

Column Title: **As The Saws Turn**

Article Title: **Three Spinning Plates**

I've had several very long and busy weeks. I thought summer in the exhibit industry was supposed to be slow. Isn't this supposed to be the time to go on vacation with the family, or hang out at the lake and relax in between the insanity of spring and fall show schedules? Isn't this when we work to achieve the balance in life?

I have often likened this whole "balance" thing to trying to keep three plates spinning in the air at the same time. On one plate is your career. On another are your family and friends; and on the third are your hobbies, interests, and other extra-curricular activities. If you neglect one for very long, it starts to fall, and you have to focus some attention on it to get it back 'in balance'. Vacation was supposed to be that time when you put all three plates down to rest for awhile so you could recharge your batteries.

When I was a kid, our parents did the big two-week driving vacation every year, like so many of that generation. It was their time to get away for two weeks and relax. In my career, I don't think I have EVER gone away for two full weeks! It just doesn't work that way any more. We have to figure out how to do it in shorter bursts. So how do you take a break from plate spinning?

Probably more importantly: do you take a break at all? It's not hard, especially in this industry, to get so caught up in the deadlines and pressures that you simply don't take a break. That's unfortunate. While I really enjoy what I do, I also really enjoy my family, my friends and my recreational time. The problem is in the balancing of them all.

Here are a few questions that may help put this whole balancing thing in perspective for you:

1. What is it that you treasure?

Someone once said that wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Basically, you are shaped by what you do, what you focus on. In some cases, this is pretty easy to see. If you are entirely focused on money, you will eventually be seen and remembered as being greedy. If you are solely focused on appearances, you'll be ultimately seen as shallow. So what do you focus on? And how do you think that reflects on you?

2. How do you take the time you need?

I think it's fair to say that there aren't too many of us that can afford (either the time or the money) to take a full two-week vacation every year. Even if we could, I'm not sure it would be what we need anyway. I think shorter, more frequent escapes probably work better. The trick is scheduling them.

Let's take this to an even deeper level. Do you find time EACH DAY to recharge? Both mentally and physically? What is it that helps you to recharge? Spending time with family, exercising, walking, sitting in a park at lunch? We each need to find a way to take that quick escape to recharge.

I'm a car guy. I read car magazines, cruise car lots, and enjoy driving. To me a perfect escape is either taking off on a winding country road with the windows down and the radio up, or spending the evening in my driveway detailing my vehicles. My wife thinks I'm nuts. She takes off and cruises the malls. She rarely buys anything; she just shops. It's her escape.

It's not as much about a specific event as it is about a way of life...developing a method by which to intermittently recharge to achieve balance. It's the "trickle charge" method.

3. Why is this whole “balance in life” thing so important?

Simply put, it reminds us of what’s important in life. It helps to clear our perspective. I think it keeps us healthy, mentally and physically. You know the saying: “no one ever laid on their death bed wishing they had spent more time at work”. So stop with the overworked, overstressed, overtime lifestyle! By all means, do your work, enjoy your work, but mix in a few minutes of balance each day. I’ll bet you’ll still get everything done, and you’ll enjoy doing life even more. And the plates will all stay airborne.

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