

MICHAEL HYATT &  
MEGAN HYATT MILLER



WIN  
AT WORK  
SUCCEEDED  
AT LIFE

5 PRINCIPLES *to* FREE YOURSELF  
FROM *the* CULT *of* OVERWORK

“The rare book that is both inspiring and immediately practical. The wisdom that Michael and Megan share is the by-product of years of work as two of the most trusted professional coaches in America. I highly recommend *Win at Work and Succeed at Life!*”

—CHRIS McCHESNEY, bestselling author, leader of execution at FranklinCovey

“Success doesn’t mean sacrificing a full life, and a full life doesn’t require sacrificing success. In this poignant book, Michael and Megan share strategies for the magic that happens when high achievers become fully present for their families and communities too. Highly recommended for anyone looking to win in all spheres of life.”

—LAURA VANDERKAM, author of *Off the Clock* and *Juliet’s School of Possibilities*

“Filled with practical and thought-provoking ideas and tools, this book will help even the busiest professional transform the tension between work and life into a true Double Win.”

—JOHN C. MAXWELL, founder of The Maxwell Leadership Enterprise

“We all struggle with the time and energy demands of juggling our personal and professional lives. Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller prove that this is not a zero-sum game. You can actually have both if you follow their clear and practical guidelines.

—JOHN TOWNSEND, PhD, *New York Times* bestselling coauthor of *Boundaries*

“A riveting and insightful how-to guide for transforming you from overwhelmed to in control. Your team will thank you—and so will your family.”

—EMILY BALCETIS, author of *Clearer, Closer, Better*; associate professor of psychology at NYU

“Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller have cracked the code to transform your productivity and your relationships. If you’re looking for that ‘missing piece’ to get your life and time back, run—don’t walk—to this book!”

—JULIE SOLOMON, host of *The Influencer Podcast*

“Practical, candid, and packed with hard-earned wisdom, *Win at Work and Succeed at Life* might just be the most comprehensive guide to a thriving life I’ve encountered.”

—TODD HENRY, author of *The Motivation Code*

“A brilliant and timely book that finally answers the noise of #Hustle culture with insight and evidence. A clear reminder that there really is another (better) way.”

—BRUCE DAISLEY, author of *Eat Sleep Work Repeat*; former Twitter vice president for Europe, Middle East, and Africa

“This book has the power to change the way you think and work in a profound way. Using the principles and practices that Michael and Megan have developed, you will not only win, you will find the peace of mind and satisfaction we all strive to achieve in life.”

—CRAIG GROESCHEL, pastor of Life.Church; *New York Times* bestselling author

“We love to work. Nothing wrong with that. But what happens when work dominates our lives? Michael and Megan expose what overwork is doing to us. (Hint: It’s bad.) But they don’t stop there! They share five simple practices to help busy, overwhelmed professionals like you and me experience success at the office—and in the rest of our lives as well.”

—IAN MORGAN CRON, bestselling coauthor of *The Road Back to You*

“Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller have helped thousands of people tear down the barriers that keep them from finding work-life balance. Now they’ve distilled their experience into an accessible, thoughtful, and deeply useful book.”

—ALEX SOOJUNG-KIM PANG, founder of the Restful Company; author of *Rest and Shorter*

“My first role in Michael’s life was as his executive coach a few decades ago. And from this starting point, he and I have become close friends as he has evolved from his role as a corporate leader to a leadership-and-life thought leader. I share this because I have watched him firsthand live out the principles he and his incredibly gifted partner and daughter, Megan, outline in the pages of this fantastic book. Winning at work and succeeding at life is possible. I encourage you to grab your pen and dive into the pages that follow so you can do both.”

—DANIEL HARKAVY, founder of Building Champions

“I’ve known Michael for decades, and every time he has something to say, I know it’s going to be really helpful. This book is more proof of that—practical as always, but deep, too!”

