

MARJA WAGENAAR

the LEADER
SHIP
BOOK *for*
WOMEN

INTRODUCING
THE **50/50**
METHOD!

VANDUUREN
MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Every time I try to be a good girl and do the right thing, it somehow backfires on me. Take that one time when I had been working as a vice-president at a utilities company for just six months. I had already gotten a new business unit off the ground and was busy hiring new people. Around the same time, the company's annual figures were released, and unfortunately, they were far below expectations. An order to cut spending followed rapidly. The CEO notified each vice-president in a separate meeting that we would have to cut 15% in our departments. This obviously came at a bad time for me, right when I was in the middle of an expansion phase. But if that is the way it has to be, so be it, I thought.

I like to keep things moving. So, I set off for the finance department to discuss my proposals to cut certain items from my budget. This met with pleasant surprise on their part. But not long thereafter fellow vice-presidents started marching into my office, one after the other, shocked that I did not know that "it was never the idea to actually implement these cuts". I learned from these conversations that these types of cuts were announced regularly, but that everyone just put them on the back burner. How was I supposed to know? Apparently, all I should have done was ask my colleagues how issues like these were handled within this corporate culture. Obviously not the smartest move on my part. In the meantime, I was the only one to have lost 15% of my recently assigned budget.

I experienced a similar situation after I had just set up my own consulting firm. My second client was a major multinational in the healthcare industry. I was working directly with a member of the Executive Board. I could not have imagined a better way to start my company. After I had

researched the situation in several countries, it was time to write up my report. In this report, I indicated in a simple and straightforward way that a great deal of this company's time and money was being invested in influencing people who had lost most of their power in healthcare. I also pointed out that the company had absolutely no presence in those arenas where major decisions actually were being made. On the eve of my presentation for this client, I showed my slides to a fellow consultant who had been in the business far longer than I had. She felt my conclusions were far too extreme and thought that this might influence the desired effect in a negative way.

I modified my presentation immediately. I had put a lot of work into it and wanted it to have a serious impact. Deep down I also wanted them to continue to like me and keep on working with me, and in that case, being so upfront about everything might not be such a good idea. Or so I thought. During the dry run of the presentation with a few of the company's employees, they stared at me with glassy eyes. There was not even the slightest hint of the enthusiasm I had hoped for, even though I had bent over backwards to ensure I was presenting everything as diplomatically and pleasantly as possible. Fortunately, at that point, I decided to listen to my intuition, and radically switched gears, continuing with my initial presentation instead. This was an instant success, and even resulted in a great follow-up project. Since that time, I use "simple and straightforward" as my trademark.

Unfortunately, when it comes to our jobs, we are insecure in new situations. Believe me, everyone feels this way from time to time. I certainly do. We are inclined to fall back on old reflexes that make us feel safe. We behave like a good girl, and we put the organization's interests first. I have seen this frequently with the women who have hired me to coach them. I saw it in both younger and older women, in women just starting out in their careers as well as women who have worked at the highest corporate levels for years. Sometimes it happens occasionally, but many women continue to do this for years, and sadly, at an amazing level of consistency. They do this even though they believe that they are not getting enough recognition for all their hard work: the main reason why they feel unhappy in their jobs.

Women often seem to work a lot harder for the organization that has hired them than for themselves. They also seem to take the misconception for granted that as long as you work hard for the organization, you will automatically get ahead in your career. Working just as hard to advance your own career is not self-evident to most women. This is surprising since making your successes visible is an important requirement for being able to climb the corporate ladder. If you want to get ahead in your job, you need to have a plan how to achieve this.

