

PowerTalk has been especially designed for women leaders who want to leverage Return on Investment (ROI) in their careers and life experiences and take the next leap. Each issue of PowerTalk focuses on key strategies that will increase your leadership resiliency. Answer the questions posed, review the suggestions and write down ways you can implement. Use these suggested strategies today to enhance your tool kit or even rewrite the script for your future.

Capitalizing on Disequilibrium

The focus of this issue is *Capitalizing on Disequilibrium*. Have you heard that the solution to coping with the challenges of the 24/7 environment, competing priorities, large-scale change initiatives and scarce resources is to achieve greater balance? The quest for balance is a myth that could actually keep you running on the treadmill rather than achieving your professional and life goals. In fact, striving for the unobtainable goal of balance may contribute to the fatigue and frustration we experience in trying to keep up.

If you really test your assumptions, balance is not only unobtainable, but undesirable. We have been sold on the notion that imbalance is a negative condition; but in truth, you cannot reach your meridian (pinnacle or highest stage of development) by remaining in a state of balance or equilibrium. Capitalizing on new opportunities means becoming more comfortable with the level of disequilibrium that dominates today's environment and learning to use it to your advantage.

As institutional needs and goals are in constant flux in response to a dynamic external environment, we need to keep learning, growing and reinventing ourselves rather than resting in the status quo. Like it or not, grappling with a feeling of disequilibrium drives new learning and hence advancement, while the desire for equilibrium keeps you chained to the treadmill.

As counterintuitive as it may seem, if you put disequilibrium to good use, you can actually increase control and make room for what really matters.

*“Like it or not,
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drives new learning...”*

1. Start With Your Calendar

Is your schedule aligned with your values and priorities? If not, carve out time for reflection or renewal by making one or more of the following simple changes. You will actually create a temporary feeling of disequilibrium as you rearrange your schedule, but the ultimate outcome is greater control of your priorities.

- Schedule one weekend a month without email. Take the time for exercise or recreational activities.
- Spend half a day to a day at home every other week, specifically to work on a creative project or one that requires strategic thinking.
- Carve out early-morning time for reflection.
- Start a reflection journal. Record what gives you a sense of joy about your work or reflect and become centered on the day's professional and personal tasks.
- Attend a professional development seminar on leadership resiliency or an area of interest not directly tied to your daily professional life.
- Find a role model and interview this person.
- Schedule time each week to catch up on reading.

Rearranging your current activities will create some initial imbalance but make the best of it by using the time for creative endeavors that require "idle" time and yield long term results.

2. Make Room for What Really Matters

Peter Drucker's "planned abandonment" means deciding which activities you can abandon.

- Are all the boards on which you serve really aligned with your passions and current goals?
- Have you been serving on a campus-wide committee for several years that has taken on a life of its own?

Maybe it's time to replace yourself with a new member who can contribute a fresh perspective. Find a gracious way to take leave of the group and tell them about your new focus for the coming years. Leaving the committee will mean creating some disequilibrium because you'll need to find a new activity to fill the gap. Use the time productively for professional enhancement activities or to take on a challenging assignment that matters to the organization and creates visibility for your leadership talents.

A client of mine was considering canceling her attendance at a professional development conference because she found herself spending long hours on a board presentation. Ultimately, however, she decided to delegate the presentation to a skilled staff member. The individual's approach was quite different from her own, but nonetheless well received by the board. It renewed my client's faith that someone else could do something right and made her realize that her way was not always the only one.

Of course it's more comfortable to remain in a state of equilibrium and continue to do what you've always been doing. It takes courage and discipline to create imbalance by realigning your activities with your priorities. But remember, change is the only way to get off the treadmill and achieve your personal and leadership goals.

Additional Resources:

- [Click here to review more articles by Dr. Barbara Kaufman](#)
 - **"Success that Lasts"** - by Laura Nash and Howard Stevenson - HBR On Point Enhanced Edition, April 1, 2004. Harvard Business Review, Product #659X.
 - Learn more about participation in **Leadership California's** annual Issues and Trends Program - www.leadershipcalifornia.org
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