

Balancing Professional and Personal Life

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Engr. George Torres Balansag is a Professional Electrical Engineer and Certified Power Energy Manager with extensive experience in electrical systems, substations, transmission projects, and engineering project management. He has worked across technical, supervisory, and managerial roles, handling Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) activities that demand precision, accountability, and sustained performance.

There are limits to what can be done in engineering work, such as maximum load, tolerable ranges, and a point of failure. Performance decreases, and risks increase when the limits are exceeded and not adhered to. The same principle applies to your professional life. The balance between personal and professional life is often discussed in an abstract way. With engineering practice, it becomes real and measurable. When we become fatigued, our judgment is impaired. When we are under stress for long periods, we lose accuracy. When we continuously bear too much weight, we fail. These outcomes are unacceptable in technical environments, as decisions there affect safety and operations.

This chapter will examine balance from a leader's perspective: balance is a leadership responsibility rather than a personal preference. In the agile leadership framework, balance equals sustained performance, adaptability, and reliability. Leaders who effectively manage their own limits can manage the systems, teams, and change they lead.

What is the connection between balancing personal and professional life and agile leadership?

Agile leaders rely on sustained responsiveness. Using engineering terms, a system's responsiveness diminishes when it's overloaded; leaders and

teams experience the same type of devolution. If an individual operates at or near their maximum capacity for an extended period, they lose the ability to adapt rather than gain it.

Agile environments require frequent decision-making, continual reassessment, and the ability to adapt plans to new circumstances. Agile leadership, as a result, demands cognitive clarity and judgment. Balance helps agile leaders maintain those qualities. Leaders who manage their own workload and recovery can respond to changes accurately rather than react in a rush.

Frequently throughout an engineering project, the constraints are constantly changing; for example, design changes, site conditions, delays in materials being delivered, or operational risk. Therefore, to provide agile leadership in those environments, it is not just about working quickly but about making consistent adjustments. The concept of balance allows leaders to pause and analyze different factors to determine the best course of action. Because taking time to think and respond is important, making poor decisions becomes more likely without some balance.

Agile leadership also focuses on iteration. When leaders iterate, they should learn during each iteration. When leaders are fatigued, they miss learning opportunities by overlooking feedback. Balanced leaders can reflect on their results, recognize areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments. Continual improvement rather than continual correction is reinforced through this type of iteration.

From an engineering perspective, balance is a stabilizing control for agility and helps prevent system overload and maintain system integrity; thus, balanced agile leaders are both responsive and dependable.

In practice, striking a balance between personal and professional life will allow leaders to be responsive to the organization while maintaining accuracy, safety, and long-term performance. This will allow agility to fulfil its original intent: to respond to or manage change without compromising the stability of the system.

Throughout my career in electrical engineering, I have worked in operational, technical, and managerial roles, where accountability for my work is paramount. My career began in system operations at Visayan Electric Company, where I served as a control engineer for distribution systems managed via SCADA. By working on live systems (generation, transmission, distribution, and metering), I learned that fatigue and distraction should not be part of someone making real-time decisions, responding to emergencies, or managing loads. My decisions impacted the stability of the system and ultimately the safety of the general public. I've worked as a Substation Engineer with Intec, in Abu Dhabi, where I supervised the installation and commissioning of primary and distribution substations, coordinating daily activities on-site with strict adherence to both safety and technical standards, putting in long hours during the commissioning phases of our work when demands were often more professional than personal.

My career continued to grow while working for Abu Dhabi Distribution Company for six years, where I performed operations on live systems at voltages up to 33kV and was responsible for outages (execution), condition monitoring, incident reporting, and verifying the protection systems prior to commissioning and handover. The sustained focus required in a high-reliability operational environment reinforced the need for continual mental clarity. I began to understand how an extended workload without adequate recovery affects your judgement and response time.

Currently, I am a Project Manager with Xian Electric Engineering Co., Ltd., directing major NGCP Projects, including 230kV transmission line systems, GIS substation installations, capacitor banks, and Static Synchronous Compensator (STATCOM) stations. Responsibilities include managing Engineering, Procurement, and Construction activities, coordinating with contractors and schedules, reviewing the technical design process, and ensuring compliance with established safety and quality standards. These roles require robust decision-making capabilities under pressure while working across many disciplines.

Throughout my career, I have come to understand that there is no separation of professional performance from personal capacity; that extended availability without recovery negatively impacts an individual's effectiveness. The earliest signs of extended availability include slower analysis, increased reliance on routine decision-making, and reduced situational awareness. These symptoms of increased workload, when observed in an engineering context, indicate that the systems being operated are outside their optimal operating ranges.

As time passed, I learned to manage balance intentionally by viewing available workloads and recovery with the same perspective as I would system load and periodic maintenance, planning for the possibility of exceeding capacity and implementing preventive measures to avoid failures. This approach enabled me to sustain a high level of performance in demanding roles while maintaining stability in my personal life.

My experience supports the premise that finding a viable way to balance professional accomplishments and personal responsibilities is not only a matter of convenience; it is essential to being an effective leader in technological environments. Intentionally balancing the two creates both a higher level of professional output and a greater sense of responsibility in one's personal life.