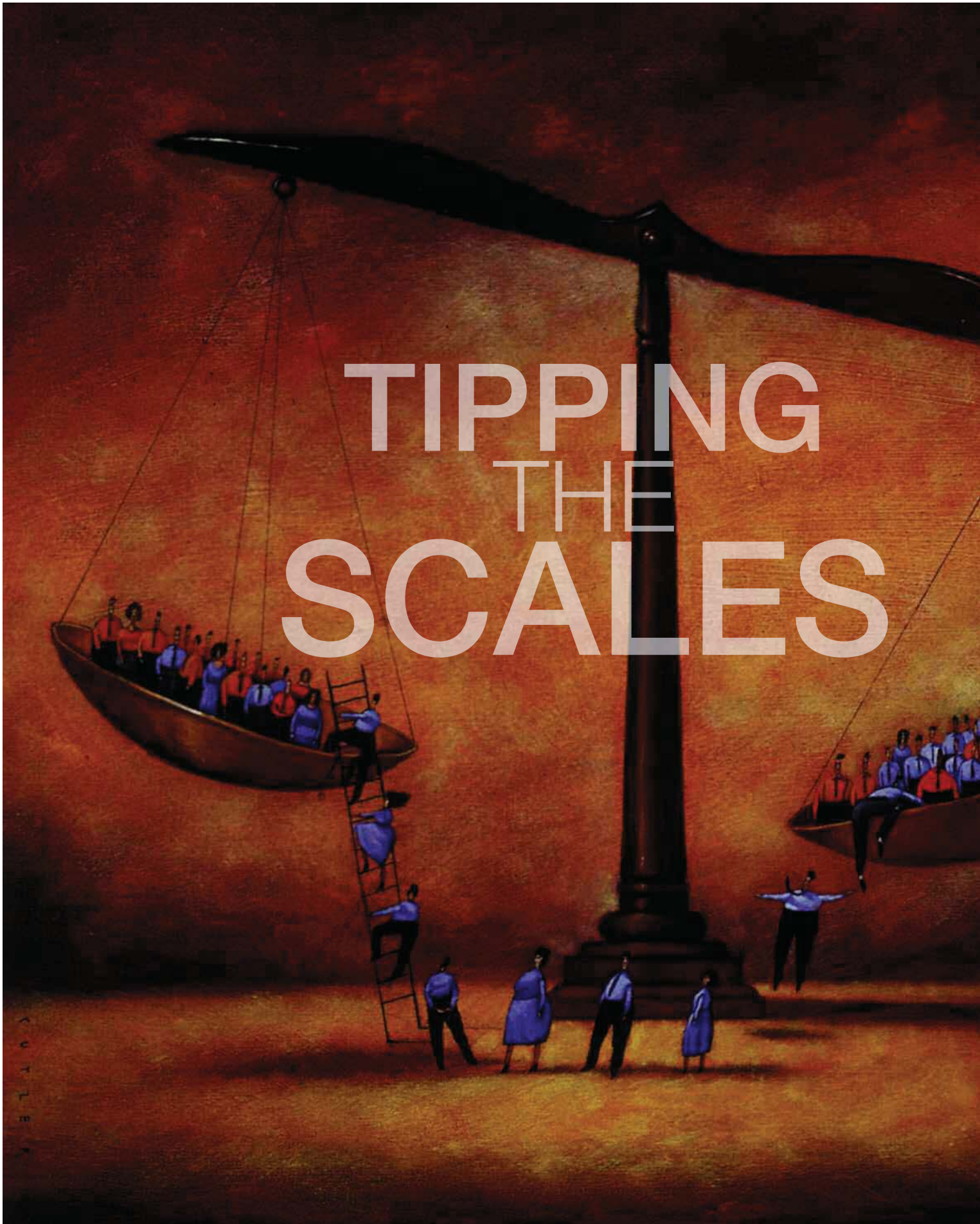


TIPPING THE SCALES



W. H. H. H.

Can leadership skills really help enrich other aspects of your life? **Stewart Friedman** thinks so, as *HRM*'s Matt Buttell found out.

Life often throws things at us to make us question our priorities. For some it could be a bad career move, while for others it could be the loss of a loved one. For Stewart Friedman, Director of the Work/Life Integration Project at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, it was the birth of his first child. "I began to think very hard about what my role as a father was in making the world safe for my children," he comments. "That was something I hadn't actually thought about before I met him." By evaluating what this meant to him, Friedman began to develop his hugely successful Total Leadership program.