—JOHN ELDREDGE, president of Wild at Heart; bestselling author

“We should be deeply suspicious of any approach that requires a sacrifice of family life in order to succeed at work—or vice versa. No one truly wins the game unless they win both, and this elegant book spells out how you can achieve the ‘Double Win’ and enjoy the process.”

—RAY EDWARDS, communication strategist; author of *How to Write Copy That Sells*

“Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller take aim at the false notion that success at work is only attained by failing at home. They point to a better way of living and working, one where winning in one area fuels the other.”

—SKIP PRICHARD, president and CEO, OCLC, Inc.; *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *The Book of Mistakes: 9 Secrets to Creating a Successful Future*

“Not only will this book be extremely helpful to you as you seek to navigate your own Double Win, but you can be sure that, written by a dad and daughter, it has the ring of authenticity. And truth. I had the joy of watching so much of what Michael and Megan write about unfold firsthand. You’re going to love this book.”

—ROBERT WOLGEMUTH, bestselling author

“Here’s good news: you don’t have to sacrifice personal happiness for career success. If you doubt that, read Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller’s latest. This is more than a business book. It’s an inspiring personal story of work-life transformation.”

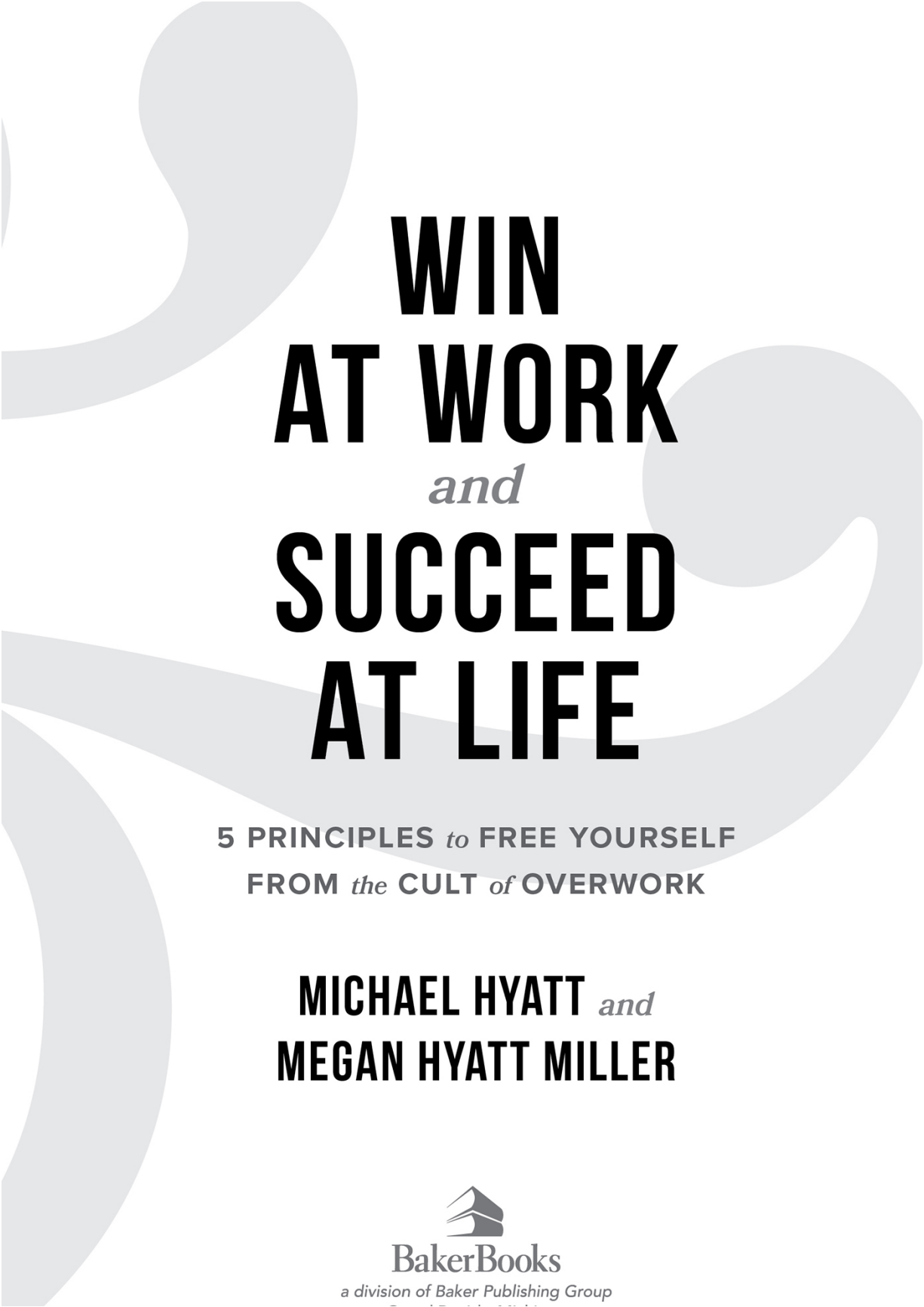
—BOB GOFF, bestselling author of *Love Does*

