

## **A Career That Soars Without Sacrifices Life Harmony: A New Paradigm Through Gps (Goal, Path, Self) and Energy Management**

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### **Abstract**

The old paradigm that career success requires significant sacrifices to one's personal life has long dominated professional culture. However, recent empirical research suggests that this perspective is not only flawed but also counterproductive. This article explores how professionals can achieve career success while maintaining life balance through an innovative approach called self-operating system enhancement, which incorporates a GPS (Goal, Path, Self) framework and an emphasis on energy management. By synthesizing cutting-edge research literature from across disciplines, we identify that work–life balance is not merely an important moderating variable but rather an accelerator of long-term career success. Research shows that effective energy management is more significant than traditional time management in creating sustained productivity. By integrating three key pillars—meaningful goal setting, measurable strategy selection, and self-awareness development—professionals can navigate their careers and personal lives simultaneously and harmoniously. This framework is supported by findings from a systematic literature review of more than 100 peer-reviewed articles. Research shows that consistent boundary-setting, structured wellness routines, and mature self-awareness are key to achieving sustained success without sacrificing mental and physical well-being.

**Keywords:** Work-Life Balance; Energy Management; Sustainable Career Development; GPS Framework; Emotional Intelligence.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary professional landscape, the dominant narrative has long been one of heroic struggle and extreme sacrifice (Bray, 2019; Igou, 2024). Professionals perceived as successful are often associated with images of overwork—those who sacrifice precious time with family, neglect their physical and mental health, and live lives filled with stress and imbalance (Akanji et al., 2020; Jordan Nelson & Robison, 2025). This paradigm has become so ingrained in organizational culture and professional values that many talented individuals feel trapped in a false dilemma: choosing between achieving career success and maintaining personal happiness (Canales et al., 2025; Cooper, 2024; Lamar, 2023; Mukaila-Lawal, 2026; Tokumitsu, 2015).

Popular narratives of success in the media, business literature, and organizational discourse continue to reinforce this image through inspirational stories of visionary entrepreneurs and charismatic leaders who work day and night to achieve their dreams while sacrificing personal relationships, health, and work–life balance. These stories create an implicit expectation in the workplace: if you want to be an effective leader and dedicated professional, you must be willing to sacrifice your personal life. True commitment to work is measured not by results achieved, but by hours spent in the office or working outside of regular business hours (Abdulaziz et al., 2022; Simon et al., 2023).

However, organizational and positive psychology research over the past decade has systematically challenged this fundamental assumption (Colla et al., 2022; D. Alexander et al., 2024; Galanakis & Tsitouri, 2022; Shrestha, 2024; Van Zyl et al., 2024; Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022; Wissing, 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that this assumption is not only conceptually flawed but also counterproductive to creating sustained professional success. Even more surprisingly, research points in the opposite direction: professionals who actively maintain their work–life balance actually demonstrate better performance, higher retention rates within their organizations, and deeper life satisfaction than their peers who live in a state of perpetual burnout.

This momentum drives the urgent need to fundamentally reconstruct the paradigm of career success. It is no longer about how many personal sacrifices can be made for professional success, but rather about how to optimize the strategic synergy between professional ambition and personal happiness. In this context, this article proposes a new, comprehensive, and empirically validated perspective: through a self-operating system enhancement approach with a GPS (Goal, Path, Self) framework and a significant emphasis on energy management, career advancement and a harmonious life are not two opposing goals, but two forces that can mutually reinforce and accelerate each other.

The urgency of this research is even greater in the post-pandemic era, where the boundaries between work and personal space are increasingly blurred, and burnout rates are reported to be rising across various sectors. Professionals and organizations alike need practical, evidence-based guidance to create success that is not only outstanding but also sustainable and non-destructive. Therefore, this study aims to: 1) critique the old paradigm of sacrifice in achieving career success; 2) integrate the concept of energy management and the GPS framework as a new approach; and 3) formulate the practical implications of this integration for individuals and organizations. The theoretical benefit of this research is to enrich the repertoire of Human Resource Management and industrial psychology, especially in sustainable career development. In practical terms, this study is expected to serve as a roadmap for individuals in designing a self-operating system and for organizations in creating a culture that supports holistic success.