The fact that the job market is changing at a very rapid pace also makes it necessary to be just as dynamic in your own efforts. Guarantees no longer exist. These days, people rarely spend their entire life working within the same organization. Changing employers every five years or even more often has become commonplace. Companies go out of business much faster than they used to, while at the same time, entirely new organizations suddenly appear, offering products and services that we have never heard of before. For example, who would have believed twenty years ago that we would now be buying a lot of our clothes online? Employment relationships are also changing. Sometimes you work as an employee on the payroll, as an independent contractor at other times, or you choose consciously to sign a temporary contract. AI (Artificial Intelligence) will take over certain tasks in the near future. If you do not grow along with the job market and adjust to the new requirements, you could end up being sidelined. In the best case, being a good girl will mean stagnation. And in the worst case, it could lead to a step or even a significant leap backwards. You are the only one who can change this!

The 50/50 method evolved from the countless conversations I had with female clients, from the differences I observed between my male and female clients in their approach to their jobs, and from my own experiences. I was looking for a simple and straightforward way to make it clear what goes wrong when women disregard themselves. And I wanted to have an easy-to-apply strategy for breaking this habit. It all started with drawing a few arrows on a flip chart. I then came up with exercises using these arrows, and my clients took it from there. The result is now an entire book about the 50/50 method. The book addresses women's

complete career cycles, from starting out in a new job to landing your dream job. The 50/50 method will help you achieving professional success.

The 50/50 method offers women an easy tool to change the negative pattern of giving the organization their best efforts while selling themselves short in the process. The 50/50 method ensures that you will work just as hard for yourself as for your organization. The result is more visibility, more success, more room for your own development and a faster advancement of your career. Thanks to the 50/50 method, you will create a clear and self-evident balance between what you accomplish for your organization and what you accomplish for your own professional growth.



THE 50/50 METHOD

Taking good care of yourself: that is what it is all about. It is up to you and no one else to create the conditions necessary for your success. The 50/50 method helps you to devote as much time and energy to your personal career goals as to the goals of the organization you work for. For that, you need to have a personal plan. This will allow you to achieve your own career goals in an easy and self-evident manner.

1.1 Stop being a good girl

The term 50/50 says it all: what you put into your work and what you take out of it has to be in balance. If you put in too much and take out too little, you will get dissatisfied with your job sooner rather than later. Of course, we all know examples of people who do nothing but take. They are only thinking about themselves and neglecting the interests of their organization and their colleagues. They often irritate us, and we certainly do not want to be like them. Well, you can relax. That is the least of our worries. We women are mainly in the opposite category. Most of us are the 'givers', some to the extreme. So aiming for a better balance is a worthy goal. The 50/50 method will help you achieve that. The 50/50 method has four stages: stagnation, balance, the short-term pitfall and creating your own personal plan. In the last stage, you have reached the situation in which being successful at your job has become a natural habit.

Stage 1: Stagnation

I regularly ask during speeches or coaching sessions what is wrong with the illustration in figure 1.1. At first glance most people do not have the faintest idea at all, as it all seems so logical.

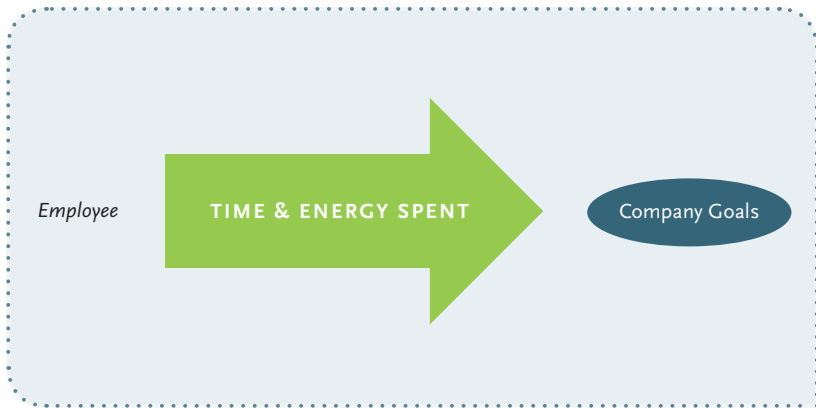


Figure 1.1 Stagnation

Yet it actually shows how this employee is doing nothing but marking time. She is devoting all her time and energy to achieving the objectives of the organization she works for. She is still trying her utmost best to be a good girl. She works incredibly hard for the company, but she does not give a moment's thought to improving her own prospects. Innocently she assumes that that will happen automatically. But quite the contrary is true. Such a wait-and-see attitude generally means that recognition, salary raises, and promotion fail to occur. As a result, her career is put on hold. When she starts feeling dissatisfied, she solves it by trying even harder and pouring even more time and energy into her work in the hope that somebody will eventually notice her efforts.