“*Win at Work and Succeed at Life* is a life-transforming read.”

—PATRICK LENCIONI, CEO and founder of The Table Group; bestselling author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and *The Advantage*

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# 1

## THE DOUBLE WIN

The really tough choices . . . are genuine dilemmas because each side is firmly rooted in one of our basic, core values.

RUSHWORTH KIDDER<sup>1</sup>

Her tears were born out of years of silent suffering. Each drop carried a memory fed from a deep well of hurt. Sitting next to my wife, Gail, in our family den, I (Michael) was caught totally off guard. I felt as though there weren't enough tissues in the world to wipe away the pain.

Gail and I have been married for more than forty years. She's always been my biggest supporter and cheerleader. But that afternoon silent resentment and regret finally bubbled over. I wanted to defend myself. Thankfully, I somehow had the presence of mind to keep my mouth shut long enough to listen.

Several hours earlier, I'd been sitting with my boss in his spacious C-suite office at Thomas Nelson Publishers. The walls were lined with books our company had published. I felt proud scanning the upright spines. After all, my team and I had produced a bunch—including several bestsellers—all while transforming the company's worst-performing division into its top profit generator.

But the CEO had called me in for more than an attaboy. He reached across the desk and handed me the biggest bonus check I'd ever seen. I had to read the number twice. It was larger than my annual salary! I somehow resisted the overpowering urge to call Gail with the news. I wanted to tell her in person. I knew she'd be elated.

The two of us had an unspoken, unarticulated pact, going back to our earliest years together. Here's how it went, more or less: We've got a big family, five kids with lots of expenses. I will go work and do whatever's needed to provide for us. Meanwhile, Gail will manage the home front. We'll check in occasionally, but we'll stay in our lanes.

Off we went in separate directions, me to work, Gail to running the home. My career was pretty much everything for me then, and Gail frequently found herself covering for me with the kids while I worked nights and weekends. She never complained behind my back about my absence. Quite the opposite. "I know Dad wishes he could be here," she'd tell the kids, "but what he's doing is important. I'm so proud of him for how hard he works for us."

Neglect in one area often signals neglect in others. Not only was I underserving my family, I was underserving my health in those days too. I thought I could get along just fine eating junk and indefinitely postponing exercise.

But now, after working seventy to eighty hours a week, traveling countless hours through soulless airports, and missing far too many family events, the payoff was in hand. The massive bonus check in my pocket was proof it was all worthwhile. As I double-checked the number, all the zeroes before the period felt like validation.

When I finally arrived home, I was grinning from ear to ear. I had bagged the big one. Against all my expectations, however, Gail was . . . subdued.

"Babe," she finally said, "I really want to be excited for you, but we need to talk." Uh-oh. No high fives? No "Let's pop the champagne"? She led me into the den. As we sat down, I noticed her lip was quivering. She composed herself.