## **METHOD**

### **Paradigm of Change: From Barrier to Accelerator**

A significant paradigm shift has occurred in academia and organizational research over the past two decades. Rather than viewing work-life balance as compromising productivity or professional commitment, recent empirical research demonstrates a complex but consistently positive relationship between work-life balance, sustained career development, and subjective professional success.

David et al.'s (2025) longitudinal study conducted in 24 different organizations across the manufacturing, service, and technology sectors involving 1,847 employees and followed for 18 months found that employees with a healthy work-life balance reported statistically significantly higher levels of job satisfaction ( $\Delta\mu = 1.23$  on a 5-point scale,  $p < 0.001$ ), greater productivity (measured through performance appraisals,  $\Delta\mu = 0.84$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and deeper engagement in their professional roles. More interestingly, the longitudinal study showed that employees with high work-life balance demonstrated faster career advancement

(average promotion within 24 months: 34% versus 18% for the group with low work-life balance), suggesting that balance is actually correlated with, rather than detrimental to, career advancement.

Most significantly, Khoeriyah's (2024) study used structural equation modeling to analyze the relationship between organizational commitment, work-life balance, and subjective career success in a sample of 287 mid-level employees. The study found that work-life balance had a highly significant moderating effect on the relationship between career commitment and subjective career success. In other words, the effect size of career commitment on career success was 0.62 for employees with high work-life balance, but only 0.38 for employees with low work-life balance. This means that employees with high work-life balance experienced a greater increase in subjective career success from their career commitment than those with low work-life balance. This finding clearly indicates that balance is not just a "nice extra"—it is a significant multiplier of the effectiveness of career commitment itself.

### **Sustainable Career, Well-Being, and Long-Term Success**

Research on sustainable career development has identified three key indicators of long-term, sustained career success: (1) personal well-being and physical-mental health, (2) satisfaction and a sense of success in one's career development, and (3) sustained increases in productivity and organizational contribution. It's important to note that these three pillars cannot be achieved in a state of chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, or physical exhaustion. They require a solid, sustainable foundation of well-being.

Research by Herminingsih, Suprpto, and Ahmad (2025), which investigated the effects of job insecurity and organizational injustice on sustained employee performance, found that employee well-being (which encompasses psychological well-being, physical health, and emotional balance) operates as a strong mediating variable. Specifically, well-being mediated 73% of the negative effect between job insecurity and sustained performance, and 68% of the relationship between organizational injustice and performance. The implications of these findings are clear: organizations cannot expect employees to maintain high performance over the long term if their well-being is consistently eroded by demanding work conditions without meaningful breaks.

### **Wrong Fundamental Assumptions in Conventional Time Management**

The traditional time management paradigm, despite having dominated productivity literature for decades, operates with a set of fundamental assumptions that ignore the biopsychological realities of modern humans. The first and most crucial assumption is that all hours of the day have equal productive potential—that cognitive, emotional, and physical resources are constant throughout the workday. Traditional methods of time management (time blocking, prioritization matrices like the Eisenhower Matrix, the Pomodoro Technique) organize work into rigidly scheduled blocks, maximize each available hour, prioritize work based on external deadlines, and focus exclusively on time allocation and temporal efficiency.

However, this approach ignores the fundamental neurological, endocrinological, and psychological realities of how humans actually function. The human brain and body are not machines with constant, predictable output. Productivity varies significantly throughout the day, influenced by a variety of factors: endogenous circadian rhythms (internal biological

clocks), fluctuating mental energy levels dependent on sleep quality and recovery, varying emotional capacities based on social interactions and emotional events, and cognitive fatigue accumulated throughout the workday. Studies of ultradian rhythms indicate that optimal cognitive performance occurs in a 90-minute cycle, followed by a 15-20 minute period where performance naturally declines and requires recovery.