It was in 1984 that Friedman became a faculty member at the Wharton School, and following the birth of his son the approach really began to take shape. "I started to talk about it in the classroom," he explains, "and the students reacted quiet strongly. Some were angry and thought it was inappropriate to talk about children and the responsibility of the private sector to nurture the next generation of people, not just as employees. Whereas others were very grateful to see the opportunity to cultivate the next generation into their companies and families."

The reaction of his students meant Friedman had to embark on a path of research regarding work/life balance. "Back then, it was mostly women doing research in this area. And there were very few business schools. Because I was a man coming from the Wharton School, I kind of stood out," he jokes. You could say Friedman became something of a celebrity, at least in some circles. "I was an odd kind of duck in the conferences and gatherings about work/life," he explains. "I ended up having a lot of visibility in the media." Among others, he worked with Vice President Al Gore when he was in office, and the process became a big part of Friedman's work. It was at this time, in the 1990s, that Friedman was focusing on how to develop the capacity of leadership within companies that worked in business schools, and everything came together at the Ford Motor Company when, among many programs there, one in particular was created.

As Friedman explains, the purpose of Total Leadership was improving performance in all four domains of life – work, home, community and self – by creating value among them. The program walks participants through its three main steps and builds on the research and work that Friedman has completed in both the work/life and leadership development fields. The book, which accompanies the program, has been described as "Brilliant" and "Offering what most think impossible." What's more, when the program started with 36 high-potential managers implementing changes to their work and other parts of their lives, experiments not only produced impressive quantifiable business results, but also improved job satisfaction. It provided respondents with a deeper connection to their families and communities and many reported feeling healthier and less stressed. All were making better use of their leisure time and felt better about their company and more positive about tying their future to that of their firm. All this happened in the space of about four months. Clearly, Friedman was onto something.



Stewart Friedman is the founding director of the Wharton School's Leadership Program and its Work/Life Integration Project. He is the former head of Ford Motor's Leadership Development Center. Friedman has worked with thousands of executives, managers and community leaders to strengthen their leadership skills and enrich their lives.

"There are many different kinds of experiments and everyone does something different," says Friedman. "It's all customized to the individual." The things that people do range from exercising and changing their diet, to turning off the Blackberry a few nights a week. People don't just lose weight, but also improve sales performance and client satisfaction, as well as form closer relationships with friends and family; they create dedicated time outside of work, which in turn improves performance at work as they are more focused.

Step to it

Of course there is an argument that no matter what you do, you can always become a better leader. This is something that is echoed by Friedman's program, which maintains that leadership is something that can, and indeed must, be learned. "It involves three main steps: be real, be whole and be innovative, and the process of reflecting on these consciously designed experiments allows you to draw insight about your own leadership and how to bring the pieces of your life together in a meaningful way."

The first piece, "be real," encourages participants to clarify what really matters in their life. "We ask people to describe three or four critical incidents that have shaped their lives and their values," explains Friedman, saying that this means participants are acting with authenticity, which gives them the strength that comes from doing what they love, drawing on the resources of their whole life and knowing that they're creating value for themselves, their family, business and world. "Effective leaders articulate

a vision that inspires them and the people around them," says Friedman. "Their everyday actions fit not only with their personal values but also with the values of the groups of which they are a part."

The second piece, "be whole," is to recognize and respect that there are four domains of life and that they need to fit together in a coherent way. "That's something we all aspire to, each in our own way," says Friedman. "This comes to life by identifying the most important people in each domain, those that I call key stakeholders, and describing the performance expectations you think they have of you and the expectations you have of them." This segment is about establishing deeper connections with the people who matter most to you in your work or career, in your home or your family, your community or social groups, and simply telling them how important they are and having conversations about mutual expectations. "It can be very enlightening," says Friedman. "What you think people expect of you is often more than what they actually expect. This is a great insight for many, and it's quite liberating because it gives you some great discretion to experiment."

Finally, the "be innovative" segment looks at continually experimenting with how you get the job done. "In the third phase, you design and implement experiments that are intended to produce a four-way win,"

says Friedman. "That's really a lot of fun when you try something new and learn about creating sustainable change, which is, of course, what leadership is all about." Here the focus is not just performance at work, but in all four domains of life.

