

Nicola Smee: On balancing work and family

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Just returned from a working holiday in Africa and about to head off to Australia, Nicola Smee is a one for mixing business and pleasure. This year has seen her and Kevin, her husband and business partner in a number of different countries for both work and relaxation. Like many of us, she is always trying to balance things.

A qualified nurse, now Managing Director of a thriving multi-million dollar risk brokerage firm, Nicola is still in "the caring profession" in her mind. She has just taken some of those caring skills and transferred them to clients, colleagues and of course her family.

It's not unusual for Nicola to juggle clients, staff training and tick off errands that ensure that her children (and husband) are in the best care during the day- all this within an average hour. Their company is evidence that the strong culture that a family business can bring to an organisation can make it anything but 'mom and pop' – but can be a source of powerful differentiation.

Together they have forged reputation in their industry for caring and have sought out like-minded families in their clients. Many professional women (and men) will be able to relate to Nicola's story.

"I'm no different from many women out there trying to juggle a family, career and life's demands" she says.

At the beginning of this year she realised she was actually out of balance. So she started a diary, making sure she gave time to all parts of her life including health, family, career,

relationships, spiritual, mental and all the 'boxes.' She came to realise that ignoring any of them created chaos that affected every other area of her life.

This year, she has tried to focus on being 'in the now' and fully living in the present, not worrying (too much) about what she has to do tomorrow. This is a tall-order for most of us. She is also focussed on getting as much as she can out of each day- even from the inevitable negative stuff that happens - knowing that they all teach us something.

Nicola found that she used to stress over things like coming home to a messy house and get cranky with her children and husband. This was until she read a statement one day that said "it's not a problem if you know how to solve it.' She now has the most amazing lady who keeps her house lovely. She pops in twice a week.

Kevin used to say how he worked hard all week and then spent weekends mowing lawns, so she knew how to sort that one too. Not a biggy, but it gives back more valuable time together as a family.

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I was born in Timaru-a beautiful town by the sea.

My Hobbies:

- * On my weekends I love to have friends over for a BBQ
- * Support my children playing sports
- * Boating/fishing on our beautiful waters!
- * Reading Inspiring Books
- * Movies---Comedy!
- * Going to a nice Restaurant with Family and friends

My favourite time of the day:

I love watching the sunset. I love that time to reflect on my day. Especially while walking along the beach or in a hammock in Fiji.

I'm currently involved in:

- * Solutions Financial Services as Managing Director and
- * Broker Independent Group as a shareholder and responsible for business relationships

My big goal this year is:

To lose 6 kg and I'm getting desperate now. End of year is looming very quickly.

My 'secret' for getting things done is:

I set daily goals and break my day into half hourly manageable chunks. I also set 90 day goals and yearly ones.

- * Each morning, I take a couple of minutes to jot down what I want to achieve for that day. I start with the hardest and tick them off. This part (ticking them off) is very satisfying.
- * Try to actively focus on balance –this reduces my stress!
- * Take 'time out 'daily e.g. read, have a relaxing bath, go for a walk, pray

When I feel things are getting me down:

I get on my knees and ask for direction. Take myself to somewhere quite and just try and relax and put things back into perspective!

Stress – how do I cope with that?

I have been trying really hard this year to maintain a more balanced lifestyle. This requires discipline and setting up an 'ideal diary' making the time to eat healthy, go to the gym, spend times with friends and not let others waste steal my time. Not always easy.

How many hours do I work?

Well, my children always say "Mum you are always working." Mind you, I don't work on the weekends. When I do work I work real hard. I try to work as smart as I can and focus on the important tasks and do them first. I realise I can't do everything, so I have created a great team around me who have better skills than me in a number of areas.

What is the hardest lesson I've had to learn?

Not everyone likes me.

What separates successful people from unsuccessful people?

How quickly they can get back on track when they have been derailed or things haven't gone to plan. Also I've found successful people tend to have higher energy levels.

My Qualifications:

I am a Qualified Comprehensive Nurse; I did this in Sydney and have done some post grad in Quality Management and Health Management.

The 3 Most Important Skills I've had to develop are:

- * Don't take things too personally
- * Listen and know your team well
- * Read, read, read and learn from others. Never say "I know."

Important skills you would advise to up and coming youngsters:

Don't skip corners. Be pro-active. Don't limit yourself to your job description. Constantly look at how you can add more value to your team. Your effort will get noticed. Start acting and dressing today as the person you want to be .If you want to be the CEO, dress and act like one.

Do I have a formal goal setting process?

I'd be a fool not to have one. Yes I do.

Have I ever been scared to do something?

Yes, to jump off Sky City. To overcome the fear- I just did it. It was not easy, but once I controlled what my mind was telling me- I actually really enjoyed it I felt ecstatic about my accomplishment.

What comes first....success or confidence?

Confidence. I link that to self -esteem. I feel as a parent this is one of the most important things to pass on to your child -build their self -esteem up. Their confidence will grow accordingly and then success. Life is a mirror, what you put in you will get mirrored back!

My Parting Shot?

Be. Do. Have. Be the person you want to be, do the right things and you'll have the life that you want.

Dwayne Alexander, our goal guru is founder of <http://www.livemygoals.com/> the social network for goalgetters.