### **Energy Management as an Alternative Paradigm**

Energy management takes a fundamentally different approach than traditional time management. Rather than viewing time as a unit of production to be maximized, this approach recognizes that energy—in its various dimensions—is a truly renewable resource that requires conscious investment in restoration and revitalization.

The energy management framework recognizes five key dimensions of human energy that are independent but interconnected:

1. Physical energy is facilitated through regular exercise, balanced nutrition, adequate hydration, and high-quality sleep. Physical energy is the biological foundation that enables all other energy dimensions to operate optimally.
2. Emotional energy is nurtured through meaningful and authentic social relationships, mature self-compassion, and engagement in activities that bring joy and meaning. Employees with high emotional energy demonstrate greater resilience to stress and a superior ability to manage interpersonal conflict and team dynamics.
3. Mental energy is maintained through deep focus, engaged learning and intellectual stimulation, and meaningful periods of cognitive recovery. Low mental energy manifests as difficulty concentrating, a reduced ability to solve problems creatively, and an increased tendency toward rumination and negative self-talk.
4. Intuitive energy stems from a strong alignment between daily activities and fundamental personal values, a clear sense of purpose, and alignment between work and personal identity. When intuitive energy is low, individuals experience a sense of alienation from their work even though they are technically performing well.
5. Spiritual energy (in a secular context) refers to a meaningful connection with something beyond the individual self—whether it be community, nature, creative expression, or philosophical principles. Low spiritual energy often results in a sense of meaninglessness and a lack of purpose.

The energy management approach explicitly distinguishes between "time allocation" and "energy investment." Energy management emphasizes the quality of effort over the quantity of hours, aligning cognitively demanding tasks with periods when mental energy is at its peak, integrating meaningful recovery breaks (rather than just short micro-breaks), and making sustainability a fundamental priority rather than an optional luxury.

### **Empirical Evidence of Energy Management Superiority**

Research consistently shows that professionals who apply energy management principles, as opposed to traditional time management alone, report and demonstrate:

1. High-quality output with the same or lower effort (superior quality-to-effort ratio)
2. Better retention of creative energy and cognitive resources throughout the workday
3. Reduced risk of burnout despite equivalent objective job demands
4. Improved cognitive function and decision quality, especially in the latter part of the workday (morning-to-afternoon consistency versus the typical afternoon slump)

5. Better interpersonal effectiveness and collaboration skills, due to more stable emotional regulation

Research analyzing knowledge workers who apply energy management principles shows that they generate 2.3 times more creative solutions per unit of work time than their peers who only use traditional time management. Furthermore, the retention rate for high-performing employees who practice energy management is 94% compared to 71% for those who don't.

### **Gps Framework: Integrated Navigation Between Career And Personal Life**

The GPS (Goal, Path, Self) framework represents an integration of three key dimensions of career navigation and personal development, validated through extensive empirical research. It offers a coherent system for realizing professional potential while maintaining personal well-being and life satisfaction.

### **GOAL: Defining Meaningful Goals Beyond Conventional Success Metrics**

Many modern professionals begin their career journeys with the implicit assumption that the primary career objective is to attain a certain positional status (promotion, title, or management level), accumulate maximum material compensation, or attain social recognition and status. However, extensive research on meaningful work and career purpose shows that these materialistic-positional objectives—while important and valid as intermediate goals—are not the ultimate goals that provide deep meaning to life. Achieving these goals often leaves a sense of emptiness (a hedonic treadmill) if not embedded in the context of broader goals.

The GPS framework places GOAL at a fundamentally deeper level than conventional career metrics. It asks a more powerful set of introspective questions: What does it mean to live a good life? What legacy do I want to leave to the next generation? How do my professional contributions contribute to a broader sense of purpose and intrinsic meaning? Is my work aligned with my core values? These questions lead professionals to define career goals not in terms of conventional, extrinsic measures of career success, but in terms of personal meaning, life contribution, and alignment with one's authentic self.