Take the lead

It is obvious that Friedman thinks leadership is very important in terms of human resources management. He details that having been a member

"The role of the HR executive is growing in importance and has become much more of a strategic part of so many businesses"

of the Human Resources Executive Committee at Ford 10 years ago, and having taught the strategic human resources management course at Wharton, he has felt that there is an increasing importance in seeing people as a distinctive asset. "The role of the HR executive is growing in importance and has become much more of a strategic part of so many businesses," he says. "That's why I think it's a great career for young, talented businesspeople, especially because it has traditionally not been the sexiest option for many people."



FEEL THE SQUEEZE

Stewart Friedman on how the current economic climate could be the perfect time for leaders to step up to the plate.

This is a time when, contrary to the knee-jerk reaction that managers are likely to make, which is to turn up the pressure on their work force, it's actually a smarter idea to let your people know the reality, give them information about the real prospects for your organization, and invest a bit of attention to their lives beyond work.

This means that you are not burning your people out, and there's a high risk of that right now because of the pressures that people are feeling. You can go a long way as a business leader to ensure that the people who are still with you are functioning at a high level if you acknowledge that, yes, there are pressures at work, but also that these pressures are felt in other parts of their lives too. Give them an opportunity to take a small step to experiment with how they get things done to make their lives outside of the office a little less stressful. Your business will benefit as a result.



And, as the consulting world moves toward issues of organization and people strategy, this offers another indication of how the concepts and tools from the HR field are being applied to real business problems. "Recently, the trend has been, and will continue to be, for HR to have a deep background in some other aspect of the business. Having early exposure in your career to another functioning area, or being a player on a business team where you have real day-to-day knowledge of the core business aspects, will increasingly be essential to the HR world."

Despite a recent focus on work/life issues, one of the trends that Friedman has observed over the years has been the excessive segmentation and differentiation in this field, so much so that it is often relegated to a lower status position in the hierarchy of HR issues. In contrast to this, it is Friedman's belief that HR professionals need to see a natural convergence between both the work/life field and the leadership development field. He is encouraging human resources management teams to do the same. "If the work/life field can be directly connected to the leadership development people of the organization, we change people in the HR world and I think it serves both parties well to do that."

Friedman concludes by saying it is an exciting time for HR. "The impact that a smart HR strategy has on a firm's competitiveness is absolutely huge," he says, and he certainly offers food for thought – "The Total Leadership program is not an abstract idea," he says. In fact, the program's results show that it's structured method produces measurable changes. "You become more focused on the things that matter and you feel more grounded and more like the person you want to be," says Friedman.

As Total Leadership generates support and helps participants feel more connected to the important people in their lives, Friedman believes the key to leadership success lies in offering more resilience to the unpredictability of today's turbulent markets, and the turbulent world as a whole. By becoming open to discovery and feeling more hopeful and enthusiastic about our futures, Friedman's program shows, in very practical and meaningful ways, how to get the power to shape them. ■



WHEN FORD MET FRIEDMAN

Back in 1999, then-CEO of Ford, Jacques Nasser, was looking to change. Ford had previously been recognized for its slow-paced, structured environment, and now it was time to embrace diversity and the firm's talented people.

But what the company really needed was someone to find this talent and train it. Ford needed a leadership guru, someone capable, an outsider, someone unburdened by corporate history – someone with credibility that could make the firm's radical change ideas a reality. Fortunately, Ford found Friedman.

By this time, Friedman's work was already gaining a reputation for success, and his leadership program was beginning to be recognized as a defining experience for Wharton's MBA students. At Ford, one innovation was that each year the manufacturer would take 36 of its brightest stars for a week of classes. Nasser himself would assign strategic projects to these executives, grouped in teams of six, which included members from diverse areas of the company. Six months later, the teams would report back to the CEO on their findings and their impact.

It was Friedman's job to ensure there was leadership development happening on an epic scale. Friedman had to extend the firm's principles deep into the organization. He says of this time, "I had an opportunity to combine everything I had done into something with a much broader scope and impact." Already well known in human resources circles as a leading thinker on work/life issues, and having been noted by *Working Mother* magazine's list of the top 25 men who had succeeded in improving the lives of working parents, Friedman's work was clearly making change happen. At Ford, the changes were dramatic. Friedman remembers it being like "training legions of crusaders in the service of transformation." He recalls it being, "a daunting task, but an exciting one."