"You know, Michael, I love you," she said. "I'm so proud of you. I appreciate all that you're doing to support this family. But I gotta be honest. . . . You are never home. Your five daughters need you. Even when you are home, you're not really here. You're somewhere else." She paused, tearing up as she weighed her words. "Honestly, I feel like a single mom."

## **The Hustle Fallacy and the Ambition Brake**

We all begin our professional lives, switch jobs, and take promotions with good intentions. No one starts by thinking, "The choices I make today will

alienate my spouse and cause my children to hate me,” or “The patterns I set now will lead to exhaustion and burnout,” or “It’s time to start trading my health for wealth.”

Instead, we picture the financial, emotional, and social benefits that come from meaningful work. Our options are open, our future bright.



## **THE HUSTLE FALLACY**

## **THE AMBITION BRAKE**



But as stress and strains intensify at work, as they invariably do, many of us fall for the Hustle Fallacy. We think if we just crank a little harder, we can push past all the pressure. The demands keep mounting, and we try running faster still. We hope to catch up—maybe even get ahead—if we just work smarter and master personal productivity. But no matter what we do, the obligations outpace our hustle.

We work longer and sleep shorter; fix problems at the office while creating new ones at home; attend more meetings and skip more meals, games, and nights with friends; plan bigger projects and lead smaller lives. We assume we'll eventually be free to pause, relax, and give attention to our health and relationships. But before long, *eventually* becomes another way of saying *never*. Our life becomes what researcher Ann Burnett calls an "everydayathon."<sup>2</sup>

Presented this unattractive picture, some people opt for a completely different reality. They refuse to shortchange health or relationships and intentionally throttle back their career. Instead of hustling harder, they pump the Ambition Brake.

But this choice has trade-offs of its own. Applying the Ambition Brake might secure our health and family, but we end up with unused potential, reduced income, and other losses. Stress and crazy hours no longer crush our health or personal life, but unfulfilled professional dreams and ambitions could just as well crush our souls. And that's where my (Megan's) story comes in.

## **The Impossible Choice**

As you might guess from my name, I'm Michael's daughter. I'm also the chief executive officer at Michael Hyatt & Co. Before taking that role, I served as chief operating officer for several years. But filling those roles almost didn't happen.

When my husband, Joel, and I got married, I was running communications at New Hope Academy, a nonprofit private school with a mission of racial reconciliation in Franklin, Tennessee. He was a vice president at Thomas Nelson.

After a couple years together, we decided to adopt two young boys from Uganda. They were only toddlers, but both had already experienced a lot of

trauma. Still, we figured we were up to the challenge. We had Jesus, Target, and Whole Foods. That and a little love can solve anything, right?

We were in over our heads from the start. Shortly after we got home, I quit my job to care for our boys full-time. But therapies and specialists don't come cheap. We couldn't afford the help we needed on Joel's salary alone. I had to find a part-time position somewhere.

Around that time, my dad launched Michael Hyatt & Co. Pretty soon he needed a part-time manager, and we figured I could do the job in about ten hours a week. Given our situation, that seemed like the perfect fit; so, I took the role.

We were off like a rocket. As the business raced ahead, my ten hours became twenty, and then thirty, and then forty. The scope of my role and size of my salary grew along with the hours. In fact, two years in, my earning potential exceeded Joel's. He quit Nelson and began freelancing, holding things together at home, while I pursued this rapidly scaling opportunity. That's when I faced an impossible choice.

Eventually, my dad and I realized we needed more than a manager. We needed a chief operating officer. We both knew I'd be great for the role. But I also realized it would be more demanding than anything I'd done before, and that presented a dilemma.

I could become the COO or successfully raise my kids. That's how it felt—an *or*, not an *and*. I could achieve my potential as an executive, but my children would suffer. Alternatively, I could turn my attentions home, but I'd have to take a back seat in the company I helped build. I could win at work, or I could succeed at life, but it seemed as though I couldn't do both.