Empirical research by Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012) developed the Work and Meaning Inventory, a psychometrically robust instrument for measuring meaningful work. This study involved a small sample ( $N > 3,000$ ) and found that employees who scored high on meaningful work (which refers to a high alignment between work and personal meaning) reported significantly higher job satisfaction ( $r = 0.68, p < 0.001$ ), higher work engagement ( $r = 0.74, p < 0.001$ ), lower risk of burnout, and higher overall life satisfaction ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.001$ ).

More significantly, Wrzesniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton, and Berg's (2003) study of occupational calling and occupational identity found that employees who viewed their work as a "calling" (a meaningful calling aligned with a deeper purpose) versus simply a "job" or "career" demonstrated significantly different psychological and performance outcomes. Those with a sense of calling reported higher job satisfaction, a greater willingness to go beyond prescribed tasks, and lower intentions to quit—even when controlling for compensation and job security. These findings suggest that meaning and alignment with purpose are more powerful drivers of professional excellence than external incentives.

### **Measurable Strategies and Routes to Achieve Meaningful Goals**

Once a meaningful goal has been clearly defined through a process of deep reflection, the next component of the GPS framework is PATH—a concrete strategy and operational roadmap for achieving that goal. PATH is not simply an abstract ambition or a baseless hope; it is a well-thought-out blueprint that considers potential obstacles, available resources, strategic timing, and contingencies.

Savickas et al. (2009) developed the Life Design counseling framework, a sophisticated approach to career construction that emphasizes the importance of narrative and personal agency in constructing identity and career. In the context of life design, individuals are not passive recipients of career opportunities; they are active architects of their own career trajectories. Individuals must not only understand their goals but also actively shape the path toward those goals through intentional experiential learning, strategic mentoring relationships, and deliberate exploration.

PATH in the context of harmony between life and career must also consider critical dimensions that are often overlooked in traditional career planning:

### **Set Flexible Yet Consistent Boundaries**

Michel, O'Neill, and Kossek's (2022) research used a complexity theory framework to analyze work-family boundary management. They found that optimal work-life balance is not achieved through rigid, inflexible boundaries or a fully integrated blend without boundaries; rather, optimal balance is achieved through consistency between boundary preferences (what individuals want) and actual boundary implementation (what they actually do). Their study of 412 professionals found that inconsistency between preferences and implementation resulted in cognitive dissonance and a significant increase in work-family conflict, regardless of the actual number of boundary violations.

Recent research by Andrić et al. (2025) in a structural equation modeling study with 823 employees found that work-life balance operates as a full mediator in the relationship between organizational support and employee engagement. This means that organizational support initiatives (such as flexible work arrangements and employee wellness programs) only translate into higher engagement if employees can actually maintain an adequate work-life balance that aligns with their personal preferences. This finding demonstrates the importance of individualization and personalization in boundary setting—there is no one-size-fits-all approach that is optimal for all employees.

### **Definition of Gradual Achievement and Progressive Goal Achievement**

An effective PATH should break down ambitious long-term goals into a series of meaningful milestones that are measurable and achievable within a reasonable timeframe. This not only makes monumental goals more tangible and less overwhelming; it also allows for continuous feedback, course corrections, and adjustments based on emerging learning. Each milestone achieved also serves as a confidence builder—a powerful reinforcement of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation.

### **SELF: Self-Awareness and Continuous Capacity Development**

The third and most fundamental component of the GPS framework is SELF. Without a deep and accurate understanding of who we are, what our authentic strengths are, what limitations we face, and how we react to stress and challenges, goals and paths will remain ungrounded abstractions.

### **Self-Awareness as a Foundation for Career Success**

Research on emotional intelligence—which is a core component of self-awareness—has consistently shown that self-awareness is a more accurate and powerful predictor of career success than cognitive intelligence alone.

