



Increase Productivity by Not Hating Your Job

By Hema Oza | 08/14/07 - 01:15 PM EDT

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In September 2001, Tevis Gale sat down with her boss at lunch near their **AOL** office in New Brunswick, N.J., and told him he had to fire her.

After 13 years of striving to climb the corporate ladder, Gale says she had started to notice two things going on around her. First, there were people overengaging in their work to the point of burnout, which Gale admits she was doing. Second, there were workers who had a hard time engaging at all.

"It struck me that we spend more than half of our waking moments at work, not to mention all the ways in which work affects us in our social lives and our family lives," Gale recalls. "I began thinking that something was amiss. I wasn't sure exactly how to tackle it, but I knew that the question of work-life balance had something to do with it."

One year after her meeting with her boss, Gale founded Balance Integration, a company that teaches the art of work-life balance.

The burning question Gale says she's still addressing: Why is it that work becomes oppositional to life? Why is it that so many people hate their jobs?

The Danger of Disengagement

It seems that from a young age, people are taught to find an acceptable job that will provide a significant salary, and that that will be their main source of satisfaction in life, the 38-year-old entrepreneur says. "But I started to realize that even in corporate America, making six-figure salaries with health insurance and benefits, a lot of us are wandering around feeling unsatisfied and disengaged."

Research has now caught up to what people have known for a long time, Gale says, which is "if you are engaged in your work, you are going to do a better job."

Human resource and management advisory firms like Gallup Consulting and Towers Perrin have conducted worldwide research on the topic.

Gallup's latest employee-engagement survey revealed that only 29% of U.S. workers describe themselves as being engaged in their positions and Tower Perrin's numbers are even worse, Gale says -- the consulting firm estimates that only about one in seven employees are truly engaged.

According to Gallup's survey, 56% of workers are not engaged, meaning that they sleepwalk through their workdays, not putting any energy or passion into their work. Another 15% of employees, the poll reads, are actively disengaged, which means not only are they unhappy at work, but that they are busy acting out their unhappiness and in turn, are undermining what their engaged employees accomplish.

"This is not only a national crisis, it's a global crisis," Gale says. "When you look at studies on performance and effectiveness, there are so many indicators that engagement is driving the ability of companies to sustainably succeed."

Finding the Balance

For Gale, the idea behind her venture started out very humbly, she says. "I just wanted people to feel better at work every day."

One of the first steps she had to tackle was how to bring balance into the workplace. In serving corporate America, Gale says she knew no one was going to just start working less.

"My understanding of balance is how to stay centered in the midst of everyday chaos," Gale explains, noting that most people's workdays will remain overbooked.

Keeping this in mind, Gale developed three main programs for her company: Balance U, which focuses on helping individuals feel centered through yoga and migraine management classes; Integration U, which teaches strategies for best embracing with daily work challenges; and Corporation U, which is a consultative approach for the entire business. "We look at what is happening in a company's culture and how each employee plays a role in expressing what the culture stands for," Gale explains. "It's about the 'we' of the culture."

Balance Integration's programs cost anywhere from a couple of hundred dollars for a small seminar to tens of thousands of dollars per month for an extensive ongoing

course. The instructors don't simply talk about peace, love and happiness, Gale says. "We're teaching people how to function well every single day and do so sustainably in the course of their professional careers."

Clients have included her former employer AOL, **Google** ([GOOG](#) - [Get Report](#)), **Yahoo!** ([YHOO](#) - [Get Report](#)), **Deutsche Bank** ([DB](#) - [Get Report](#)) and **Bank of America** ([BAC](#) - [Get Report](#)).

And for small businesses, where fewer employees each play a more significant role, it's essential to ensure they are all fully and willingly involved in their duties.

People from all types of organizations have asked Balance Integration to create programming to shift not only their culture, but how their employees experience the work-life question, Gale says.

"It doesn't matter if you are a freelancer or are working for someone else," Gale says. "You still have to learn how to take care of yourself and to manage each moment, each day, each choice."

And Balance Integration is not focused on being the know-it-all guru, she adds.

"We walk into these sessions to give people skills and tools that they can use to find their own answers. I genuinely believe everyone wants to have a great day at work and that it's well within our grasp to be able to do that," Gale says. "I believe that when we learn the tools to help us be focused and centered and reach a state of what I call 'mastery of ourselves,' we're better able to navigate events unfolding around us."