## **A Better Solution**

That's exactly how it felt to me (Michael) as I sat with Gail in the den all those years ago. I was winning at work. I was meeting and beating my numbers. I was leading my team. I couldn't let them down. They expected and deserved to go on to better, higher accomplishments. My boss did too. He was literally banking on it.

Of course, Gail and the girls also needed me. And I knew winning at life included additional areas worth my attention: health, friendships, hobbies, and all the pursuits and pastimes that make a well-rounded person. The



choice couldn't be so binary as hustling or braking. There had to be a better solution.

When facing such an impossible choice, it's wise to look for a third option. The confrontation in the den wasn't the first time workaholism had caused problems in my marriage; I'll share another in the next chapter. But Gail's tearful protest was the most sobering to date. I had to find an answer.

I started to ask myself: Was there another way? One that wouldn't cost me my career or my family? One that didn't leave me with a lifetime of burnt bridges, failed health, financial disaster, and family regrets? What if I could win at work *and* succeed at life? It took several years of research, experimentation, and self-discovery, but I'm happy to report I found that elusive third option. We call it the Double Win. It's what my company is all about today. It's what this book is about now.

We don't alter our trajectory by running faster or slower. As Andy Stanley says, "Direction, not intention, leads to destination."<sup>3</sup> We must imagine a different destination and then change our course to get there.

Thankfully, around the same time I (Megan) contemplated the COO offer, I attended a conference where one of the speakers, a CEO of a very successful business and mother of several children, helped paint a different picture for me. She said, "There is nothing in my business so important that can't be handled between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., so that I can be home with my kids without compromising my business results."

That was the first time I'd heard that perspective from a female executive. Her observation opened up a new sense of possibility. I didn't have to work fifty-plus hours a week and ignore my kids. Here was my third way.

I told my dad that I could take the job on one condition: I had to unplug from work and leave every day at 3:00 p.m. to pick up our kids from school. I wanted to be the one greeting them, fully focused on their day without the distractions of email, texting about business, or getting tied up on the phone. He agreed, I took the job, and I've been working some version of that schedule ever since.

My story is an example of the Double Win, which sees work and life in partnership, not opposition. They complement and fuel each other. Winning at work gives us the confidence, joy, and financial support necessary to support our personal priorities. Succeeding at life fosters a clear mind, creativity, and a rested body so we can focus on the work that matters most.

This is not an abstract hope. It's a concrete, daily reality. We live it. Our employees live it. Our coaching clients live it. And it's a real possibility for you as well. But there's an obstacle.

## **The Cult of Overwork**

For most of us, our sense of what's possible is shaped by the cult of overwork. It's a widespread belief, one endemic to major corporations and small businesses alike. And it holds vast numbers of workers in its sway. Knowingly or not, to one degree or another, millions of us have accepted the idea that

- ▶ work provides the primary orientation for life;
- ▶ constraints stifle productivity;
- ▶ work-life balance is a myth;
- ▶ a person should always be busy; and
- ▶ rest wastes time that could otherwise go to work.

We may never consciously verbalize these ideas, and many of us would deny them when they're stated so clearly. But they hover in the background, nonetheless, quietly informing our thoughts and actions.

The impact of this belief system on our lives is staggering. Consider health. Eight in ten workers in the US suffer from on-the-job stress.<sup>4</sup> When we're under pressure, we tend to abandon healthy self-care habits, which amplifies the problem.<sup>5</sup> People who clock in excess of 55 hours each week raise their chance of heart attack by 13 percent and stroke by 33 percent, compared to those who work only 35 to 40 hours.<sup>6</sup> That's to say nothing of tension headaches, digestive troubles, higher blood pressure and cholesterol, decreased libido, and elevated levels of epinephrine and cortisol—all of which overworking contributes to.

What about relationships? Three-quarters of US professionals say stress undermines their personal connections.<sup>7</sup> Entrepreneurs seem to suffer considerably higher divorce rates than others.<sup>8</sup> Same with CEOs.

