

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Announcements

By Douglas E. Welch

While it may not seem like it at times, you all have lives outside of your career. In fact, there are events in your lives that often impact your ability to do your work. When these events intersect with your work life, it can be extremely stressful. You might worry about losing your job, or you might feel guilty for disappointing your boss or coworkers.

Regardless, everyone requires time away from work to handle these large steps in their lives, and you should never have to worry about taking the time for yourself when you need it.

Marriage, Birth, Death

Arguably, these are the three most stressful events you will ever face in your life. If you thought it was tough to decide between two jobs, just wait until you are deciding that you want to spend the rest of your life with someone. Even though marriages are usually joyous occasions, people are often afraid of telling their boss. They are afraid that the boss might not understand the need for less overtime while you are planning the event. Perhaps you are worried that they might not let you take vacation time when you need it for the honeymoon tickets you got for Hawaii.

Telling your boss that you are about to become a parent can be even worse. Some bosses may think that you will be less productive, less likely to stay late, and generally less likely to do everything they require of you. They might be afraid that your priorities will shift, or that you will be less of a team player. Worse yet, you might be wondering these same things. You worry about doing the best work possible on three or four hours of broken sleep a night, and how it might affect your career.

Finally, a death in the family—especially a sudden death—can bring all sorts of confusion into your life. You need time to grieve and to perform your family obligations. Sometimes you need to fly out of town immediately, no matter what stage your current project is in. Adding to this stress with worries about your job can bring you to the edge of a mental breakdown, if you are not careful.

It Doesn't Matter

Despite all your worries, and those of your boss, the most important thing to remember is that when any of these events occur, work comes second. For your own well-being, you must remember this. No matter how your employer may react to your announcements, you must take your needs into account first. These three events are defining moments of your life. To offer them anything less than your full and complete attention could be something you might regret for the rest of your life.

The bitter truth is, it doesn't matter how your employers react to your announcement. In most cases, they will react as people first and bosses second. Marriages and births will bring hearty congratulations, and a death in your family will bring heartfelt sympathies. No pressure will be applied, and you should take no burden of guilt on yourself.

In a small number of cases, though, your employer may react first as a boss, and then as a person. No matter what you might be feeling when this happens, you must turn away and give it no more thought. A person who reacts with anger, sarcasm or outright belligerence has proven that he or she requires no more of your thought or attention. You need to take care of your "business" in the best way you know how. Only after your life is settled will you be able to come back and deal with what you now know is a lousy work environment.

Never be afraid of making announcements to your boss, whether the occasion is happy or sad. It could be the most informative action you can take in your career. Nothing is more indicative of your employer's feelings toward you and the other employees.

Most times you will be pleasantly surprised to find a real person under that usually gruff exterior. Sometimes, though, you may learn more about people than you ever wanted to know. You may get a glimpse at the depths that pettiness and insecurity reach. Even then, though, you have learned something important. You will see more clearly the truth behind your employee/employer relationship, and will be able to develop a clear plan of career action after you have handled the large events in your life. □

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