

MONDAY MANNA

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BUSINESS DILEMMA EDITION

WHEN WORK AND FAMILY COLLIDE

By John D. Beckett

Maria had been preparing for this day for several months, and her Saturday morning piano recital was nearly here. She found it difficult to think about anything else. Best of all, she was excited because her daddy would be coming! Her anticipation helped her overlook all the times he had missed other such events because of his work, which often involved making business trips out of town.

Then, the day before the recital, her father's boss called. Would history repeat, she wondered, as her father talked to his employer? Would he be called out of town again?

From what Maria could overhear, she knew her father was doing his best to excuse himself from making the trip. But as soon as he hung up it was obvious he had been unsuccessful. He would have to be on a flight that evening. His attendance at the recital would not be possible.

Maria did her best to act grown up. After all, she was nearly ten years old. But this time her sadness was more painful than she could ever remember. "Why does Daddy's work always have to come ahead of our important family times?" she wondered.

Struggling with having to disappoint his daughter once again, her father pondered a similar question. "I enjoy my work, but I hate to let my family down time after time. Is there not a way I can have a successful career without having to sacrifice my family to achieve it?"

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Faith, family and work" – for many of us, this represents a healthy ranking of priorities. But even with the best intentions, reality can often reverse these priorities. Work pushes its way to the top of the list, whether we want it there or not. How can we most effectively carve out time for the most important things, making sure we manage our priorities, rather than letting them manage us?
2. What could Maria's father do to strengthen his bond with his daughter, especially if this latest business trip is unavoidable and he knows he must disappoint Maria once more?
3. Can – or should – employers and employees reach some kind of understanding and agreement on family and personal priorities in advance, so that important events aren't eclipsed by work matters? Or do employers only have a responsibility for making certain their customers and shareholders are treated properly and deadlines are met, no matter what it takes? Explain your answer.

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BEST PRACTICES

Businesses fall short when they disregard or fail to recognise the priority of family. In their quest to serve the “bottom line,” they ignore the reality that their employees are multi-dimensional people, individuals whose lives have important facets that exist outside of the workplace.

The best businesses, ones that boast the most contented and loyal workers, strive to become and remain family-friendly. These companies understand their most productive and effective employees enjoy happy family lives. Because of this, they seek to reinforce family values in their policies and practices.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

- It is tempting to put the needs of a business first and foremost, but wise leaders realise that enduring values must be embraced – such as offering the opportunity to properly balance personal and professional demands. And in the process, companies often find themselves becoming more productive – and prosperous. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).
- Some companies seem intent on draining the last amount of energy and productivity from their staff, but doing so often comes at a high cost for everyone involved. So emotional and relational needs of everyone in the organisation merit serious consideration. “Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity” (Ephesians 5:15-16).
- Sadly, the business and professional world is littered with the devastation of families damaged by workers who failed to establish and nourish important relationships within their homes. Often this “wreckage” is beyond repair. This is all the more reason employers should strive to honour important family relationships and priorities. In most cases a happy home, especially one centred around faith in God, makes for happy workers. “He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers...” (Malachi 4:6).