

[A LETTER FROM VAL]

## **Your Money or Your Mind?**

Dear Friends:

This month I was going to go inside the minds of CEOs based on some interviews I did recently, kind of like the movie *Being John Malkovich*, where Cameron Diaz and John Cusack find a secret door into the mind of the actor. But after writing up the interviews, I found there was one recurring theme that struck me enough that I kept thinking about it over and over. And in the typical way these things unfold, someone has brought up the same issue in almost every meeting I've had ever since. It's workaholism, and the related illnesses of self-centeredness and disengagement.

Now don't for a minute think that I'm going to start preaching about work-life balance, because I most certainly am not. In my opinion even the phrase work-life balance is stupid, and the concept is unrealistic and unhelpful to most. As an executive I met with a few days ago put it, "It's easy for executives and professionals living in wealthy places like Silicon Valley and Marin County to talk about needing time for meditation, bike rides, and slow-cooked organic food when they've already made or inherited \$20 million." But we all know their admins, hourly workers, and housekeepers don't have time for any of that, nor will it ever be possible for most of them to achieve anything even close.

So what's going on? According to surveys, most of us enjoy work more than we enjoy "life," and only complain when the mix is not serving us well. In our non-work time, we often either have nothing productive to do, which stresses us out and causes couples to argue, or we have too much to do, leaving us exhausted from doing things we're not really all that good at. But of course, few of us will ever admit it. This work-life balance fallacy became clearer to me recently when I interviewed a CEO who brazenly told me that the next large, public company he's going to run will need to pay him more money than the current one—shocking, I know—because he spends so much time traveling that his kids routinely assume he won't make it to their birthday parties. Now wait a minute: Birthday parties happen on the weekend, and there's only one a year per kid. Unless he's Jon Gosselin or the guy from *Big Love*, he only needs to make it home around once a quarter to have all the birthdays covered. Perhaps times are different now, but I remember as a kid that my mom and dad would 'produce' our birthday parties. This meant that my mom would make a cake and my dad would cut shapes from a cardboard box so we could play Pin the Tail on the Donkey. My dad would've never missed a birthday, no matter what. He put us first.

This missing-the-birthday-party syndrome was so shocking that I asked my business partner, James Holland, about it. James is a recovering workaholic who's held senior HR roles at a number of large corporations. He said that no company would ever ask, or would even want, someone to be traveling on a weekend if it meant missing an important family event. "Companies want executives operating at the highest level of productivity," he explained, "and this means not having family problems. You don't want your execs worrying about their spouse, their kids, or even their parents. You expect them to organize their work lives around their family commitments. But some execs want to avoid their families and use work as an excuse." Yes, James is a cynic. Yet I also suspect that he's onto something.

Now that the economy is in recovery, it's giving workaholics a new excuse for neglecting their families and putting in long hours. "We need the money," they say; or, "I need to rebuild our portfolio," or, "This company is my last chance..." I recently received an email from one of the more evolved executives I know, and even he's drinking the Kool-Aid. He writes: "My life is completely crazy. My wife and I both

have huge jobs. This job is very wild—12–14 hour days and just torrential & relentless work. I love being a dad more than working so it's been challenging for me. This weekend is another wild one as my wife is in Seattle Sat AM, then our oldest has football on Sat at 1pm, then the little one naps, then dinner ... Sunday I have a board meeting at some undetermined time so I have to keep that open, and also my youngest has a birthday party from 12–2 in San Jose ... And so it goes ... I just hope I get some sleep tonight." Why is he doing this to himself—and to them? How can making even more money be more important than time with his kids? Isn't this a question that many of us need to answer, not when we're worth \$20 million and our kids are all grown, but now?

