

Personal sacrifices don't need to be part and parcel of a successful career. With a little know-how, it's possible for business leaders to reproduce the same success in their personal and family lives as they currently strive for in their high-flying, all-consuming careers, writes *Dr Christian Marcolli*

Design

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life



PERSONAL LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

For many businesspeople today, life is tough. Economies are sluggish, technological change is relentless and global competition remains ruthless. In this harsh business environment, even apparently well paid and well-to-do managers and professionals are overworked, under pressure and highly stressed.

It is not uncommon to find busy executives giving 100% of themselves to their career, while feeling a gnawing sadness that their private and family life is not all that it could be. While their focus, strength and energy are channelled into their work, their private life slowly atrophies, like an unused muscle. At best, they are coping, but with diminishing energy, resources and joy. At worst, they suffer unhealthy lifestyles, fraught relationships and family breakdown.

If this sounds familiar to you, you may feel that personal sacrifices are simply the price of career progress. But it doesn't have to be this way. It is possible for top performers in the business world to avoid hazards like burnout and divorce, and reproduce the same success in their personal and family lives as they currently strive for in their high-flying, all-consuming careers.

To do so, individuals must develop a coherent strategy for work/life integration and execute it with the same determination as they do with business strategies.

This does not mean curtailing your career. On the contrary, it is about maintaining your ambitions and continuing to achieve professionally, while strategically leaving you with enough energy to create the treasured moments for yourself and your family that build the strong foundations of your life.

I have anchored many of the positive changes needed to bring work and family life into equilibrium in P6PROP®, a model for Personal Leadership Excellence that I've developed over many years to help individuals maintain optimal performance, especially during times of uncertainty and change.

The P6PROP® model helps high performers harmonise their 'inner world' of real purpose, as well as physical, mental and emotional health, with their 'outer world', which is dominated by the demands of their work and home lives.

Personal Leadership Excellence, I believe, is essentially contained in six key characteristics – which all happen to begin with the letter 'P', hence 'P6'. They are: Passion, Precision, Perception, Peace, Presence and Persistence.

Think of the six blades of an aeroplane propeller, where each blade corresponds to one of the six Ps. Imagine yourself as a plane powered by those six propellers. The way the blades of each propeller are angled determines whether a P-component has a positive, neutral or negative impact on performance.

The 'PROP' of P6PROP® stands for Personal Resource Optimising Performance – or how you can angle those propellers to perform at your best. When all of the P-components are angled optimally, you achieve forward thrust and velocity, all the while effectively utilising your energy.

When your P-components are angled in the wrong direction, it hinders your progress, slows you down, and eats up all of your fuel. When you understand the key aspects of each P-component, and how they are currently angled in your own life, then you can realign your course and make greater use of your resources.

In terms of business success, I have seen P6PROP® produce dramatic results for individuals and teams. It can also make a huge difference to your family life, so it's worth considering how you measure up to the six Ps:

1. PASSION

Are you a passionate player in private life, in your family and at home? Are you fundamentally excited to see your partner and kids (if you have them) at night? Do you take a keen interest in what matters to your loved ones? When you are at home, are you really excited to be there?

Instead of thinking of the family as a place of duty, where dinners are served and homework is done, start thinking of your family as a place that provides true support, bonding, comfort, relief, laughter and relaxation after the stresses of difficult days

Passion is critical to families because it fuels our desire to be together and to create quality 'moments' and memories together. When you hide out at work to avoid being at home, then you are not passionate about your family. Passion in family life means placing your family commitments at the top of your to-do lists on a regular basis. It is expressed in your commitment to being a really excellent partner/spouse, friend and parent at home.

To unlock the passion in your family life, instead of thinking of the family as a place of duty, where dinners are served and homework is done, start thinking of your family as a place that provides true support, bonding, comfort, relief, laughter and relaxation after the stresses of difficult days.

Write down what makes you and your family tick and what makes you unique as a family. Ask all family members to contribute and summarise your ideal vision of your family. This will give you all clarity on what it really means to be part of a loving, supportive family unit, and the fundamental connection you have to each other.

Incorporate your individual passions into family life. If you have a passion for cooking, for example, get your spouse and children involved in planning and preparing a meal once a week. Encourage your children to share the things that they love doing, and make space for it in your time together. Also, share your passion for your work. If your family understands what you find fulfilling about your work, the greater the chance that they will offer you support when you need it.

