



STORIES TO INSPIRE YOUR THINKING

Those who were willing to be open-minded to resources, options and support to solve a particular challenge or rethink a particular opportunity demonstrate Work / Life Synergy at its finest:

- 1. FREE RANGE THINKING:** An office manager working full-time was challenged with the dilemma of being able to cook dinner at a reasonable hour for her diabetic husband by the time she got home. She loved cooking everything from scratch and was an accomplished cook who enjoyed this aspect of her life. She often brought her leftovers as samples to work for everyone to enjoy. However, due to the demands between work and home, she was not enjoying it as much due to the stress associated with getting it done due to her time constraints. The office had a full kitchen, and so out of curiosity, she asked if she could have access to the kitchen. This would allow her to use her lunch break for some of her prep work in order to be able to get dinner on the table sooner at home. Her request was received with a resounding "Yes!"
- 2. TEAM IN BUSINESS AND LIFE:** An owner/CEO of a business was ready to scale down her involvement as she prepared for her ultimate goal of retirement. A V.P. of Operations was the perfect candidate for the position of President. However, to support him, a top-notch executive assistant was also needed in order for his focus to be on strategic initiatives in running the company. Upon considering various candidates, none a good fit, the suggestion was made to consider his wife who had all the skills for the position and had become available on the job market due to downsizing. While many CEOs would have immediately dismissed this suggestion, this one paused and seriously considered its merits. The CEO had known the wife for years and recognized the fact that in her role as a supportive spouse, the wife had extensive knowledge of the business. Therefore, the CEO decided to try the idea. Almost immediately, semi-retirement was realized due to the synergy between the husband-wife team. Years later, the CEO is now nearing full retirement with total confidence that the business is in good hands.
- 3. A CHILD'S EYE:** A marketing executive was exasperated by the delivery of an order of sophisticated brochure packages, where inconsistency in quality dictated the need to go through more than 10,000 brochures and inserts to determine those to be rejected for a credit from the vendor. The executive's eleven-year-old daughter, who was visiting during the summer break, wandered into the conference room. Much to the executive's delight, her daughter's scrutinizing eyes noticed imperfections even staff did not catch. The final tally resulted in the entire order being reprinted at no charge by the vendor, plus additional concessions for the delay and inconvenience.

- more on next page -

4. **GIRL SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE:** An ownership team of an upscale clothing and accessory consignment store was overwhelmed each season, due to the need to go through an insurmountable pile of items delivered for consideration in their store. Because of their high standards of everything being “like new,” it required hours of reviewing each piece. Those items rejected were donated to charity. A consultant, who was also a mother of teenage girls, suggested that the owners consider turning this operational task into a community service project for Junior and Cadette-level Girl Scouts. Not only were these pre-teens and teenagers meticulous at finding flaws in fashion items, they could also handle the delivery of items to the Salvation Army or Goodwill as a part of their community service project. The suggestion worked seamlessly and became a regular seasonal approach to business.
5. **WORKOUT WORKED IN:** A freelance graphic designer had the best of both worlds working from home with small children. However, a third aspect was suffering ... the “taking care of me” side – in never seeming to have enough time for exercise. One day while playing with one of her children, lying on her back lifting her toddler with her legs like a teeter-totter, a light bulb went off. She proceeded to develop an entire exercise routine around playing with her children including aerobic, resistance training, and stretching. While it was fun, playtime for her children, it became a much enjoyed and coveted workout time for her. Best of all, she soon found an even bigger boost in energy for her children and her work because she was also taking care of herself.
6. **ONE TIMES TWO EQUALS FORTY:** A consultant and a client were both seeking a part-time office administrative assistant to support business growth. While many excellent candidates responded to their job listing, all were seeking full-time employment. One particular candidate not only had the skills, but also the attitude and demeanor that the consultant considered a perfect fit for both businesses. The consultant approached the client with the idea of sharing the employee and the benefits necessary for full-time value to the candidate. With the added open-mindedness of the candidate, a deal was finalized and two part-time positions turned into one full-time position with benefits for the employee.
7. **HOMEMADE RETREATS:** Two long time friends living a state away kept in touch on a regular basis sharing stories of their work and their lives. One a business owner and the other a department head of a larger company, they would often confer with one another for advice or perspective related to their job responsibilities. Because of stagnant sales, the usual annual company retreat the business owner wanted to take to continue to motivate staff was simply not one that could be budgeted. The department head also used an annual getaway as a means of rejuvenating his management team. He had used his mountain retreat as a place to go, but was looking for another location, without spending additional monies. Then an idea occurred that met both of their needs. The friend with the mountain retreat offered his home to his colleague, and in return, the business owner, who lived near the beach, offered her home the same weekend in exchange.
8. **NOT SO CRAZY AFTER ALL:** An owner of a manufacturing company came home one evening and shared with his family the crazy idea a young ambitious woman had for a product. She had met with him seeking his partnership in producing a prototype of the product. Curious, his daughters and wife wanted to know more, and once he shared the story with them, he realized that perhaps it wasn't such a crazy idea after all. The next day, he went back to work and called that young woman, stating he would help with the prototype. That crazy idea ended up being Spanx®, the product that even Oprah swears is among the best products for women created in this decade.

So, consider your current challenges and opportunities and see where being truly open to all possible resources, input and support may lead you!