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"It's all about quality of life and finding a happy balance between work, friends and family."
Philip Green—CEO Arcadia Group, UK

KEY CONCEPTS:

- We all must answer the Ultimate Question to live a life of fulfillment.
- Long-term fulfillment can be achieved by following your Life Purpose.
- Most of us have an inkling of our Life Purpose at a young age; however, if our inclinations do not point in the direction of what Western Society considers a "successful career," we are often advised away from that direction toward a career that likely will not bring long-term fulfillment.
- People in jobs they dislike make up a major segment of Western Society which is one reason that the level of employee engagement, i.e., "employee enjoyment" is so low.
- There is a way out of this problem by re-discovering your Life Purpose and pursuing it with Balance through the power of a Values-Based Life Plan.

It is often called the Ultimate Question. We all seek long-term personal fulfillment in both our personal and professional lives. And in doing so, we come face-to-face with this question, a question that has confronted humanity since the dawn of time, a question each and every one of us must answer. But first, a very telling story.

A bright, young Prague executive had made it to a top position at a leading multinational technology company. Shortly before his 35th birthday, he found himself suffering from overwork, stress and exhaustion, so he decided to take a holiday

BALANCE:

THE BUSINESS-LIFE CONNECTION

PART I: THE ULTIMATE QUESTION!^{1,2}

in a remote seaside village on the island of Sicily. One afternoon as he basked in the warmth of the Sicilian sun and gazed out over the tranquil turquoise Mediterranean, he suddenly found himself in casual conversation with a fisherman.

He asked the fisherman about his life in this remote village. "Well," said the fisherman in broken English and Sicilian dialect, "I sleep late; take my boat out just after lunch and catch enough fish to feed my family and a bit more to sell in the marketplace so that I have money to buy a few bottles of wine, bread and some vegetables. Just before sunset, I join my friends at the local café and we drink, laugh and talk until the early morning hours. Then I go home, sleep late the next morning and start all over again.

The recovering executive was intrigued. "Why don't you get up earlier, take your boat out before dawn, and catch even more fish to sell?" "Why would I want to do that?" was the fisherman's response. "Because with all that extra money you could save up and buy another boat, hire another fisherman and catch even more fish!"

"So, then what would I do?" "Well," said the executive as he became increasingly animated, "with all that extra money you could continue to buy more boats, recruit more helpers, and before long you would have your own fishing fleet!" "What then?" responded the puzzled Sicilian.

"Then you would have a nice balance sheet that you could take to an investment group, and you could finance the purchase of other fleets here in the Mediterranean. Why, you could even take your company public on the New York Stock Exchange. You could build a global fishing empire and then diversify into related business sectors." And finally, with intense crescendo, the executive exclaimed, "You could become a Fortune 500 company, and even have your picture on the cover of Forbes Magazine!"

Now, thoroughly puzzled, the fisherman queried, "What then?"

"What then? I'll tell you what then—you would be very wealthy. You could then live the life of your dreams, with no more stress and worry. You could settle in a little village, sleep late in the morning, maybe take your boat out to do some fishing and spend evenings with your friends at the local café—that's what!"

I first heard this story years ago from an executive coach, and recently saw it again in a book by

physicist and philosopher, Jim Baggott.¹ Baggott suggests, "This story highlights the absurdity of some aspects of our modern consumer culture. We struggle to make our way through the reality of our complex social existence, striving to earn enough money to buy things we don't need, pay off the mortgage, pay bills, the school fees, the expensive holidays, and so achieve our world of imagination, our dream of a simpler existence. In our complex lives, simplicity is bought only at a high price, it seems." Personally, I see no problem with pursuing the "good life" as long as it is done with *BALANCE* and with an accurate answer to the Ultimate Question.

Your answer to the Ultimate Question (**Figure 1**) is critical to your well-being, but it also has practical implications. So, here's the question, "What do I do with my life?" For most of us, the objective of our answer is long-term personal fulfillment. I have found in my life and in my study of the lives of other executives, both successful and not, that *the key to long-term fulfillment is balance between your personal and professional lives*. Both spheres are important. By fulfillment I mean a state of mind characterized by feelings of contentment, joy, and satisfaction. It certainly is not a state that you can sustain without occasional interruptions and spikes of uncertainty and disappointment. Challenges happen. But as you look back over weeks, months and certainly over the years, you want to be able to say as Mr. Sinatra sang, "I did it my way," and in doing so, it made an important difference in your life and in the lives of others.

Eleanor Roosevelt often advised that "Happiness [fulfillment] is not a goal; it's a byproduct."² You must do something to achieve fulfillment, and that "something" is finding and following your Life Purpose. Anything else is a waste of a good life and talent. Unfortunately, the numbers don't suggest that most of us find long-term fulfillment.

¹ EDITOR'S COMMENT—This is the first article in a new series derived from the author's latest book, *BALANCE: The Business-Life Connection*, SelectBooks, New York, 2013. The book is based on three decades of personal experience on how to achieve success and long-term fulfillment in both your personal and professional lives. Details concerning the book and points of purchase can be found at www.BalanceTheBusinessLifeConnection.Com or at www.JamesCusumano.Com.

² The author may be reached at Jim@ChateauMcelly.Com.

FIGURE 1: Your answer to the Ultimate Question has profound implications for the quality of the rest of your life.



