



EXECUTIVE VITALITY: CULTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Often, when it comes to work-life balance, leaders ask for “A” and reward “B.” The company’s written values may say “we value fun, family, and taking care of yourself,” but the leaders neither model that behavior nor reward it in others. Does this sound familiar? These are the leaders who say, “Go home and relax,” and then set unrealistic, unilateral deadlines, or send you emails all weekend.

Company off-sites or events also can illustrate a dichotomy between the stated values (e.g., take care of yourself) and the demonstrated values (come out and party with us). Often the company “retreat” includes long days (sitting), late nights, alcohol, sweets, and too much food in general.

Like many executives we know who attend such retreats, “Matthew” prefers not to go to bars. He prefers to get up early and go for a run. This reflects his personal values that bars are not fun and taking care of himself is important. Through coaching he got to a place where he communicated to his colleagues that his time with them was valuable, he wanted to put his best foot forward, and he knew what he needed to do to make that happen.

How can you make sure you are putting your best foot forward with your colleagues? What do you need to do to build in rest on your next extended company outing? What boundaries do you need to create and maintain to take optimal care of yourself and your vitality when you travel or go to corporate events?

Doing these things takes making them a high priority. This takes planning. It can even take courage. It is obvious you will feel better, have more energy, be more productive, and perform better generally if you are taking care of your vitality.

Next time you go to a corporate meeting at an enticing resort try the following:

1. Do not overeat. Do not indulge. Do not use sugar as a pick-me-up; that provides a transient effect followed by a crash. Find out ahead of time what is on the menu and make any special requests you need to.
2. Stretch. Walk. Ascertain in advance what the facilities are for working out, what is available and when.
3. Be sure you can travel back to your hotel if there is a party at a remote venue. Don’t become a stranded, unwilling, captive participant.
4. Get your normal amount of sleep (assuming it is enough; get more if it is not!).

The choices you make in such situations affect your vitality, how you feel about yourself, and the impression you make on others. I will never forget, early in my career, attending a large sales meeting at a lovely resort and being quite amazed at a new hire who was energetically dancing up a storm. She may have gotten her exercise via the dance moves; however, the alcohol that provided the fuel ensured that this was her first and last performance with the sales team. Never saw her again.

As a leader are you sending a consistent message about work-life balance and taking care of one’s executive vitality? What changes do you need to make the next time you travel on business to ensure you are at your best?