A meta-analysis by Pirsoul et al. (2023) analyzed 150 independent samples with a total of N=50,894 participants and found that emotional intelligence—specifically its self-awareness component—was significantly correlated with various indicators of career success: career adaptability ( $r = 0.52$ , 95% CI: 0.48-0.56), career decision-making self-efficacy ( $r = 0.61$ , 95% CI: 0.56-0.65), entrepreneurial self-efficacy ( $r = 0.48$ , 95% CI: 0.43-0.53), and career commitment ( $r = 0.45$ , 95% CI: 0.40-0.50). Overall, the effect size of emotional intelligence on career success was large, suggesting that emotional intelligence is a fundamental competency for professional effectiveness.

More specifically, a systematic literature review by Coronado-Maldonado et al. (2023) analyzing 104 peer-reviewed articles found that individuals with high self-awareness demonstrated superior abilities to: (1) recognize and understand stress triggers and emotional reactivity, and consequently develop effective coping strategies; (2) recognize personal communication styles and preferences, and consequently adapt their approach to different situations and audiences; (3) clearly articulate their boundary needs, thereby effectively communicating these boundaries to managers, coworkers, and family members; (4) provide critical feedback and receive feedback with a constructive mindset, facilitating continuous learning and professional development; and (5) demonstrate greater adaptability to organizational change and market disruptions.

### **Self-Development as a Continuous Iterative Process**

The concept of a "personal operating system," proposed by the McKinsey Health Institute (2024), represents a framework for thinking about professional development in a more holistic and integrated way. In this framework, professional excellence is not simply about acquiring knowledge or mastering technical skills; it is about continually expanding awareness and expanding the capacity to handle complexity with grace and wisdom.

Kegan's developmental theory suggests that individuals can evolve through distinct stages of psychological complexity and meaning-making. Individuals who reach the "Self-Author" stage (a sophisticated creative stage) from the reactive or conformist stage demonstrate significantly higher effectiveness in complex and ambiguous contexts, precisely because they have a more sophisticated capacity to navigate multiple perspectives simultaneously and maintain coherence in the face of contradictions.

Self-development involves several practical components:

1. Regular reflection and journaling to identify recurring patterns in behavior, triggers, responses, and outcomes
2. Seek feedback from multiple perspectives (360-degree feedback from managers, peers, direct reports, mentors) to address individual blind spots.
3. Involvement in challenging learning and development experiences—coaching, mentoring programs, executive education, or experiential learning opportunities
4. The practice of mindfulness or contemplation to increase emotional regulation, metacognitive awareness, and the ability to respond rather than react.
5. Assessment tools (psychometric instruments, personality assessments) to clarify strengths, areas of development, and personal style preferences

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Operational Implementation: Bridging The Gap Between Theory And Practice**

Integrating the GPS framework and energy management principles into everyday working life requires a well-thought-out structural approach and a phased implementation strategy.

#### **1. Energy Management in Daily Practice: A Three-Tier Implementation Approach**

##### **Level 1: Awareness Phase—Mapping Personal Energy Patterns**

The first stage is developing a deep, conscious awareness of your personal energy patterns. This involves a period of deliberate observation and reflection to answer key questions:

- a. At what time of day does mental energy peak? (For most people it is 9-11 am, but there is significant individual-specific variation)
- b. What specific professional activities are energizing (energizing) versus which are draining (draining)?
- c. How do circadian rhythms and personal sleep patterns affect work productivity and emotional availability?
- d. What are the most effective recovery activities for different types of energy depletion?

The practice of systematic journaling or energy tracking (either through a simple spreadsheet or a dedicated app) over a 2-3 week period can provide invaluable data about personal patterns.

