



## MIND YOUR BUSINESS

By Andrea Zeller

Is it possible for the self-employed to have a personal life?

This question becomes more relevant as the holidays arrive and each of us are struggling to do it all – especially women! Women typically take on responsibility for holiday traditions – engaging the children in creative activities like baking holiday cookies, making decorations, or, for the really ambitious, making personal holiday gifts and, don't forget... cooking that fabulous holiday dinner! Oh and then there's our desire for those special romantic times with our significant other throughout the holidays.

All this and manage a small business too?! Of course, super Mom can do it all – at least, that's the image we like to believe.

Studies indicate that more than 50 percent of small-business owners work more than 60 hours a week; a quarter of those hardworking people put in more than 70 hours weekly. Are we really holding reasonable expectations of ourselves? Ask yourself, can you really maintain all the personal attention on the home front as well as working those 60-70 hours a week? It is important to keep these expectations in check and keep life in balance – especially through the holiday season.

“How do we do that?” you might ask. I believe the answer is in planning ahead, holding yourself to reasonable expectations and in setting priorities and boundaries.

Here are suggestions to help the self-employed keep a personal life during the holidays:

- 1. Develop a personal mission statement.** Attend the free *Brown Bag Dialogue* workshop Dec. 9 from noon – 1 pm at the Creekside Career Center in SLO. Call 595-1357 to register. Or visit <http://www.franklincovey.com/missionbuilder/index.html> for a free wizard to help you write your personal mission statement and/or a corporate statement as well.
- 2. Set priorities and plan ahead.** Once you have your personal mission defined, you are focused and better able to align your priorities. What are the top ten things you want to accomplish through the holidays? Write a schedule to achieve your goals.
- 3. Increase your self esteem.** Know who you are and what you are really good at.

3. **Protect your time and manage your relationships;** be they clients, family or friends. Respect yourself and don't over commit. Set boundaries. Some small business owners believe they must jump at every one's whim – doing so lowers your value in other's eyes because it shows you don't value yourself. Clients, in particular, like to know they are seeking products and services that are in high demand – so let them know that you'd love to do their work but that you are already committed. Then suggest an alternative deadline.

4. **Take time for re-creation.** Time away from work allows you to *re-create* yourself and regenerate the batteries which feed the sparks of creativity. Making exercise a priority creates windows of time for re-creation. Brainstorms that come to you from *re-creation* time can revamp your business and lead to increased sales.

Ultimately, holidays are for celebrating love and thanksgiving for our gifts. Begin the celebration of love and thanksgiving within yourself then channel the abundant overflow to those around you. Bountiful peace and good will to all!

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*Andrea Zeller, Executive Director of Mission Community Services, coordinates Women's Business Partners (WBP) to ensure all community resources are leveraged and optimized to support entrepreneurial women. WBP serves everyone interested in establishing self-sufficiency through small business ownership while primarily focusing assistance towards socially and economically disadvantaged women. WBP can take you step by step towards success and can help those who speak only Spanish. Visit [www.MCSCorp.org](http://www.MCSCorp.org) or call 595-1357 to find out more.*