



From Values to Action by Harry M. Jansen Kraemer, Jr.

Session 2- Balance and Perspective

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Presenter: Melina Rudman, Program Director, Leadership Greater Hartford

***“Yesterday, I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.
Today, I am wise, so I am changing myself.” – Jalal ad-Din Rumi***

Session Objectives:

1. What Does Balance Really Mean?
2. Balance Begins Within
3. You Bring It With You
4. Perspective, Vision and Leadership

Key messages from Kraemer:

Defining Balance: “Balance is the ability to see issues, problems, and questions from all angles, including from differing viewpoints, even those that are diametrically opposed to mine. With balance I am able to make decisions explicitly with an understanding of the broad impact, instead of focusing narrowly.”

Life Balance: “In all aspects of your life, professionally and personally, pursuing balance will give you a richer, more holistic perspective. You move beyond what you see and know in order to consider what others have to say.”

Leadership Balance: “By pursuing balance, you follow your natural instincts to grow and learn by talking with others. giving your curious mind room to explore the possibilities. When you couple the practice of self-reflection with the discipline of balance by seeking input from many people, your leadership is elevated. You... demonstrate that you are committed to doing the right thing rather than being right.”

Paradox: something that is apparently contradictory, but actually true.
With balance; stillness and contemplation reveal the need for action, and action reveals the need for stillness and contemplation.

Small Group Work: Reflect and share

1. "Thirty spokes converge upon a single hub; it is the hole in the center that the use of the cart depends upon." – Tao Te Ching

Do you have a daily practice of balance: self-care; reflection; creativity; simplicity? How does it affect you? What are its challenges?

2. Remember the October snowstorm and power-outages: how did the world affect your regular life-work balance? When did you notice that you were/were not bringing balance into a busy, distracted, chaotic situation?

3. "The greatest risk of action is the risk of self-revelation, and that is also action's greatest joy." - Parker J. Palmer.

What is your vision for your life and your work? What does it reveal about you? Are your daily actions informed by reflection? Are they creating the life you envision?

Seasoned Leaders Have Balance



To produce healthy plants it takes the right amount of water, sunlight, fertilizer, and care. Too much water or too little sunlight may hurt your plants. The best gardeners learn through experience and reflection what flowers need to grow and develop. In a similar way, seasoned leaders know what it takes to help people and organizations achieve their potential. They provide the right amount of direction, discussion, coaching and feedback to help people succeed. They have a balanced approach in areas like the following:

1. Task and People

The seasoned leader focuses on both the task and the people. Some leaders are too task-focused. For example, Ralph led a group of seven people. With him it was all business. No small talk or reaching out to people as people. For him the only thing that mattered was results. On the other hand some leaders are too focused on pleasing people at the expense of solving problems and getting the work done.

2. Talk and Listen

What's your ratio? We have all met leaders who are ineffective because they don't listen. Remember the God given ratio—two ears, one mouth. On the other side of the equation I met one leader who was a great listener but his employees didn't know where he stood on key issues. The seasoned leader engages in the appropriate amount of both talking—stating their views and listening to ideas of others.

3. Plan and Do

Planning is important, but so is execution. Some leaders over plan and under execute. Of course some leaders do just the opposite. They're busy having meetings, doing power point presentations but making no improvements in the operation. Is there a "right" balance? It depends. In some situations an hour spent planning makes the implementation go more smoothly. In a crisis situation you may have only 60 seconds to plan—quick action is required.

4. Results and Process

Some leaders only focus on results. In meeting after meeting they ask, "What's the bottom line?" Results are important but so is process—how things are done. However, putting all your attention on process is also wrong. Results count! The seasoned leader focuses on both what is being accomplished and how it's being accomplished.

5. Firm and Flexible

There are times to be firm and there are times to be flexible. The overly flexible leader is unwilling to take a firm stand. They are wishy-washy and often flip flop on their position. On the other hand, the overly firm leader is rigid and sees every issue as black and white. Seasoned leaders have the wisdom to know when to hold the line and when to be flexible.

6. Coaching and Letting Go

An important part of a leader's job is to coach people on how to be more effective and efficient. However, there is an important difference between too little and too much coaching. Too much can frustrate initiative. On the other hand, too little coaching and guidance can cause failure. Sometimes failure can be the best thing, life lessons often come out of failure. Other times it can be catastrophic – in the case of accident, injury, or other severe loss. Seasoned leaders know the difference between providing too much and too little coaching.

7. Facts and Feelings

Getting the facts is important. But tuning into your feelings is also important before making important decisions. Some executives fail to identify the danger signals because they repress their feelings as if feelings are something to be avoided. I like the way author and blogger [Mary Jo Asmus](#) stated it in a recent blog— “Connect with your heart when your head wants to rule. Connect with your head when your emotions are threatening to take over.”

8. Work Life and Family Life

Some leaders get totally consumed by their job and neglect their family. In his book, *Better Under Pressure*, Justin Menkes, interviewed Ralph Larsen, retired CEO of Johnson and Johnson. In the interview Larsen stated, “...you've got to make sure that you have the right balance between your work life and your family life, that you take care of your family and kids so you don't have chaos at work and at home.”

What would you add to this list?

Summary

Seasoned leaders know the importance of balance. But finding the right balance doesn't mean moderation in all things. Rather it means being versatile and flexible. It means using the appropriate mix of various ingredients to help people grow and blossom. Great leaders have the wisdom to know what actions are needed and necessary to achieve success.

Bibliography

- Kaplan, R.E. and Kaiser, R.B. “Developing Versatile Leaders.” *MIT Sloan Management Review* (Summer 2003).
- Menkes, J. *Better Under Pressure*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2011.

About the Author

[Paul B. Thornton](#) is the author of numerous articles and 13 books on management and leadership. His latest book, [Leadership - Off the Wall](#), highlights the guiding principles some well-known business and political leaders keep on their desks or post on their office walls. In addition to being a speaker and management/leadership trainer, he is a business professor at Springfield Technical Community College. In the last 20 years, he has trained over 10,000 people to be more effective managers and leaders.