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Four Studies of Executives Helping Employees Align Their Actions and Values

Stewart D. Friedman

Director, Work/Life Integration Project, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

What does it take for business leaders to integrate the different domains of their lives (work, home, community and self) and what must they do to ensure that the people in their organizations are able to do the same?

These are the questions that were taken up in innovative ways by the “work/life movement” as it began to find its voice about two decades ago. At the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School, the Work/Life Integration Project convened a group of business school faculty and business leaders to see if we could find some answers. And we did. Over the past 15 years we have met on five occasions, each time focusing our efforts on generating useful knowledge; ideas for action that people in organizations might use to improve performance by integrating work and personal life.¹

We started by exploring dilemmas in teaching about work/life integration. Then we researched what individuals and managers need to know to integrate work and personal life. Finally, we asked about the role of senior executives in creating and sustaining organization cultures that recognize and support employees at work and beyond. Four case studies emerged from this most recent initiative, and they are presented in this issue of this journal.

These cases are about the challenges of leadership: how to mobilize resources towards valued goals, initiate innovation, and inspire commitment. These cases were written to be of practical use to those interested in learning more about what leaders can and must do to create opportunities for employees to contribute to their organizations and to live full and productive lives.

The first, by Sharon Lobel, is about AlliedSignal. It focuses on a leader’s struggle to integrate an unyielding demand for bottom-line results with a focus on the whole person. The second, by Stew Friedman, Cynthia Thompson,

1. Publications from this research project include: (1) Friedman, S., D., Christensen, P., and DeGroot, J., (1998) “Work and Life: the End of the Zero-Sum Game”, *Harvard Business Review*, Nov.-Dec., (2) Friedman, S. D., DeGroot, J., and Christensen, P., (1998) *Work and Life: The Wharton Resource Guide*, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, (3) Friedman, S. D. and Galinsky, E. (2000) “Corporate Help Is at Hand for Working Parents”, *Financial Times*, November 22, and (4) Friedman, S. D. and Lobel, S., (2003) “The Happy Workaholic: a Role Model for Employees”, *Academy of Management Executive*.

Michelle Carpenter, and Dennis Marcel, tells the story of how then-Chairman Phil Laskaway advanced the cause of work/life integration at Ernst & Young. The third, by Ellen Bankert, Mary Dean Lee, and Candice Lange, describes how top management fosters what many commentators have described as an almost utopian work environment at SAS Institute. Finally, our fourth case, by Phyllis Siegel, explores how senior executives moved towards faster time-to-market in the rapid-paced world of data systems at Seagate Technology while striving to help employees achieve important life goals.

In these detailed case studies readers will find practical examples of how executives take action on both a one-on-one basis as well as in organization-wide initiatives to make work flexible and supportive of employees' lives beyond work, while persistently focusing on critical performance goals. If you are interested in learning more, please contact the author at friedman@wharton.upenn.edu