

Featured Author in Nursing Link, The Nations Nursing Community

Technology: Friend or Foe in Work/Life Balance?

90 Views

[0 Comments](#) [Share](#) [Flag as inappropriate](#)



Featured Author:

Todd Wheeler, President and CEO



Todd Wheeler is the founder and president of Concierge Colorado and Hospital Concierge of America. For over 20 years he has been a successful entrepreneur in many sectors of the service industry. In the 1990's he operated an international management consulting firm specializing in organizational development and growth for mid-size and large organizations. Clients included: Arthur Anderson, Gambro International, Rocky Mountain Bank Note and Grupo Misa (Mexico City). In a former life, Mr. Wheeler was the Chair of the MIT Enterprise Forum in Colorado.

At the present time Hospital Concierge of America and Concierge Colorado provides concierge consulting services and concierge programs to hospitals as retention and recruitment tools. These concierge programs have been noted by both hospital administration and staff as “indispensable”, “extremely professional”, “world-class” and “life savers”. Feedback proves that many nurses site these programs as the reason they work at this hospital. Mr. Wheeler believes that all concierge are not created equal, and strives every day to create and deliver elegant results to people problems. For several years, Concierge Colorado has been exceeding the expectations

of over 10,000 individuals and has completed over 35,000 requests for hospital staff, with a 99% same day completion score.

After developing and utilizing web based concierge management technology to run the concierge business for the last 6 years, Concierge Colorado is now offering consulting services, training and the most powerful Customer Relationship Management tools for hospital concierge and small businesses.

More articles from this author:

- [Stressed Out? How Nurses Can Regain Some Calm](#)
- [Work-Life Balance: Why You Need It & How to Get It](#)

Todd Wheeler, Concierge Resource

Technology: Friend or Foe in Work/Life Balance?

September 24, 2008

Technology has given us many conveniences in this modern era. With our Blackberry, laptop, cell phone, and pager, we are better connected to information and people than ever before. Our staff, colleagues, family and long lost friends can reach us instantly and we are never more than a heartbeat away from the information we need. The Internet gives us 24/7 access to shopping, information, feedback, data and business tools across different time zones, cultures, languages and quality levels. Today we are a society of things that are “instant,” “fast,” “microwavable” and “hyper-efficient”... Then how come it feels like we are always exhausted, and our “to-do” list never ends?

The reality is, with every technological advance created to make life simpler, many of us have found a way to overcomplicate things. For instance, take the idea of the PDA (personal digital assistant, such as Blackberry). The idea sounds good – put all of your personal information on a handheld device that tracks your schedule, address book, task lists, budget and privacy codes. Then, when you need to pay an online bill, plan a party or schedule a dentist appointment, you have what you need at your fingertips. Right? That is, if you can find what you need, have the time to work out the schedule, can manage the last minute changes, and your battery doesn’t fail.

Technology alone is not the solution. In order to fully utilize the benefits of technological advancements in helping us balance work and personal life, we have to make the technology fit our lives, rather than fit our lives into the technology.

When we bought cell phones, we did so with the reassurance that our business associates, colleagues, patients and staff could reach us when they needed us right away. For medical professionals, quick communication could mean the difference between life and death.

What we didn’t watch were the boundaries we placed on the use of that cell phone. Now, in addition to everyone at work reaching you by cell phone or text messaging so can your teenage

son (“What’s for dinner?”), your mother (“Don’t forget to send Dad a card”), your drycleaner (“Your clothes are ready to be picked up”) and so on. We gave our cell phone number out to everyone – and everyone’s calling. Without setting boundaries on how, when, where and why to reach us, this vital communication tool has become a constant source of interruption. Our thoughts, activities, relaxation and balance are thrown off.

Another example is the use of the Internet. Have you ever noticed that hopping online to find one thing usually has you shopping for many other things you never even knew you needed? It’s like the ideal shopping mall in that if you like X, they are happy to show you W, Y, and Z, which you will also surely need! Finding valuable information, such as phone numbers, driving directions, data and forecasts is important. Stopping at just that is nearly impossible. Marketers are trained to take your attention away from what you started looking for, and bring you along to many other delightful choices to peruse.