These high-pressure jobs would be enough to strain any relationship, but long hours and singular attention to work drive marital breakdown. "The No. 1 reason why CEO marriages fail is lack of time for family," according

to a story by CNN. “CEOs are almost always at work and when they’re not, they’re thinking about work.” Said an attorney quoted in the story, “You end up with these fractured relationships where the husband and wife are almost living two separate lives.”<sup>9</sup>

Overwork also damages job satisfaction, productivity, and more. A recent study by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence examined engagement and burnout in over a thousand US employees. Twenty percent of employees reported both high engagement *and* high burnout. They were passionate about their work, but they were suffering from it too.<sup>10</sup>

Constant stress and anxiety compromise our ability to think clearly and make good decisions. Our judgment goes out the window, and we make more mistakes than usual.<sup>11</sup> Not only does this produce diminished performance, but it works like a negative feedback loop. The cult of overwork is a self-reinforcing belief system. When overworked, we tend to think the answer is more work! It’s a classic example of what economist Bryan Caplan calls an “idea trap.”<sup>12</sup>

Good ideas tend to produce good outcomes, and good outcomes reinforce good ideas. But the reverse, as Caplan explains, is also true. Bad ideas tend to produce bad outcomes and reinforce bad ideas. “Once you fall into this trap,” he says, “all it often takes is common sense to get out. But when people are desperate, common sense gets even less common than usual.”<sup>13</sup>

Breaking free from the cult of overwork requires interrupting the negative feedback loop with new and better ideas. That’s why we wrote *Win at Work and Succeed at Life*. We want to offer our fellow high achievers some of that hard-to-come-by common sense. In the pages ahead, we present not only a rejection of the cult of overwork but also a proven pathway you can follow to experience the Double Win for yourself. Let’s talk about how.

## **Five Principles of the Double Win**

High achievers feel compelled to overwork for a variety of reasons—some good, some bad, some inherent to the very nature of work itself. We’ll spend time looking at those in the next chapter.

Then we will offer our counterproposal to the cult of overwork: the five principles of the Double Win. Here’s an overview of each.

**1. Work is only one of many ways to orient your life.** There are several domains beside work. But family, friends, community, physical and emotional health, and all the rest are easily marginalized while pursuing career ambitions. The cult of overwork obscures the fact that success is only sustainable when most of these domains thrive together—which is a challenge.

Technology encourages work to backflow into our nights and weekends. And that eclipses other life-enhancing pursuits, which undercuts both our personal and professional lives. A culture that encourages employees to work all hours will damage the support structures that make those employees good at their jobs in the first place.

Life is multidimensional, and success is too. We bet you came to this book because you believe that to be true but haven't had the right tools to protect these other domains. We'll talk about how to do that as we go.

## **2. Constraints foster productivity, creativity, and freedom.**

Early in our careers, neither of us were taught to appreciate the power of constraints. But we all have a finite amount of time, money, energy, mental bandwidth, and creative capacity. Since we can't do everything, constraints force us to make choices. We have to decide where and how to best spend our time, money, and so on.

When working within the constraint, we experience tremendous gains. Not only does our productivity improve, but so does our capacity for fresh thinking. We're also free to engage our whole life, not merely the parts tied to our laptop or smartphone. Ironically, it's when we refuse to acknowledge life's natural constraints that they get the better of us. If, on the other hand, we embrace constraints, we can turn them into aids to achievement.

**3. Work-life balance is truly possible.** Many think achieving work-life balance is a myth because they assume balance is an attempt at some sort of Zen-like state of equilibrium when everything is in perfect proportion, perfect alignment. Once achieved, you're set for all time. Since that's impossible, they believe balance is likewise impossible. But that's not reality—nor is that what we're advocating.