Take this example: day in, day out, Robyn works incredibly hard as a head of the complaints department of a telecom company. She makes sure every complaint is solved correctly and that complaining customers all end up being satisfied. She often has to put in quite a bit of overtime. Her boss thinks that everything is running smoothly and has no idea of what it all entails. Robyn does not tell him either, because she thinks her boss already knows. She also assumes that he knows that she would love to manage a larger department like dealing with all customer contacts, because she made everything run so smoothly in her current department.

Stage 2: Balance

Instead of adopting such a wait-and-see attitude, you could take a different approach. You could ask yourself what your organization can do for you instead of concentrating single-mindedly on all you can do for your organization. You can do that, for example, by simply raising your hand, by making yourself known and by talking to your boss about your future in your organization.

At this stage, Robyn decides to draw up a monthly report for her boss, showing the growing number of complaints that are dealt with, the percentage of customers who, thanks to her efforts, do not move over to the competition and the additional hours she is putting in. This makes her work visible. She also gets him to agree to her proposal for an additional pay rise and for the appointment of two new managers to take some of the weight off her shoulders.

If you start by raising your hand, you are taking the first step towards a healthy balance. In that stage you devote 50% of your time and energy to advancing the organization and 50% to advancing yourself. Figure 1.2 clearly shows what happens.

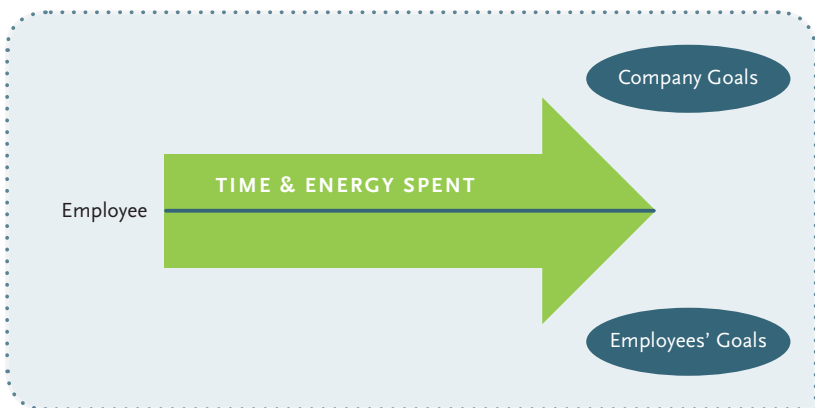


Figure 1.2 Balance

If what you put in and what you take out is in balance, you have reached the optimal situation. For yourself, because you derive greater satisfaction from your job, since you are also working on your own professional future. And for your boss, because she has a motivated employee who does her work with pleasure and tries to achieve clear objectives. Your chance of having a successful career has now grown tremendously, because you are working as much for your organization as for yourself.

Stage 3: The short-term pitfall

You might just think you have achieved a proper balance. But here is the spoiler: a pitfall that appears quite often. Be aware of the short-term pitfall:

- *Fun and great colleagues.* Having great colleagues and enjoying your work can result in a phantom balance. Of course it is nice to have great colleagues, which makes it enjoyable to be at work. But enjoying *being* at work is not the same as enjoying *doing* your work. Certainly not when, someday, your colleagues move ahead, while you stay behind.
- *Attractive benefits.* Another short-term pitfall are attractive benefits: a good income, an easily attainable bonus, the possibility of taking business trips in great comfort or the situation in which you can largely decide when to work remotely.
- *Recognition.* Recognition is another one. Your boss who involves you in a great number of things, who attaches importance to your input and sometimes even allows you to do some of his own work. But most of this goes unnoticed by others in your organization, and it leaves you without any confirmation how this will prove positive for you in the long run.
- *Needed or indispensable.* The feeling of being needed or even indispensable falls within the same category. Certainly if people regularly tell you how indispensable you are. Of course, it is flattering for your self-esteem to know that your input is important if not crucial for the progress of your organization. But often this feeling is all you get, while day after day you keep giving the organization your full 100%.