#### **2. Level 2: Deliberate Scheduling—Aligning Activities with Energy Peaks**

Once patterns are identified, the next step is to intentionally realign scheduling and task allocation to align activities with energy availability:

- a. Complex or creative work that requires maximum cognitive resources is scheduled specifically during periods of peak mental energy.
- b. Administrative tasks, routine work, and activities with low cognitive demands are grouped and scheduled when energy is lower.
- c. Recovery breaks are scheduled proactively and consistently, not treated as “optional” when extra time is available.
- d. Protected meeting-free periods are scheduled regularly for deep work and strategic thinking.
- e. Movement breaks and exposure to nature (even just going outside for 10 minutes) are scheduled for physical energy recovery.

Research shows that professionals who write strategic reports or presentation proposals during peak mental energy periods (9-11 a.m.) produce significantly higher-quality documents with lower stress levels than those who force themselves to write after a lunchtime energy slump or in the afternoon. The difference isn't just in the quality of the writing; it's also evident in the mental state and physical recovery afterward.

#### **3. Level 3: Sustainable Routines—Building a Non-Negotiable Foundation**

**Foundations of Physical Health:** Research shows that regular exercise (a minimum of 5,000 daily steps has been shown to have a significant protective effect), balanced nutrition, adequate hydration, and quality sleep (7-9 hours) are essential

foundations for sustained career performance and well-being. Research also shows that a 20-minute walk can significantly reduce stress hormones and restore cognitive resources.

**Emotional Recovery:** Meaningful social connections, engaging hobbies, and practicing self-compassion are essential for restoring emotional energy and building resilience.

**Mental Clarity:** Strategically take breaks between deep work blocks (90-minute Pomodoro-style focus blocks followed by meaningful 15-20 minute breaks), limiting social media during work hours, and maintaining focus on one task.

**Spiritual Alignment:** Regularly reflect on whether current activities and commitments align with core values and life purpose. A 5-10 minute daily quiet time or reflection before diving into work can significantly impact daily coherence and sense of meaning.

### **Establishing Operational and Personal Boundaries**

Recent research on work-family boundary fit (Kim et al., 2023) found that optimal work-life balance is achieved not through universal prescriptive boundary setting, but rather through consistency between individual boundary preferences and actual boundary implementation. This means:

1. If individuals prefer integrated boundaries (work and personal life can mix fluidly), then actual implementation must be consistent with this preference, and inconsistency will produce cognitive dissonance.
2. On the other hand, if individuals prefer segmented boundaries (a sharp separation between work and personal time), then implementation must strictly maintain the separation.
3. Inconsistency between preferences and actual behavior results in stress, cognitive dissonance, and increased work-family conflict regardless of the objectivity of the actual situation.

### **Operational Implementation:**

**Clarity about Boundary Preferences:** Through deep reflection and possibly conversations with a trusted mentor or coach, individuals should clarify how they prefer to manage the work-life interface. This isn't about "universal best practices"—it's about what works for the individual in their context.

**Explicit Communication:** Boundaries are only effective if they are communicated clearly and repeatedly to managers, coworkers, and family members. Implicit expectations are often a major source of conflict and frustration.

**Flexibility within Boundaries:** Optimal boundaries allow for occasional overlap or adjustment to accommodate genuine priorities in the work or personal domain, but with intentionality and conscious choice, not inherent blurring or unclear expectations.

**Regular Assessment and Adjustment:** The effectiveness of boundaries should be evaluated regularly. If a professional consistently feels upset after saying yes to requests that violate stated boundaries, this is a signal that boundaries need recalibration or clearer communication.

### **Self-Awareness Practice and Continuous Development**

Daily Reflection Practice

Practice a 10-15 minute journal to document observations about:

1. What activities, interactions, or accomplishments energized me today? Conversely, what drained me?
2. How did I respond to stress or challenges today? Was my response aligned with how I wanted it to be, or was I reactive?
3. What decision or action did I take today that I'm truly proud of? What might I have approached differently?
4. Purpose alignment check—does my work today contribute meaningfully to a larger purpose I care about?

### **360 Degree Feedback and Multiple Perspectives**

Regular feedback from multiple perspectives (managers, peers, direct reports, mentors) is a powerful tool for uncovering blind spots and understanding the impact of behavior. The Leadership Circle Profile and similar assessment tools provide a structured framework for systematic feedback.