Making the most of what you’ve got

The good news is that technology can help you achieve life balance if used properly. Learning how to best take advantage of these tools is critical in achieving balance and becoming happier and more productive at work and in your personal life.

Here are a few guidelines to take advantage of technology, and turn it into something that makes your life better:

- *Set ground rules.* Although a cell phone provides around the clock access, you need to set rules around who can call you, when and for what reason.
 - o For example, do not answer phone calls from work while you are at home – and do not answer phone calls from family and friends when you are at work. Have a special code (like a “911” text) for family or truly urgent work situations to let you know it’s an emergency.
 - o Be discrete in giving out your cell phone number. Consider it a very exclusive number. It is your prized possession.
 - o If you carry a Blackberry or other PDA and have access to your email around the clock, exercise self-discipline. Decide when and where you will check new e-mail, and respond. Just because someone sends you a message on Saturday does not mean they need to hear back on Saturday!
 - o For those times when you must work from home, on your personal time, take advantage of the benefits of a laptop. Don’t just sit in your home office, go outside and sit in the sunshine, take the laptop to the park where the fresh air will rejuvenate your thoughts.
- *Manage your e-mail:* If you spend a lot of time working at your computer, turn off your email notifications (the audible or visual notifications alerting you to new email.) Set specific times that you check your email. Don’t look at, or answer, every email the moment it comes in. This can eat up a lot of your productive work time!

Also, when you receive an email, decide right then and there if it should be filed away, responded to, forwarded or deleted. Have folders in your e-mail system to organize the messages you receive, so you can archive them and refer to them later. There is nothing more unnerving than seeing “240 unread messages” in your Inbox. Do something with the email and keep this folder clean.

- *Get help where you can.* If work/life balance is a common struggle where you work, discuss a concierge service with your employer. Concierge services bring the convenience of a personal assistant to staff when they most need it, and allow you to focus on patient care instead of errands.

Hospitals across the country are recognizing that a high-quality on-site concierge service can increase staff effectiveness, satisfaction and ultimately patient care. By allowing you to focus on your job, and not getting distracted with interruptions from the multitude of errands and projects you manage in your personal life, you are able to focus more effectively on your work tasks. Then, your personal time becomes more about quality interactions, rather than checking things off your list.

While the help of a concierge may not break your dependence on technology devices, knowing that your errands and to-do list are being managed will make your technology solutions less about managing your personal life. Concierge services can help with everything from picking up and dropping off dry cleaning, and coordinating car repairs, picking up a cake for a team member, to arranging birthday parties, and wedding planning! A full service concierge can return as much as ten hours of free time per week back to you and relieve you of the stress and headaches of multiple “to-do” lists.

Hospital Concierge of America has helped its clients realize work life balance by providing services, including:

- o Researched and prepared paperwork for Chinese adoption (Saved employee over 100 hours)
- o Located an upholstery shop to repair a couch cushion severely damaged by a over-zealous puppy (Saved employee two hours)
- o On two days notice, hired a private chef for a 25-guest Christmas Day dinner (Saved employee 5 hours and the family relationship!)
- o Retrieved the family cat that had passed on (Reduced stress and emotional toll on family)
- o Planned an entire engagement proposal, from the dinner to the proposal (She said YES!)

Technology can work for you, or against you. Hopefully, I’ve illustrated some ways to corral your enthusiasm for fitting your life into a technology solution, and rather letting the solution (technology or other) work for you. When properly used, cell phones, pagers, laptops and PDA phones – and even concierge services—can make life efficient, giving us piece of mind that information and help we need is quickly attainable. Concierge service firms employ state-of-the-art technology to manage and fulfill client relationships and personal requests. We certainly see technology as a friend!

Todd Wheeler is CEO of Hospital Concierge of America, a Colorado-based company that partners with hospitals to create optimal work-life balance for their valued employees. Providing the convenience of a personal assistant who can manage their to-do lists, hospitals allow employees to focus on job performance, productivity, and personal balance. The result is greater employee retention, recruitment, profitability and ultimately better patient care.