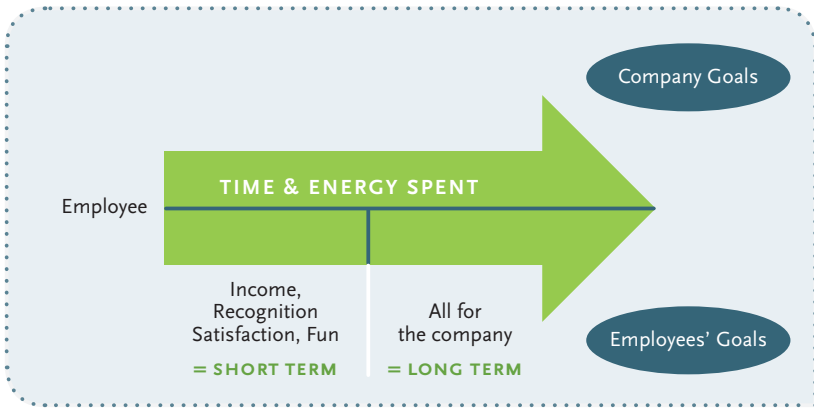


Figure 1.3 The short-term pitfall

Figure 1.3 shows that choosing short-term satisfaction is an easy way out. After all, you are still, in the long term, focusing on the organization and not on your personal goals. Choosing this way out can arise from fear and uncertainty about your own long-term possibilities, or even from laziness. Honestly: those are all limitations you impose on yourself. And these eventually take you down a dead end. With only yourself to blame.

Stage 4: Drawing up your personal plan

You are the one who can avoid those short-term pitfalls. That is why you need a good plan for your own future in which your professional growth takes center stage. Issues such as preparing for your next step should be addressed in such a plan. When you take on a new role, you make, as a rule, a work plan for moving forward that part of the organization which you are now responsible for. This includes, if you do it properly, both short-term and long-term goals. If you want to help yourself getting ahead, you must make exactly the same sort of plan with your personal goals and the way in which you want to achieve them. This helps you to secure your own professional success. Both short-term and long-term. Figure 1.4 shows the advantages.

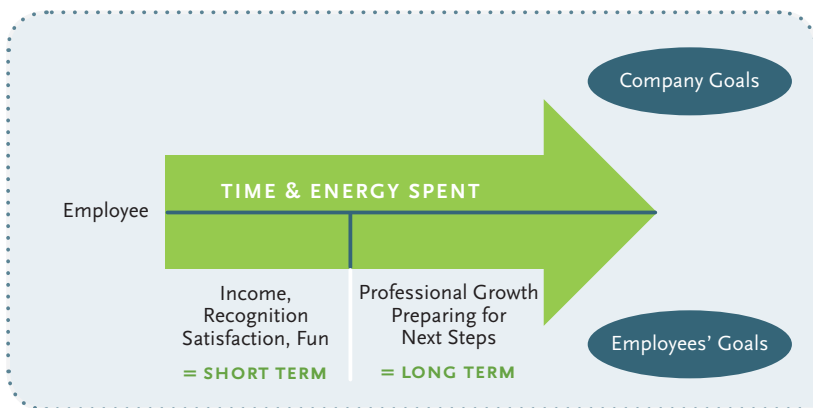


Figure 1.4 Create your personal plan

1.2 Creating your personal plan

It is smart to you draw up your personal plan and your plan for the organization – call it your work plan – at the same time. They can both influence each other in a positive way. You can make use of your business goals for your personal development and vice versa. If, for example, you want to learn how to manage external stakeholders, because you sometimes dream about a future in public relations, you could organize a visit by the mayor or some city council members to your company. In this way, you are working on achieving a personal goal while at the same time throwing a positive light on your organization.