Leading corporate strategist, Gary Hamel and the results of several Gallop polls show that only 20 percent of people in the developed world are engaged and fulfilled in their jobs.³ People in the other 80 percent, fall in a range between just collecting a paycheck, to outright distaste for their job and their employer. It's not that they are not talented; they almost inevitably are, but not at the job they are currently doing.

Most of us have an inkling of our Life Purpose. As the King of Salem counseled young Santiago in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, "You have succeeded in discovering your Personal Legend [Life Purpose] ... It's what you have always wanted to accomplish ... Everyone, when they are young, knows what their Personal Legend is (Figure 2)." Perhaps misguided early in life by well-intentioned counsel, people in that 80 percent category were dissuaded from engaging with their true Life Purpose, and encouraged to pursue a profession or skill that their advisors considered a "successful career." Successful here means a career that would result in high salary and a position of prestige. And now they find themselves stuck in a job they just don't like.

It is never too late to change careers and find, pursue and nourish your Life Purpose, no matter how frightened you are of doing so. Consider just one commercial sector—restaurants. The late multibillionaire Ray Kroc, son of modest Czech immigrants, grew up in Chicago and tried all kinds of jobs, including jazz band pianist, waiter, and traveling salesman. He was fifty-two years old when he finally discovered his Life Purpose and founded the global McDonald's franchise. Harland "Colonel" Sanders lived a very modest life for more than six decades. A citizen of the south, his life-long passion was developing the most delicious fried chicken recipe. He was sixty-five years old when he launched the Kentucky Fried Chicken chain. The message here is don't waste your time trying to live another person's dream—no matter whose dream it is—it can't be done. That course almost always leads to disappointment and an also-ran life. In my book, *BALANCE: The Business-Life Connection* I provide an entire chapter on how determine or rediscover what your true Life Purpose is and how to reconnect with, nourish and follow it. But even

this cannot lead to long-lasting fulfillment without *BALANCE*.

What do I mean by *BALANCE*? It is the ability to readily exercise optimal effort in both your personal and professional lives to achieve a desirable return in both spheres. Optimal means being efficient, i.e., doing things right, and being effective, i.e., doing the right things. Desirable return is achieving those goals that you set for yourself in both spheres of your life. For this to work, you must create a Values-Based Life Plan. In this busy world, it is next to impossible for you to achieve *BALANCE* without such a plan (Figure 3). The reason that many people do not believe balance is possible in their life is because they have never experienced the power of a Values-Based Life Plan.

In "*BALANCE*" I describe in detail how to create your plan. To demonstrate its effectiveness, I disclose my personal Life Plan for the year 2005 and the results and outcomes that occurred over the subsequent five years. To create your plan you first identify your fundamental values in each of six areas of your life. These values must be what you truly hold sacred in each area, not what someone else or even you think they should be, but what you actually feel deep down in your very soul. Coming to grips with this process is a challenging and interesting undertaking in its own right. The six areas are *profession, finance, relationships, spiritual, health and knowledge*. Using these values, I show you how to create goals and actions that are meaningful as well as a time-management tool to be sure that your goals are achievable in the time period you set for yourself. The final product is a three-year rolling plan, and it does take some time to develop this plan the first time around. However, updating it annually is relatively straight

FIGURE 2: The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho, although written as a fable, is one of the best texts for insight on finding your Life Purpose.



FIGURE 3: It is nearly impossible to BALANCE your personal and professional lives without having prepared a Values-Based Life Plan.



forward. This process is not only a means to a fulfilled personal life, but also it enables you to acquire Inspired Leadership skills that can help you play an important role in building a successful enterprise.

I have been following this route for over 40 years, and I can assure you that it works! It sure beats finding yourself in that 80 percent segment of the unhappily employed! And as for the required effort, as a great philosopher once noted, "It takes more work to live an unhappy life than it does a happy one, so why not choose a happy life?"

Enjoy the journey!

James A. Cusumano, PhD ■

¹ Jim Baggott, *A Beginner's Guide to Reality*, Penguin Books, New York, 2005, Kindle version, location 359.

² Eleanor Roosevelt, *You Learn by Living: Eleven Keys for a More Fulfilling Life* Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1960, p.95.

³ Gary Hamel, Gary Hamel's Management 2.0, "Management's Dirty Little Secret," *Wall Street Journal*, December 16, 2009. Also see <http://www.gallup.com/poll/150383/majority-american-workers-not-engaged-jobs.aspx>.

James A. Cusumano is Chairman and Owner of Chateau Mcely (www.ChateauMcely.Com), chosen in 2007 by the European Union as the only "Green" 5-star luxury hotel in Central and Eastern Europe and in 2008 by the World Travel Awards as the Leading Green Hotel in the World. It is also home to Chateau Mcely Forum (www.ChateauMcelyForum.Com) which offers programs for building Inspired Leaders. He is a former Research Director for Exxon, and subsequently founded two public companies in Silicon Valley, one in clean power generation, the other in pharmaceuticals manufacture via environmentally-benign, low-cost, catalytic technologies. While he was Chairman and CEO, the latter - Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc. - grew in less than 5 years, to a \$1 billion enterprise with 2,000 employees. He is co-author of *Freedom from Mid-East Oil*, released in 2007 by World Business Academy Press (www.WorldBusiness.Org) and the author of *Cosmic Consciousness - A Journey to Well-being, Happiness and Success*, published in English and Czech by Fortuna Libri, 2011. His new book, *BALANCE: The Business-Life Connection* was published in April 2013 by SelectBooks in New York City.