2. PRECISION

The common definition of precision is being exact, especially when performing a certain task or mastering a skill. Have you mastered the right skills to bring your passion for your family to life? Do you have a real understanding of what it takes to be a committed and present spouse? Do you have a strong sense of what it means to be an exceptional parent or friend? And do you take daily actions to be that person?

Precision in the family context means forming 'family-friendly' habits and behaviours. People who are not precise often look back with regret at the things they wish they had done. When you are precise, you know that fulfilling those promises to yourself and those who you love is simply a matter of focus, dedication and a commitment to making it happen. And the reward is a tremendous amount of satisfaction and joy.

Ask all family members about their expectations towards you as a partner/spouse or parent on a regular basis. Ensure that you have the curiosity to learn more about how to be a "good parent" by reading some of the latest books or articles. Times are changing and you need to keep up with the new demands in the private world as much as you do in the business world.

3. PERCEPTION

How you perceive your environment is very important to your success in life. If you think about your life outside work, what does that private sphere look like? Is it a stable and trustworthy environment? Do you get your needs met at home, not just in a material way, but also on an emotional, mental and spiritual level?

Your home and family life should be a place to reconnect and recharge. It should give you energy to face the stresses of the world. When your home is a safe haven, it is free from chaos and conflict (most of the time anyway). It has predictable routines and rituals that you can fall back on in times of stress. When you are truly supported at home, the key people in your life help you stay on track – and hold up a mirror to you if you deviate from your core values.

Creating a supportive and trustworthy environment in a family takes work. It won't happen when family members all eat separately at different times, or when they isolate themselves behind closed doors, with music blaring and computers and TVs dominating.

4. PEACE

Focus on the peace that you can achieve within yourself that comes from reflection, understanding and acceptance of your own life story. It is about feeling comfortable in your own skin.

Do you know yourself inside and out, as a partner, parent and friend? Can you pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses? Have you spent time thinking about your personal history, and what it has meant to your life so far?

Peace is so important to individuals, especially to parents, to break the dysfunctional patterns of the past. When you have made peace with the past, you unlock the possibility of the present and are fully in charge of your vision for the future. Finding your inner peace will offer you strength and insight, which is the first step to bringing your best self to your family life.

5. PRESENCE

Presence is closely linked to peace. It is being able to express your true, authentic self, based on an understanding of the main narrative of your life. Only through understanding your story can you know your true self. And presence is all about sharing this true, authentic self with the world.

So many of our interactions with others are based on fear, with our defences high and our authenticity low. Are you truly authentic in your interactions? When your kids or partner describe you, does it match how you feel inside? Do you sometimes feel like you are "playing a certain role" at home?

Be your true self. Show your weaknesses, and capitalise on your strengths. Screw up royally, and then find a solution to make it right. Show who you are by living the values you hold dear.

If you can achieve presence, your interactions will be natural, easy and comfortable. You will shed any feeling of being ill at ease, especially with those who matter to you the most.

6. PERSISTENCE

Persistence is all about overcoming inertia and keeping the forward motion towards achieving your goals. So how do you tackle important projects in your life?


When you face a challenge, don't give up. There are not many more important projects than building a strong family. Establish and maintain 'good habits' – from eating together and sharing chores, to planning meals and leisure activities – that strengthen your family bond.

By stepping up and sticking to your commitments to your loved ones, you show them how much they matter to you. Persistence means cultivating your family relationships, day in and day out, especially in periods of stress.

It also means taking care of yourself – adopting good habits in your diet, exercise, sleep and 'you time'. This isn't selfishness, as partners, parents and friends we can only be what we need to be when we are fresh and fit.

TIME TO GET MORE?

I have applied the components of P6PROP® to my own family life, and seen amazing results. This has added to my sincere desire to help other people experience their lives more fully, to form stronger and deeper connections with their partners and children, and to be more present, peaceful and mindful.

Through this approach, genuine work/life integration really is possible. Instead of exhaustion and domestic friction because of stress and work overload, you can get more of the good things in life. Not more in material terms, but more joy, more satisfaction, more meaning, more love and more success – however you define it – at home, as well as at work. 

Dr Christian Marcolli is a leading performance coach. He is author of *More Life, Please!* (Urbane Publications), a new book that brings together concepts, stories and concrete guidance to show people how they can not only achieve top performance at work, but also integrate their home lives more fully, to form stronger and deeper connections with their spouses and children, and to be more present, peaceful and mindful.

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