You should also actively look for courses, business schools and other possibilities to advance your personal goals. Most organizations have a budget for the personal development of their employees. It is there to be used. Let that budget serve the goals in your personal plan. Keep in mind that this approach creates a win-win situation: for yourself *and* for your organization. Let me stress it again: in this situation, your organization has an extraordinarily motivated person on board. Believe me, that will pay off.

EXERCISE

Make a Personal Plan

For your Personal Plan formulate 5 short-term goals (1 year) and 5 long-term goals (5 years) for your own professional growth. Next to each goal, write down *how* you want to achieve it (the approach), when it should be achieved (date!) and attach a *detailed planning* to it.

	Goal	Approach	Finished (date)	Planning
Short term: 1 year	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•
Long term: 5 years	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•
	•	•	•	•

Goals are there to be achieved. So, in doing this exercise, it is important to be as precise and specific as possible. Otherwise, your goals will remain wishes, and nothing else. Make a commitment to yourself about accomplishing your personal goals in the same way you make a commitment within your organization about your business goals. Continue to attach equal importance to both of them, even during very busy times. While achieving your work goals, you are fortunate enough to have people looking over your shoulder. With your personal goals, on the other hand, the challenge is entirely up to you to ensure that you free up enough time and energy to achieve them.

Let's get back to Robyn. She has now made a personal plan and focuses on it. With her previous actions – making her boss more aware of her work, a rise in salary and two additional managers – she remained trapped in the short-term pitfall. She tried to make her current position more pleasant.

So let us look at two examples from her personal plan: one of her long-term goals is to head up a large department handling all customer contacts. She is going to follow a marketing course – something she has wanted to do for quite some time – to help her achieve this. One of her other goals is to send a quarterly report to the whole board (and not only her own boss), so that her work and her results become visible in a wider circle. This could help her getting the promotion she wants.

Implementing your personal plan is an adequate way of applying the 50/50 method in your work. All the following chapters in this book will help you to accomplish your own healthy balance. This is done by dealing with a whole range of subjects and situations that you could encounter in your career. They vary from the first 100 days in a new job, dealing with the unwritten rules in your organization, the skills you need for a leadership role to building a vertical network to land your dream job.

1.3 How 50/50 are you?

But before you start, take an honest look at yourself. How 50/50 are you the moment?

EXERCISE

How 50/50 are you?

Fill in where you would position yourself right now.

The 50/50-scale

Your organization

Yourself

0/100	10/90	20/80	30/70	40/60	50/50	60/40	70/30	80/20	90/10	100/0
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Repeat this exercise every 3 months to measure your progress. Celebrate every step forward. You can also do this exercise with your network, with friends and with your colleagues. It might even be useful – and fun! – to rate each other.

TIPS

- Never, ever try to be a good girl again. It will not help you in getting ahead.
- Use the 50/50 method if you want to be successful in your work.
- Avoid the situation in which you are only working for your organization and not for yourself. That leads to stagnation at best.
- Make sure you devote 50% of your time and energy to helping your organization move forward and 50% to helping yourself move forward. That is a healthy balance.
- Beware of short-term pitfalls. These lead to a phantom balance.
- Make a personal plan with your own goals for your professional growth. This will enable you to apply the 50/50 method in your work.
- Rate yourself on the 50/50-scale every 3 months. Measuring your progress is a great motivator.

PART I

A GOOD START

A good start begins long before your first day in a new job. Choosing the right job and the right organization are crucial. The same applies to the right work culture. All must be a perfect match. Use your first hundred days to create the foundation for your future success. Carefully scrutinizing your new organization will get you there.