Work-life balance is dynamic, not static. Consider the gymnast walking across a balance beam, or an acrobat walking the tightrope, constantly adjusting. Balance requires us to anticipate and deal with variables. It also

requires us to weigh the different domains of life intentionally and with a view toward seeing they all get the attention they require. It's not about the perfect distribution of our efforts and interests, time and talents, or anything so precise. It's about not dropping the ball because we took our eye off it and forgot to check back.

Given cultural and workplace pressures, this is especially burdensome on professional women. We'll explore why and what can be done about that as well.

**4. *There's incredible power in nonachievement.*** High achievers struggle to hear this, but many of the most enriching, restorative activities in our lives are ends in themselves: hobbies, art, child-rearing, friendships, music, wine, crafts, games, and more.

This is difficult to embrace because high achievers want to measure everything. It's got to count or it doesn't matter. We're hardwired to pursue the all-important return on investment. But not everything is a goal. Not everything has an ROI outcome to measure—at least not in the short term.

Even more problematic is wrongly believing that achievement is always good, and nonachievement is pointless. As we'll see, it pays major dividends.

**5. *Rest is the foundation of meaningful, productive work.*** The cult of overwork devalues rest. Sleep is of no commercial value, right? In fact, some regard it as the enemy. If we're not careful, we can view rest as a necessary evil, a biological need we begrudgingly endure to keep working and consuming.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE CULT OF OVERWORK</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOUBLE WIN PRINCIPLES</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work is the primary orientation for life</li> <li>● Constraints stifle productivity</li> <li>● Work-life balance is a myth</li> <li>● A person should always be busy</li> <li>● Rest diverts time away from more work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work is one of many ways to orient your life</li> <li>● Constraints foster productivity, creativity, and freedom</li> <li>● Work-life balance is truly possible</li> <li>● There's incredible power in nonachievement</li> <li>● Rest is the foundation for meaningful, productive work</li> </ul>

Never mind the overwhelming body of evidence showing that sleep rejuvenates our mind and body, keeps us sharp, and powers performance. Sleep is not only the secret weapon of enhanced productivity, it's also the foundation for it.

When we undervalue sleep, we also fail to understand the negative consequences when we and our team are sleep deprived. We'll discover that rest is an active skill, and we'll gain a fresh appreciation for deliberate rest as a tool to stimulate and sustain creativity in work and life.

## The Double Win Decision

We've both made a lot of sacrifices for our careers over the years. We're convinced the trade-off wasn't worth it—not only in terms of what it cost our personal lives but also what it cost our professional performance. What we missed for years, and what you might be missing right now, is that these aims can be achieved only in tandem. If we try advancing one at the expense of the other, we eventually fail at both.

That's why we've paired each of these principles with a practice to help you implement the principle and escape the cult of overwork. As you begin practicing these principles, we're confident you'll see your relationships, health, and well-being improve, along with your job satisfaction and performance. In fact, you'll be more productive, creative, and resourceful than ever.

During the last eight years, our team at Michael Hyatt & Co. has coached thousands of business owners, executives, and nonprofit leaders like you who find themselves facing the impossible choice. And, like us, they don't want to choose winning at work over being successful in life, or vice versa. Instead, they've committed to the Double Win and reaped the benefits.

Time and again we've seen leaders multiply their revenue *and* slash their hours. We've seen them achieve unprecedented success in their career *and* in their personal life. We've watched our coaching clients become more productive while at work *and* fully present when at home. They just needed a new approach. Maybe you're in the same boat.

We're grateful that a number of our clients have given us permission to share their stories with you in this book. As you'll see from their accounts, the Double Win yields amazing returns.

It's never too late to steer the ship another direction. Imagine what could happen if you or your company were operating at full capacity instead of the mirage of it? An over-busy life is not an economic necessity; it's a failure of imagination.

If you're all in on the Hustle Fallacy, or assume the only alternative is to pump the Ambition Brake, we want you to imagine something different: Picture what your life would be like if you really had time for your career and your relationships and the time to take care of yourself. Does that sound appealing, like something you'd like to experience for yourself? If so, let's get started.