

THE SEVEN-DAY WEEKEND

Finding the Work/Life Balance

RICARDO SEMLER

RICARDO SEMLER is CEO of Brazil's Semco S.A., a 50-year old company with annual revenues exceeding \$160 million. He is one of the world's most respected champions of organizational change. Mr. Semler is also the author of the business best-seller *Maverick!* which tells the story of Semco's transition from paternalistic, command-oriented management to a highly democratic, participative management structure.

SUMMARIES.COM is a concentrated business information service. Every week, subscribers are e-mailed a concise summary of a different business book. Each summary is about 8 pages long and contains the stripped-down essential ideas from the entire book in a time-saving format. By investing less than one hour per week in these summaries, subscribers gain a working knowledge of the top business titles. Subscriptions are available on a monthly or yearly basis. Further information is available at www.summaries.com.

MAIN IDEA

The “seven-day weekend” is a metaphor for the fact it’s now time to do things differently and better in the business world.

Most of the practices which people so blindly accept as part and parcel of the business environment (like a dress code, set work hours and unquestioned adherence to what the boss says rather than what your instincts tell you is right) are not as absolutely essential as they may seem. In fact, most of these common practices have taken root as offshoots of a boarding school mentality or as the result of the business world adopting the military model as the best way to organize itself.

When you stop and ask some pointed questions, however, it soon becomes clear there must be a better way to get things done while harnessing the collective brainpower and intelligence of everyone involved. For example:

- Why can’t the workplace be reorganized to make work fun?
- Why can’t there be a better mix between what people do on weekends (their passions) and what they do at work?
- Why do we value intuition highly and yet find no place for it as an official business tool?
- Why do we assume that the future is in the laps of the gods and yet we try and preplan or project every moment of it?
- Why do we think we are equipped to manage our own lives but can’t be trusted to lead ourselves at work?
- Why do we tell our employees we trust them – and then turn around and search them as they go home or audit them rigorously?
- Why should people have to stick to a career choice they made as an unprepared and inexperienced adolescent?
- Why doesn’t money buy success – if almost everyone measures their success in cash terms?
- Why is it that billionaires accumulate money only to donate it later to ethereal concepts like world peace?
- Why can’t we take the kids to work if it’s perfectly acceptable to take some of our work home?
- Why does everyone think the opposite of work is leisure when it is actually idleness?
- Why do business people have a flock mentality – and regularly follow rams that turn out to be nothing more than wolves?

Some companies are starting to develop their own unique answers to these and other questions. One such company is Semco S.A., a Brazilian company which has been led by Ricardo Semler for the past twenty years. By setting up one of the world’s foremost democratic companies, Semler transformed Semco from a small family business into a highly profitable manufacturing, services and high-tech powerhouse – 40 times its original size. Uniquely, Semler achieved this not by attempting to be a dynamic corporate leader but by finding the right balance between work and personal life, not only for himself but also for his 3,000 employees. In fact, Semco functions best when Semler is away watching his favorite movies or relaxing with his son in the middle of the business day. Semco employees create their own jobs and generate the company’s new projects and businesses without requiring the approval of the CEO or any other senior business leader.

1. The end of the traditional weekend Page 2

Why is it that intelligent people are prepared to put up with all manner of irritation and inconvenience in the name of employment? For example, technology now makes it possible for people to answer their e-mail during the weekend – regardless of whether they are working or not – and many people do just that. As a result, most employees are struggling to find a good balance between their personal and work lives. Drastic action is needed to restore this balance.

2. Success and money are distant relatives Pages 3 - 4

For most people, success and money are distant relatives. Rather than gauging their success by how much they earn, most people measure success by how closely what they do taps into their talents and personal interests. Similarly, organizations need to develop new ways to measure success that transcend cash reserves, revenues and profits. Instead, they should be looking at whether their people have an opportunity to tap into their reservoir of talents and abilities.

3. Management by omission Pages 5 - 6

The traditional management style is command-and-execute – the workers do whatever the boss says without questioning why. When greater creativity is needed, however, the traditional management style cannot work. The key to better management in that case becomes to inspire your people, to trust them to do the right thing, and then get out of their way and let them get the job done. Counterintuitively, the less managers do, the better.

4. A long list of pied pipers Pages 6 - 7

The best management of all is self-management. In essence, self-management is self-interest at work. By conceding that managers don’t know the best way to do everything, the workers themselves become accountable for generating the results they want. Again, that unleashes untapped reserves of creativity and originality in ways that will benefit the organization.

5. Rambling into the future Pages 7 - 8

Most managers assume the future will be an extension of the past, only better. They fill their spreadsheets with models showing sales that rise steadily from year-to-year. That’s comforting, but seldom true. Instead, unexpected learning should be encouraged because this is the hotbed of innovation. Paradoxically, therefore, managers can best prepare their organizations for the future by loosening their controls and allowing people to ramble into the future.

Summaries.Com

The Ultimate Business Library



We condense **300+ page** business books into **8-page** summaries.

By reading summaries, you'll get the **key ideas** in **30 mins**, so you can spend more time turning your ideas into **dollars**.

Knowledge is Power — Invest in Your Future

For just **\$2 per week**, you will...

- Learn from the mistakes and success of the smartest people in business;
- Get fresh ideas, strategies & motivation that could be worth millions to you;
- Follow emerging trends, so you can catch the wave before your competitors do;
- Catch up on the classics you always wanted to read.

1,000 Top Business Book Summaries

Our catalog includes summaries on a range of topics for aspiring entrepreneurs, managers, and consultants.

BUSINESS PLANS

MANAGEMENT

PRESENTATIONS

SALES

LEADERSHIP

MOTIVATION

STRATEGY

AND MORE

