

BALANCING act



A news director's job can be all consuming. Veterans say one of the toughest things to learn is how to maintain a personal life, whether you're married or single. "News people think their job is more important than anything else," says Clear Channel's Steve Minium. "Your job is not *that* important. Full-time focus on the job and full-time focus on the family. It is a discipline that you have to develop."

Go home

Set a hard start time and a firm time to leave the office every day. Stick to it. If you come in for the morning show, leave earlier. There's no point in working yourself to death. Your ability to make good decisions goes down after about 10 hours. Besides, what message are you sending if you don't go home? Show your staff that you trust them and leave.

Protect your private time

Don't give in to the temptation to log in from home or work every weekend. Come in one weekend a month if you really need to catch up. "I rarely work from home anymore," says KVOA's Kathleen Choyal. "It's really important to me to decompress a little bit and not worry so much about what's going on at the office."

Be candid

Prepare your family for the realities of the business. "There are only a few people in your city who do your job," says WHBQ's Ken Jobe. "If you lose [your job], you have to go somewhere. Success may also mean we're going to need to move." Explain how major news events will affect your family too. Make sure everyone understands they may have to face some situations without you, because when a hurricane hits, you'll be at work, not at home.

“We’ve moved so much one of my brothers-in-law thinks I’m in the witness protection program.”

Geoff Roth • KMPH-TV/KFRE-TV • Fresno, CA

Involve your family

If you’re married or in a relationship, include that person when you’re invited to work-related events. Consider bringing your family to the TV station once in a while so they can meet the people you work with.

Set the tone

Be sensitive to the staff’s family issues as well as your own. Understand that their definition of family may not be the same as yours, and recognize their obligations to relatives, friends or partners. Let them know their family is important to you and give them time to deal with urgent family issues. Help their families understand the demands everyone in the newsroom faces. WCPO’s Bob Morford hosted a Saturday meeting for his staff and their spouses to talk about the realities of TV news. “It was the first time they had ever been invited to something other than the holiday party,” he says.