### **Mindfulness Practice or Contemplation**

Research shows that even a 5-minute daily mindfulness or meditation practice significantly improves: emotional regulation capacity, stress responsiveness (responding rather than reacting), decision quality, relationship effectiveness, and overall well-being. Mindfulness practice improves personal and social awareness precisely because it trains attention, reduces automatic reactivity, and enhances conscious decision-making.

### **Integration: How Gps And Energy Management Work Together As An Integrated System**

The true beauty of the GPS framework when integrated with energy management principles lies in their complementarity and reinforcing dynamics. The three GPS components do not operate in isolation; they work synergistically to create a coherent and mutually reinforcing personal operating system.

Goals provide direction and meaning—answering the fundamental "why" of every effort and commitment. Meaningful and intrinsically motivated goals generate strong intrinsic motivation, which is fundamentally different from external motivation based on rewards or punishments. Intrinsic motivation is associated with a higher quality of engagement, greater persistence in the face of obstacles, and a deeper sense of fulfillment.

Path (Measurable Strategy) provides a concrete operational roadmap—answering the practical questions of "how" and "what." A well-designed Path ensures that every day-to-day professional activity contributes, in a tangible way, to a meaningful goal. This creates alignment and a sense of coherence even in routine daily activities.

Self-awareness provides the wisdom and discernment to navigate between goals and paths—answering the introspective question, "How do I best function, given who I am?" Mature self-awareness allows for ongoing, real-time adjustments to goals and paths as circumstances change or new learning emerges. This creates dynamic flexibility while maintaining coherence.

Energy Management ensures that this continuous navigation is sustainable and non-destructive. By deliberately optimizing energy resources rather than simply manipulating their temporal allocation, professionals can maintain high-quality output and well-being simultaneously over extended periods of time.

The integration of the three results in a coherent personal operating system—a mutually reinforcing system in which:

1. Work that aligns with goals and values generates genuine intrinsic motivation.
2. Genuine intrinsic motivation results in deeper engagement in work activities.
3. Deep engagement results in quality output and genuine professional excellence.
4. Professional excellence, when aligned with personal goals, increases overall life satisfaction and sense of meaning.
5. Increased life satisfaction and sense of meaning reduces stress, increases resilience, and improves psychological well-being.
6. Increased resilience and well-being allows for better navigation of challenges and setbacks in the workplace.
7. Better navigation of challenges results in continuous career development and professional growth.

This creates a virtuous cycle where career success and personal life reinforce each other rather than compromise each other.

### **Implications for Individual Professionals: Reframing Success**

The shift from the old paradigm to a GPS and energy management approach requires some fundamental changes in mindset and approach to career development:

1. **Reframing the Definition of Success:** From climbing the external career ladder (promotions, titles, compensation) to achieving internal alignment—coherence between work efforts and personal values and meaning in life. This doesn't mean ignoring external accomplishments; it means placing them in the context of a deeper purpose.
2. **Personal Agency and Responsibility:** A shift from passively waiting for the organization to provide work-life balance to proactively designing and managing personal operating systems that align with individual values and needs. This isn't blaming individuals for difficult situations; it's recognizing personal agency in areas where control can be exercised.
3. **Long-Term Temporal Perspective:** From quarter-by-quarter or year-by-year optimization to multi-year career design that takes into account different life stages, evolving priorities, and non-linear career trajectories. Research shows that professionals with a long-term perspective demonstrate greater resilience to short-term setbacks.
4. **Investing in Sustainable Development:** Investing in developing self-awareness, cultivating emotional intelligence, and expanding personal capacity is not a luxury or optional; it is essential infrastructure for professional sustainability and effectiveness in the complex modern workplace.

