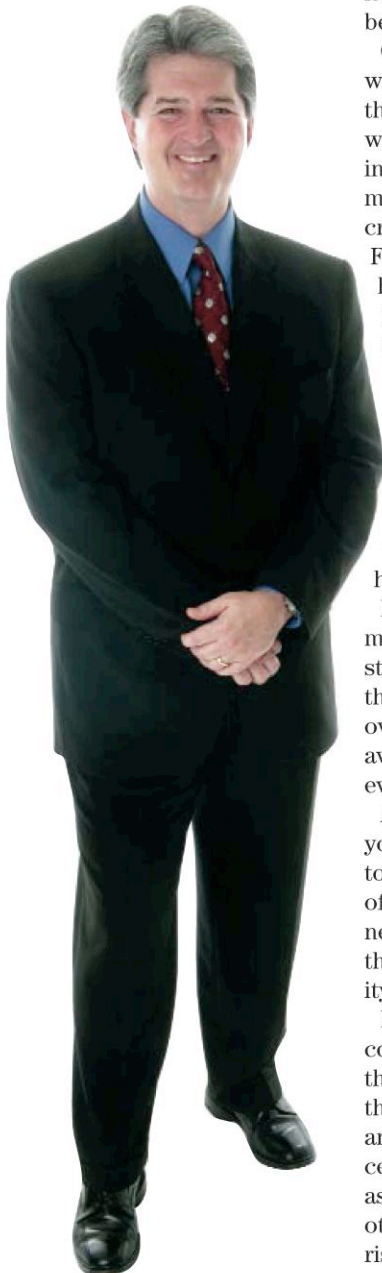


Has your job become bigger than your life?

Take a personal and professional inventory to restore your balance.



The headline in the newspaper instantly drew my attention to the article below it.

Less than 24 hours ago, a prominent local attorney had taken his life. I had known Bob casually through professional associations and a few deals between our companies. He was very competent; I remembered how detailed he was in the negotiations we had conducted.

As I read on, I learned that he had a wife and two children, now left behind in the horrific wake of his actions the day before.

Over the next few weeks, Bob's suicide was the topic of much discussion, and through friends and contacts, I learned what had happened. Bob had been working on a very large deal, one that would merge his company with a competitor, creating a dominant player in the market. For almost a year, the merger had been his sole focus, and he had worked as many as 100 hours each week, even sleeping some nights in his office.

At the final hour, the other company decided to abort the merger. No one knew that when Bob left the office that day, he would never return. Dismay, disillusioned, hopeless — all of these emotions must have overwhelmed him, and in the end, he took his own life.

Bob's story had a profound impact on me. Somehow, he had allowed the circumstances of his job to become so important that when they failed, he felt his life was over. It was a mistake I was determined to avoid, in my own life and in the lives of everyone I could influence.

Are your responsibilities overwhelming you? Everyone is being asked to do more today than they were a few years ago and often with fewer resources. While you need to stretch and grow to be successful, there is also a point where the impossibility of your workload can overwhelm you.

Instead of becoming immobilized, take control by making an inventory of everything you're working on, then take note of the deadlines, the level of effort required and the resources you will need to be successful. Use this inventory to realistically assess what you can do, then start to let others know where you need help. The risk you may feel in stating that you can't

do it all is far less than the risk you're taking both personally and professionally by trying and then failing.

Are you secretly afraid you're not qualified? Anyone with significant responsibilities has at least once had the fear that he or she isn't smart enough or talented enough to meet the demands of the role.

As soon as you have this feeling, your next fear is that someone will find out. It's a natural reaction and one that, if left to grow, will undermine your energy and your confidence. The antidote to this fear is disclosure.

When I first became a CEO, I reviewed financial reports that I didn't always understand. And although I needed to understand them, I was embarrassed to admit that I didn't for fear that I wouldn't seem qualified. As soon as I asked for help, others were happy to give it, and a fear that might have disabled me was relieved.

Is there no room in your schedule for your life? Take a look at the week ahead and pretend it's the calendar of a stranger. What can you conclude about the life it reveals?

Is there time designated for a family event such as a ballgame or a movie? Are there entries for dinner or buying a special gift for a spouse or partner? What about time for exercise, prayer or lunch with a friend? The absence of items such as these is an early warning sign of exhaustion and burnout.

Although several years have now passed, I still wonder what might have happened if Bob had asked and answered questions such as these. Unfortunately, I will never know.

But if he could speak to us now, I believe he would say something like this: "Dedicate yourself wholeheartedly to your work, but never allow your job to become bigger than your life."

I hope we're all listening.

JIM HULING is CEO of The Jim Huling Group, a strategic consulting company enabling leaders and their teams to achieve extraordinary results. Jim's leadership experience spans over three decades, including eleven years as CEO of a leading technology company named multiple times as one of the "25 Best Small Companies to Work For in America." Jim is a nationally recognized keynote speaker and is also the author of *Choose Your Life!* a powerful proven method for creating the life you want, now available on Amazon.