One CEO I know admitted that he didn't like spending time with his seven-year-old son because his son was boring and always wanted his father to play with his toys in his bedroom. The father preferred to fly his private jet to San Diego and back for the day. Another CEO similarly described his grandchildren as "boring" and said that he preferred to putter with his sports car collection on weekends. And what about the women? One CEO I know is gone so much that her parents have basically moved in to raise the little girl. The mom only sees her daughter on weekends, since she generally chooses to come home from work after the girl is asleep. And what does she do with her daughter on weekends? She takes her three-year-old horseback riding. Now that's what I call intimacy!

Why don't these people want to be with their families? Why aren't they engaged? Whatever happened to old-fashioned bonding between parent and child? These are not easy questions to answer. I know that I've struggled with workaholicism over the years, and it still flares up from time to time. For me, its most recent cause had been not having children and being so sad about it that it was better to bury myself in real estate development than to sit at home and be sad. There's nothing like serving as your own general contractor and property manager to give you something else besides infertility to think about on nights and weekends. But it's also been tough adjusting to having children, and I've got to admit that I didn't feel the bond with Hermione and Dashiell those first few months. Yeah, I thought I loved them and it was really exciting and different to have two small screaming babies invading the house. But I still avoided them at times because, well, screaming, colicky babies aren't nearly as fun as discussing renovations with subcontractors, or even sitting in a quiet office responding to a day's worth of email.

Somehow, around Month Four, I realized that if I didn't spend 90 minutes with them before work and at least that much after work before they went to sleep, I wasn't showing up as a parent, and I was leaving them to be primarily raised by nannies. I wasn't influencing them enough, stimulating them enough, and they weren't bonding with me enough. So I changed. But you can say that a combination of the desire to see them succeed mixed with my own ego caused it. It was not caused by compassion or love alone. Those came after.

And it is tough. I had a client over to my house for a morning meeting, and when she got out of her beautiful Porsche—a tall, toned, perfectly coiffed blond wearing an elegant black dress and high heels—I realized that I looked like hell. Weeks of baby viruses had made a good night's sleep seem like a ludicrous idea. I was barefoot and wearing no makeup. I hadn't washed my car since the babies were born, and my front porch was piled high with whatever was coming or going from the house to the car. It looked like the Clampetts lived there. I've made my priorities Work and Babies, and to hell with everything else. It may not be the kind of work-life balance the experts have in mind, but it's a lot more rewarding than organic gardening and Tai Chi. And this is the reality of one Silicon Valley CEO.

Finally, a quick HR aside: Yes, the job market has picked up for HR professionals. But you need to have the right skill set, and that's changed quite a bit since the days before the bust. The recovery has created different strains of HR jobs, and you may have to give yourself a makeover in order to qualify. CEOs and boards continue to want to upgrade their HR staffs, and that might mean you or your boss on the chopping block, so you'd better be prepared. In coming issues, I'll discuss some of the specifics, like best practices around managing the increasing numbers of executive coaches coming out of the woodwork, and how you can judge if you need to overhaul your HRIS/ATS.

This month I'd like to thank my staff for picking up all the pieces while I was on maternity leave, and post maternity leave, and doctor's appointments...

Take care,  
Valerie Frederickson

### [VF&Co New Offerings](#)

Are your managers providing the direction your employees need?

Executive coaching is on the rise after a number of years of no budget due to the demand for engineering managers who can handle the responsibilities of managing teams. VF&Co offers individual sessions with professional coaches to train and support your managers to handle the daily challenges of their jobs, including prioritizing and delegating, handling conflict, giving and receiving feedback, and developing their teams. This budget-conscious initiative for your managers can have a tremendous impact on the organization and get you the leadership you require. Upgrade Your HR Team's Partnering Skills!

This Business Partner stuff is really important! We have been bombarded with requests for private presentations of Valerie's award-winning How to Be an HR Business Partner presentation at internal HR meetings and internal global HR conferences around the US. In response to these inquiries, VF&Co is now offering on-site training modules for your in-house HR Team. Specifically, we'll teach your team the valuable skills necessary to be successful in the HR Business partner role, and share with your team four business partner case studies, and the strategies and skills needed to solve them.

