, each learner might keep track of ongoing research and learning discoveries made while going through a course. You can also use learner blogs to post assignments. At the same time, a course site or the instructor's blog can contain a list of links to each learner's blogs.

An alternative to individual learner blogs is one shared course blog that all can post to; however, this method has its downside. A co-author of the book *We Blog, Publishing Online With Weblogs* comments, "One thing that I have found (and this is universally applicable) is that my method of organizing topics is different than everybody else's. We all structure the world differently." This observation supports the case for individual blogs.

Overall, blogs actively engage learners to read and comment on each other's blogs. The best ones allow readers to post comments - an essential component for blogs in learning. You can also set up group blogs to facilitate learning groups and course projects.

This active sharing through blogs is an ongoing dialogue, one that just happens to take place at different times. In some courses, blogs are replacing discussion forums while others use a combination of both.

The Evolution Of Blogs

It is too soon to say definitively how you can best use blogs in learning, as acknowledged even by the organizations that embrace blogs. For example, the *About* page at the Weblogs at Harvard Law site states: "Welcome. This is the place where we point to the developments in the developing World O'Weblogs at Harvard University." This meta-blog - a blog all about blogs, both in general, and at Harvard Law - acknowledges that the future of blogs is still evolving. "We're excited about how this technology might be used in all the activities of the university, for faculty, administration, students, alumni, and staff."

Privacy & Copyright Issues For Learning Blogs

It is important to consider how to protect the learner's privacy. This might seem like a paradox, given that the whole concept of a blog is open sharing between learners and possibly beyond; but it is essential from both an ethical standpoint and legal requirements, as per the Personal Information Protection Act in BC.

At the heart of privacy considerations is that you must advise the learner (employee, student or volunteer), in advance, how you will use their content. After all, many learning blogs, such as those used in higher education, might be openly available on the web. Even where access to blogs might be limited to the learners' classmates and the instructor, it is necessary to state how the information students post in their blog will be used: who will see it, how it will be stored, and so on.

This leads to another question: Who owns the content on a weblog? The short answer is: the author - in this case, the learner.

However, you can approach an organization-sponsored blog in many ways. Harvard Law, for example,

states that unless bloggers specify otherwise, blog content is submitted under the terms of an Attribution-Share Alike Creative Commons Public Licence. (Creative Commons Licenses permit others to distribute your content, royalty-free, provided they credit the original author.) This arrangement facilitates the dynamic sharing of learning blogs, but also gives the individual the right to make another choice.

Resources

- Blogging for Business, by Jay Cross
<http://www.learningcircuits.org/2003/aug2003/cross.htm>
- Are you Blogging Yet? Web Journals Could Have Business Value, by John Foley
<http://www.informationweek.com/story/IWK20020719S0001>
- Making Sense of Weblogs in the Intranet, presentation on blogs and KM by Michael Angeles
<http://studioid.com/files/upa/angel-es-notes.pdf>

- *A Blogger in Their Midst*, by Hally Suitt, Harvard Business Review, September 2003

This is a fascinating fictional account of an organization's dilemma in dealing with an employee's personal blog and its impact on the business

- Roberta's Blog

Visit the author's blog, and follow Roberta's continuing research into blogs at

<http://www.robertaw.blogspot.com/>

- Blogtalk: ETUG Discussion on the Uses of Blogs in Education,

Lots of information. If you follow the links, you'll find actual examples of blogs used in courses.

http://www.edtechpost.ca/blogtalk_archive/

- Matrix of uses for blogs in education

<http://www.edtechpost.ca/gems/matrix2.gif>

- Weblogs as a transformational technology for higher education and academic research

http://weblogs.design.fh-aachen.de/owrede/publikationen/weblogs_and_discourse

- Weblogs at Harvard Law

<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/>

- Creative Commons Public Licence

<http://creativecommons.org/>

- *We Blog: Publishing Online With Weblogs*, by Paul Bausch, Matthew Haughey, Meg Hourihan, Wiley Publishing, 2002

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Roberta helps organizations develop and implement customized learning solutions. Her focus on e-learning includes strategy development and instructional design of online learning programs. 🌈

A Reminder to Contribute to SPECTRUM

Help *ISPI Vancouver Spectrum* become even more relevant for you!

Invitation: You are once again invited to help make *ISPI Vancouver Spectrum* an even better professional resource for you and all our chapter members. We are aiming to enhance a traditional strength of *Spectrum*: contributions by our members.

You: ISPI members have a lot to offer. We ask you to send content for *Spectrum* or the website. Send us your articles, news, tips, etc., and we'll try to use them.

Topics: Here are just a few of the many possible ideas for your submissions:

- Stories about accomplishments in your work
- Reviews of relevant books, conferences, etc.
- Annotated sets of URLs for web content about performance themes or other interesting topics
- Articles based on your research and practice
- Articles you've written for your own organization that you can share
- Articles by someone else that you would like to recommend
- Responses to articles you've seen in *Spectrum*

Guidelines: Use Word, with simple formatting. Include full copyright facts if you send something from another source for re-publication. We may edit your content. We will try to use it in *Spectrum* or on our website.

Act now! Thanks so much for considering this invitation. We look forward to hearing from *you*. Our next deadline is **March 18, 2004**. Please send your ideas, articles, etc., to the *ISPI Vancouver Spectrum* Editor, Julie Case, via email at johnandjulie@shaw.ca. Please include the word "Spectrum" in your email subject line. 