### **Implications for Organizations: Creating an Enabling Context**

For organizations looking to retain top talent and sustain high performance, research shows that structural changes and cultural shifts are necessary:

1. **Structural Support for Energy Management:** Beyond flexible work policies, organizations need to actively support energy optimization through: (a) protected meeting-free blocks for deep work (implemented through calendar policies), (b) an organizational culture that values output and quality over hours worked, (c)

recognition that recovery time and renewal activities are legitimate work activities, (d) career paths that accommodate different life stages and non-linear trajectories.

2. **Mentoring and Coaching Programs:** Explicit organizational support for employee self-awareness development through coaching, mentoring programs with trained mentors, and access to assessment tools and development resources.
3. **Transparent Career Development Roadmap:** A clear and individualized career roadmap that helps professionals understand how individual development and career advancement align with organizational needs and personal aspirations. This requires a move away from one-size-fits-all career paths.
4. **Modeling a Leadership Culture:** Leadership that embodies values of sustainable success and demonstrates (not just advocates) appropriate boundaries, regular recovery practices, and authentic work-life harmony. Culture change occurs through modeling more than messaging.

Research by Isa and Indrayanti (2024) shows that organizational support—when truly perceived and experienced by employees—plays a crucial role in determining whether employees can maintain a harmonious work-life interface. Organizations that actively implement initiatives to support work-life balance report higher employee engagement, lower turnover, and better organizational performance metrics.

### **Challenges And Limitations: Understanding Context And Constraints**

While the GPS framework and energy management principles are robust and evidence-based, it is important to acknowledge that implementation takes place in diverse organizational and personal contexts that are not always conducive.

#### **Unsupportive Organizational Context**

Individual approaches to work-life balance and energy optimization can only go as far as the organizational context allows. In organizations with chronic excessive demands, unrealistic deadlines, toxic cultures, or unsupportive leadership, even the most self-aware and well-intentioned individuals will struggle. This framework cannot magically overcome systemic organizational dysfunction.

In this context, partial solutions include: (a) leveraging current experiences to clarify personal values and non-negotiable boundaries, (b) using self-awareness to identify whether staying or leaving is the better choice, (c) seeking a role or organization that is more aligned with personal values, and (d) creating small pockets of agency and control in areas where control can be exercised.

#### **Social and Professional Barriers**

In certain industries or professional fields, there is a strong implicit expectation that "commitment" and "professionalism" are demonstrated through long hours and constant availability. Finance, law, management consulting, and certain healthcare fields have historically operated under this norm. Professionals in these fields face real career harm if they visibly deviate from this norm.

Navigating this context requires a sophisticated understanding of organizational politics and skilled communication—maintaining professional credibility while protecting personal continuity.

#### **Life Stage Considerations**

Different stages of life require different configurations of work-life balance. Early-career professionals often have more flexibility for periods of intensive work without the same personal constraints. Parents with young children require different boundaries and recovery practices. Mid-career transitions require a complete recalibration of the GPS framework.

The GPS framework is designed to accommodate these variations through inherent flexibility and an emphasis on regular reassessment.

## **CONCLUSION**

The old paradigm that career success requires significant sacrifices to one's personal life is a myth that is not only factually inaccurate but also deeply harmful to individuals and organizations. Extensive, validated empirical research from leading scholarly databases clearly demonstrates that work-life balance is not a barrier to professional success; rather, it is an essential foundation for sustained high performance and meaningful career achievement. Through a GPS (Goal, Path, Self) framework integrated with advanced energy management principles, professionals can: 1) clarify purpose and meaning in their work and life—defining success in ways that are intrinsically meaningful rather than externally imposed; 2) design a strategic path that is coherent, achievable, and aligned with their authentic self—creating consistency between daily activities and larger goals; 3) develop sophisticated self-awareness that enables continuous learning, adaptive responses to challenges, and authentic personal growth; 4) optimize energy resources rather than merely managing time, thereby ensuring sustained high performance without depletion; and 5) create a powerful positive feedback loop in which career success increases life satisfaction, which in turn enhances professional effectiveness and further strengthens the career trajectory.

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