

What Santa Can Teach Us About Our Work:Life Balance

Santa Claus has probably the best work:life balance out there. He works 1 day a year, then a steady 354 days to rest up and get ready for his next shift. He does have a tough day, but we'd all take that for the rest of the year off, wouldn't we?

Santa is also very smart in several other ways. Firstly, he has outsourced most of his work. His team of Elves do all his dirty work up at the North Pole. Secondly, he has virtually no costs as he doesn't purchase any of the presents that he delivers. And all this whilst also demanding that he is fed (mince pie) and watered (sherry) alongside feeding his reindeer.



In summary, Santa has got the ultimate work:life balance. Whilst the above comments are quite jovial, we can take some important advice from Santa. Here's how.

#1 Delegate

Like Santa with his army of Elves there are some tasks we complete that could be completed by others. Equally, why would Santa flog himself working for weeks and weeks in the run up to Christmas in every grotto around the world when he can get others to do it for him.

During my early years as a head clinician working in professional sport, delegating tasks was something I struggled with. Not that I didn't trust other staff that I was working with, I think on reflection it was my control freak side taking over. I think everyone has their own way of doing things, I certainly have. During those early times, I think I saw value in certain tasks and if I could physically find the time to do them myself I would.



An older more experienced me has realised through my own errors that this is not the way to do it. Delegation of tasks shares the workload; allowing myself and those I work with to have more time and allow us to do a better job in those prescribed tasks. More time allows more in depth work and in turn better task completion.

Like Santa I have learnt the skills to delegate and get more work done, work completed to a better standard and overall save myself more time. Less time working and more time to do what I want to do is obviously a good thing.

#2 Prioritise & Omit

There are certain tasks we complete day to day that probably don't even need completing in the first place. Working day to day as a physiotherapist there are several tasks that I must complete. For example, from a medico-legal standpoint I must complete my patient/player notes within 24 hours of the intervention. Additionally, I must plan my next working day, so I know who I need to see, when I am going to see them and what I am planning to do (i.e. treatment and rehab). These are my priorities. Beyond that many other tasks might not need completing right away. I used to make it habit to daily to clean my desk, empty my paper bin, check and restock my run-on box/bag amongst other things. Whilst these tasks do need completing, they don't need completing daily. Doing them daily is not an efficient use of my time. Time that could be better spent on other activities. Activities that will improve me clinically for example, like reading a journal paper or doing some research on a particular pathology or subject to deepen my knowledge in that area. Emptying a bin isn't going to make me better at my job, but spending some time studying might do.



Over time I have become better and better at omitting tasks from my daily routine. I used to be a compulsive email reader. I have about 6 email accounts and get approx. 35-50 emails daily. Every hour or so I'd be checking my mail and reading through them, usually on my phone. I'd then get side tracked and end up trawling through my Facebook and twitter feeds and before you know it 10-15 minutes has passed. To stop me doing this now, I will not check my emails after 5 pm. Sometimes it can be even earlier depending upon what time I finish work that day. The only real urgent emails that I may receive will be sent to my work email. 90% of these 'urgent' emails aren't ever that urgent and can be picked up and responded to the next day. The other 10% if urgent, the sender will contact you another way i.e. text or a phone call. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to check my emails continuously throughout the evening, so I don't. If I was expecting an important email, modern day technology allows us to set notifications from certain senders to ensure we don't miss them. I occasionally use this feature.

#3 Do what you enjoy!!!

Like Santa, do the best bits. Deliver the presents and get all the glory. Why would Santa want to do all the hard graft like the Elves? Like Santa you need to make time for the things you enjoy. This will be made easier by prioritising and omitting other tasks as per #2. I enjoy learning. I continuously strive to get better and better at what I do and value my time spent trying to achieve this. As such I ensure I complete 30 minutes of such practice daily. This usually comes in the form of reading. If for some reason, I don't manage to complete 30 minutes learning in a day, that time will be made up another day. This rarely happens however. I value the importance of my learning and thus always find the time to do it. Do what you enjoy.....

In summary, learning to delegate, prioritise and omit tasks will leave you more time to pursue the tasks and challenges you want to do, particularly those you enjoy the most. In doing so you can maximise your work efficiency and even get tasks done to a better standard in less time. In turn this could help improve your work:life balance for the better.

In 2017 lets be more like Santa.

Thanks for reading

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Images

Santa image (askideas.com)

Delegate (seapoint)

Time (Pinterest)