For additional information, contact Michele Li at 650.614.0220 or [michele@vfandco.com](mailto:michele@vfandco.com).

### [VF&Co HR On Demand](#)

Would you like to have access to an at-a-glance feature of HR professionals who are pre-screened, pre-interviewed, highly motivated, and ready to go? Check our website for updated profiles on a variety of candidates from HR Managers and Vice Presidents of Human Resources to specialists in the areas of compensation, benefits, and M&A.

Candidate 226 – Global (S) VPHR, CHRO

- Executive-level professional comfortable supporting CEOs and board of directors

- Significant experience in compensation and benefits, succession planning, development, and strategic communications
- Excellent coach and mentor to employees at all levels
- Very comfortable in highly technical environments
- Has managed dozens of acquisitions, roll-ups, and divestitures
- Speaks three languages fluently; Ph.D., able to relocate

For more information on this candidate and to view the rest of this month's featured candidates, [click here](#).

### [HR Consultant & Contractors' Corner](#)

What's Up in HR At Successful Companies?

Each month you can check out what's critical to our clients by seeing what kinds of HR projects we're doing.

Cool Contracting & Consulting Assignments:

- **Fighting Boredom In The Boardroom** — Helping a growing company review their Board compensation structure ensuring they are properly positioned with market with a solid rationale for the Board
- **I Need A Brand Aide, Quick** — Helping a company re-vamp their employment Brand image in the market place to assist in the attraction of talent in print, social media and general messaging
- **Se Habla (Again)** — Providing translation services to a company based out of Spain so they can align their US and home based policies and procedures
- **Partnership Gone Bad** — Helping a major employer revamp the role of their HR Business Partners to one more focused on talent management
- **Put Me In Coach** — Working with several companies on executive coaching projects to help improve the productivity of the executive and enhance their development and growth
- **Put Me In Coach (The Prequel)** — Helping several organizations with customized manager coaching focused on specific developmental outcomes
- **State of The Union** — This President does not lead the nation, but as a former leader of a major company, we are helping him re-enter the workforce and remake his image
- **Dream Assignment** — Interim VP HR support for venture-funded startup
- **Green is Golden** — HR start-up support with a global wind energy company new to the US
- **April is Tax Time** — Helping companies audit their HR function, producing a "eport card" and helping to close critical gaps
- **Clash of the Titans** — Helping an employer review their HR policies to introduce more flexibility, better communication and focus on improving communication and cooperation between Boomers, Gen-Xers and The Millennial.
- **Keeping the Seat Warm** — Filling a seat on a major employer's compensation team to provide job grading and salary structure support and board presentations

### [Current Executive Searches](#)

[Contractor] Director of Compensation (Santa Clara, CA)

Public, high-tech company needs a seasoned, polished compensation Vice President or Senior Director to redesign their compensation programs including executive and sales compensation. Previous experience presenting to the Board of Directors and Compensation Committee is required.

[Contractor] Manager of Compensation (San Francisco, CA)

High growth San Francisco-based comestible goods company requires a Compensation Manager to revamp their administrative compensation structure.

[Contractor] Multiple Compensation Opportunities (San Francisco, CA)

Venture-funded software company needs a number of important Compensation projects completed.

[Contractor] Interim HR Executive (San Francisco, CA)

Major software company needs a temporary, high-level HR executive to assist with a series of reorganizations and some strategic communications.

Vice President of Human Resources (Santa Clara, CA)

One of the hottest companies in the US is looking for their new head of Human Resources due to retirement of the incumbent. The position reports to the CEO and will be leading a small team of high-performing, sophisticated HR professionals plus a large group of outsourced partners. The ideal candidate will have had exposure to the HR best practices of large, public companies while having a hands-on love of HR typical of smaller environments. Expertise partnering with CEOs to develop executive teams plus direct work with boards of directors is mandatory. An international background is preferred, along with direct expertise running HR through an IPO.

