



Balancing Work And Life

Nine to five is a thing of the past, especially for middle managers and executives. Many of us are tied to the 24/7 office, with PDAs, phones and laptops ever ready to connect. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, founder of the Work-Life Policy Center, calls it the "extreme workplace," where 70-hour workweeks are now the norm.

With work taking up so much of our time, where do the rest of our lives come in? For many couples, two full-time jobs leave little room for the children they've brought into the world. And eventually, many find that something has to give. Reasons to be nearer to home involve more than just the kids. Sometimes, life throws us a curve. Illness strikes our spouse or a child, an aging parent needs assistance, or the long days and nights become too much and we need a change.

That realization has resulted in a call for flexible hours, telecommuting, the opportunity to ramp up and ramp down careers, or time for one parent to choose to be closer to home, remain at home full time or work from home on a limited basis. Entrepreneurs are finding new ways to be successful without the trappings of a public workspace.

While a recent study shows that less than 1% of fathers in America are full-time stay-at-home dads, many more are the ones making the choices that used to be left to their wives--being at home for part of the day or working from home, whether telecommuting or running a business. By taking the commute and the pressure to socialize out of the weekday equation, they are gaining time to be at home doing homework or attending sports events, driving for the carpool or making medical appointments.