



Two Keys to Enhancing Your Work-Life Harmony

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The new year is upon us. If your goals include being more productive and less stressed, then resolve to work *smarter*. Read on for insights that will help you jumpstart the new year. And don't expect these changes to fizzle out after January 31.

What you'll need in order to make the most of these two tips is a little bit of knowledge—about yourself.

First, are you a Separator or an Integrator?

According to management professor Ellen Ernst Kossek at Purdue University, separators prefer to maintain a strict barrier between their work and personal lives, while integrators are happy blurring the lines.

Don't be surprised if you get late-night or weekend emails from integrators, or if you overhear quite a few of their personal calls during the workday. On the other hand, separators tend to go full throttle during work hours and completely unplug the rest of the time to focus on time with family and friends.

There's no right or wrong style. Knowing your preference can make a big difference in creating a happier, more productive, sustainable work environment.

If you're an integrator:

- Would it be helpful if you had a flexible schedule or if you could work from home sometimes?
- If you sense that your after-hours communications are stressing out your coworkers who are separators, try scheduling those emails with a tool like **Boomerang** so that the emails don't actually get sent until regular office hours. Don't call or text unless it's an emergency. If you're in the C-suite or have direct reports, pay even more attention to this. Remember, you set the tone for other employees.

If you're a separator:

- Set up your automatic out-of-office email reply for normal after-hours, not just vacations. This sets the expectation about your response time. It's good to let key folks know how to reach you if it's an emergency.
- Consider carrying a separate phone—one just for work. This might make it easier for you to separate work from home.

Second, are you an Introvert or an Extrovert?

Where you fall on this spectrum is the second key to unlocking your productivity. The difference between introversion and extroversion lies with how you respond to your environment.

Too much stimulation—whether it's in the form of noise, light, movement, interruptions, or simply social interaction—will leave an introvert feeling drained. Extroverts, however, are energized by active environments. If you're not sure where you fall on this spectrum, take this **short quiz** from Susan Cain, TED Talk speaker and author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*.

According to Cain: "When you make life choices that are congruent with your temperament, you unleash vast stores of energy. Conversely, when you spend too much time battling your own nature, the opposite happens: you deplete yourself."

Imagine for a moment: What if you left work with the feeling of achievement? Well, try nurturing your nature! Expect a major payoff in the work-life harmony department.

If you're an extrovert:

- Seek out the noise, movement, and activity in your office or coworking space. Open-office floorplans and café-like workspaces are ideal for getting in your zone.
- Do you work in a loner role with mostly independent work? Look for other opportunities to stay engaged. Volunteer to spearhead office challenges, community events, or social events.

If you're an introvert:

- Recognize that you need more quiet spaces and downtime to perform at your best. Don't feel guilty about reserving time in those break-out rooms at work. If you're lucky enough to have one, shut your office door periodically throughout the day!

- Use a friendly or quirky “Please Do Not Disturb” sign. It can work wonders to avoid those interruptions without causing offense.
- Invest in an awesome pair of noise-cancelling devices or headphones. Experiment with instrumental but upbeat tunes, or simply let those headphones serve as a signal to your coworkers.
- Talk to your boss about working from home. It works best if you can have a dedicated space. Take care to design a haven for your personal productivity.

Whether you're an introvert or extrovert, separator or integrator, start the conversation to learn about your coworkers—or even your family. Knowing their styles will help you respect each other's needs and avoid misunderstandings. Regardless of your style, be your own champion. Advocate for your ideal work environment. You know who benefits? You do! Oh, and your company does, too. Sounds like a win-win, so what are you waiting for?



MEG G. ANDERSON

Founder & Editorial Consultant, Luminary Works

Since the early 2000s, Meg has been passionate about helping brands spread their mission and market their expertise through a variety of career hats, including copywriting, web design, project management, and internal communications. She founded Luminary Works in 2016 to help small, medium, and family businesses create stories worth telling and messages worth sharing. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband and their dog, Howard.



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