Vice President of Human Resources (Washington, DC)

An East-coast based, extremely well-respected commercial construction firm is looking for a VP of HR to upgrade and lead the function. Our client requires a polished, strategic, sensible executive with a labor relations background and expertise in compensation, talent development, and succession planning who can revamp the function and lead HR into becoming a major strategic differentiator for the client.

Senior Director of Talent Management & Talent Acquisition (Irvine, CA)

A rapidly-growing pre-IPO high tech start-up needs a Senior Director of Talent Management and Talent Acquisition with experience in both start-ups and public companies in the high-tech industry. The ideal candidate will have held roles in the staffing function and as an HR Business Partner.

Director of Human Resources (Southern California)

Major global technology and defense employer requires a strategic HR lead for a key Southern California location. The candidate must be able to independently lead HR for a very high-growth location that will be doing multiple acquisitions and growing organically, plus utilize the specialized services from Corporate HR.

Human Resources Manager (Silicon Valley)

HR manager needed for growing medical device company located in Silicon Valley. This role is right for someone who wants to add value directly in compensation, performance management, employee relations, compliance, and recruiting.

Human Resources Manager (San Francisco, CA)

High energy, highly professional, multi-tasking HR manager interested in adding value in multiple areas needed as a strong #2 for a high-growth software company.

Manager of Compensation(Southern California)

Internationally renowned, not-for-profit research organization needs a collaborative, flexible, proactive compensation manager to manage all the compensation programs and provide support to the Executive Committee.

## **Industry Events**

The Human Resources Forum

June 6–8, 2010 — Stone Mountain, GA

The Human Resources Forum is a senior level event specifically designed to address the increasing needs and demands of senior leaders of HR. Taking place at the Evergreen Resort, nestled in the magnificent Stone Mountain National Park in Georgia, The HR Forum provides a distraction free environment conducive for senior HR executives to expand their professional and personal development, source innovative new services and solutions and take part in extensive networking opportunities.

HR Star San Francisco 2010

July 15, 2010 – San Francisco, California

Come hear Valerie speak at the annual HR Star San Francisco conference at the South San Francisco Conference Center. Valerie will present on how to revitalize your workforce and build a solid foundation for your company's ramp up. The presentation will provide assessment tools to help you diagnose the root causes of any problems that may hinge your ability to ramp up and offer practical solutions to strategically deal with issues identified.

13th World Human Resources Congress

September 27–29, 2010 — Montreal, QC, Canada

Learn and network with 3,500 dedicated HR professionals from around the world at the 13th World Human Resources Congress in Montreal this fall! Renowned HR experts from Canada, USA, Mexico, France, Switzerland, Singapore, UK, Australia, Dubai, the Netherlands, and Puerto Rico will be offering almost 100 sessions based on this year's theme of "HR Without Limits".

Human Resource Executive's 13th Annual HR Technology Conference

September 29–October 1, 2010 — Chicago, IL

Based on real-time feedback from LinkedIn group members, this year's HR Technology Conference in Chicago will focus on three critical areas in HR technology — Talent Management, Social Media and HCM & Workforce Planning. Additionally, the conference will be revisiting some of the more traditional functional areas (such as payroll, compensation, and benefits) that may have plagued you for years. The highlight of this conference will be the hands-on Twitteriversity training class that will turn you into a pro in just 75 minutes!

European HR Directors Business Summit 2011

January 24–25, 2011 — Birmingham, United Kingdom

The HR Directors Business Summit 2011 features the leading HR business practitioners and thinkers sharing insights into the challenges faced by the HR Director and the future of the HR function. The 2011 agenda will address the core issues of business transformation, skills shortage, team building, self-

service HR, HR 2.0, and top challenges for the European HR Director role. Key speakers include HR executives from Royal Mail, Standard Life, The BBC, Axa UK, ACAS and The Carphone Warehouse.