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the only element
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THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE FORMULA

By **JEFF HADEN**
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MICHAEL Fassbender was almost bouncing as walked by me on his way to the driver's meeting before the Ferrari Challenge Series at Daytona International Speedway. Spring in his step, smile on his face, fist-bumping people he knew... Fassbender looked psyched. But he wasn't acting. This joy was real: Fassbender was going racing. Hold that thought.

THE IMBALANCE

Work-life balance: Everyone talks about it. And everyone struggles to achieve it.

Partly that's due to faulty math. Many people assume the only way to achieve work-life balance is to spend the same number of hours on work as they do on "life".

Spend eight hours at work? Then you must need eight hours of "me" time.

But for most people, that seems impossible. Many work more than eight hours a day. Many sleep at least seven hours a day (or at least should). Add in doing chores, eating, showering, commuting, getting a little exercise, and all the other things you need to do every day.

What's left? For many, maybe an hour or two. Which means work and life will never balance.

THE ALTERNATIVE FORMULA

But what if you did a different kind of math?

Take Fassbender. I don't know him. I probably could have spoken to him at

ACHIEVING A BETTER BALANCE REQUIRES DOING A DIFFERENT KIND OF MATH



Daytona but chose not to. He was clearly immersed in the moment, and the last thing I wanted to do was interrupt that.

But I do know a number of actors. I know that when they shoot a movie – and when they're at the top of the call list, like Fassbender, they typically work 12–14 hours a day.

For weeks on end they don't have time for "life". Not really. Achieving anything resembling a reasonable work-life balance is nearly impossible (although Clive Standen gives it a very, very good go.)

What can you do if that's the case? Focus not on the number of hours you spend on "life", but on the quality of those hours. That's how you balance the scales.

Imagine you're Fassbender. You love racing, so much so that you're willing to spend a tonne of money to pursue it at a reasonably high level. You love driving. You love competing. You love the

camaraderie and the shared sense of purpose and the atmosphere.

Well, you just love it.

In much the same way that planning a vacation makes people nearly as happy as actually taking that vacation, looking forward to race weekends keeps you going during the darker days of work-life imbalance.

And then, when you do get to go racing?

QUALITY VS QUANTITY

The quality of the experience far outweighs the quantity of hours involved in that experience.

One race weekend is like spending dozens of evenings on the couch passively enjoying "me time".

And you can do the same.

If you feel your work-life balance is out of whack, focus less on the number of "life" hours and more of the quality of "life" hours.

Start with everyday things. Don't watch your kids play; play with them. That will leave you feeling much more balanced – because the time you spent will matter.

Don't go to the gym and slog through a treadmill workout.

Knock out a difficult workout designed to help you achieve a fitness goal. That will leave you feeling much more balanced – because the time you spent will matter.

Shoot, if you just want to veg out, don't watch whatever happens to be on television.

Don't settle for whatever seems to be the best option. That's a total waste of "life" time. Watch something you really want to watch.

Have a list handy. Know ahead of time what you'll watch if you get the chance.

You'll enjoy the experience a lot more – and you'll feel like the time you spent watching TV actually mattered.

Then, in a larger sense, pick something you want to achieve, do, or be, and actively work towards it.

Not only will you enjoy the sense of accomplishment that comes with progressing towards a goal – even if that "goal" is doing something purely for fun – but you'll also feel better about yourself and your life.

IN CONCLUSION

In short, stop trying to balance the hours you spend on work and "life". That math will always leave you feeling discouraged and unfulfilled.

Instead, focus on making the most of every "life" hour you have – in whatever ways leave you feeling the most fulfilled.

That's the only way to balance the scales. And is the best way to truly live.

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