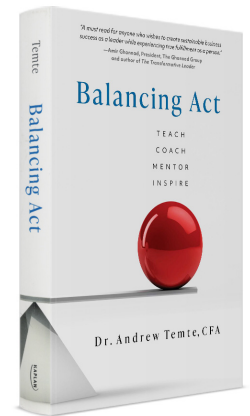


# Balancing Act

Teach, Coach, Mentor, Inspire

by **Andrew Temte**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

If you've ever felt like your life is out of balance, you're not alone. Fortunately, Andrew Temte has created an insightful guide that's loaded with practical advice about how to bring balance back to your life—and help bring balance to your organizations, teams, and employees along the way. Being off-balance almost assuredly results in hurting the people you care for most, because it renders you unable to open yourself up to other points of view. You become prone to making assumptions and taking people for granted. Being off-balance means, almost by definition, that you have a fixed mindset around certain aspects of your life. It causes you to become unyielding in certain circumstances.

In *Balancing Act*, Andrew Temte outlines the key to finding balance in our careers and in our lives through a series of powerful messages that will be beneficial to everyone from the most entry-level employee to the leading executive.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How developing a sense of balance between work, life, and the various aspects of ourselves can make us happier and more effective.
- How communicating and listening are essential for us to become contributing members of any team.
- How to teach, coach, mentor, and inspire in a way that transforms the lives and careers of the people around us.
- How to become more multidimensional—and find more multidimensional people to be employees.

### Introduction

Success without balance is often more disastrous than failure with balance. When the unbalanced achieve victory, it often serves to further destructive habits. When the balanced suffer defeat, resilience and perseverance grow.

Being off-balance almost assuredly results in hurting the people you care for most, because it renders you unable to open yourself up to other points of view. You become prone to making assumptions and taking people for granted. Being off-balance means, almost by definition, that you have a fixed mindset around certain aspects of your life. It causes you to become unyielding in certain circumstances. Being an effective business leader requires balance, and that is something you can achieve through the principles in *Balancing Act*.

### Leadership for the Next Generation

We're in the midst of a tectonic shift in what it means to be an effective leader. In the past, leaders were chosen because they demonstrated strong technical skills, were able to play and win at the game of workplace politics, or demonstrated supreme loyalty to the leaders and decision makers who came before them.

But in order to do their jobs effectively, leaders need to demonstrate balance: balance between strength and vulnerability, confidence and selflessness, passion and measure, single-mindedness and inclusivity, determination and curiosity, and leadership and followership.

### You Are Responsible for Your Own Wake

Like a boat on the water, leaders at all levels leave a wake as they interact with the organization—the higher up you are in the company, the bigger the wake you throw off. It's your responsibility to be aware of your wake and the impact it could have on individuals and teams, both within your immediate surroundings as well as further downstream.

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### Teach, Coach, Mentor, and Inspire

Think of your roles as a manager or an influencer in a business. You are in a position of authority and are responsible for your team. Some of your key roles are to teach, coach, mentor, and inspire. Others are to assess talent and provide constructive feedback to your team members so that one day they can surpass you. As an influencer, you walk a fine line. You need to find a balance that allows you

to judge without being judgmental. Sometimes you need to take control of a situation and be the smartest person in the room. It's much harder to help others develop and grow by allowing them to shine.

### The Light in Your Eyes

While poor leadership can quickly extinguish the light in a high-potential hire's eyes, providing a supportive working environment can help nurture the light and keep it shining brighter as time goes on. When you find an organization that offers that kind of supportive, nurturing, and balanced environment, leaving it becomes very difficult.

### Opportunity, Joy, and Purpose at Work

Unfortunately, many people expect that opportunity will be magically bestowed upon them. They've grown up in coddled, 'everyone gets a prize' schools and homes. They believe the business world owes them something for just showing up. But opportunity comes to those who are continuously learning, moving forward, and applying their talents in a constructive fashion. If one sits back and waits for an opportunity to knock, the wait will be long and frustrating. The ego must be balanced, because over the long term, opportunity aligns itself with authenticity.

### Disorder, Chaos, and Growth

Businesses are powered by humans. When a business is created, it is typically formed by a sole proprietor or a small team, and an essential initial condition is a deep sense of trust within the nucleus of the entity. The success or failure of the venture depends on it. Exceptional leaders understand the power of their words, identify and nurture human potential, model organizational purpose, and adopt a continuous improvement mindset to minimize organizational entropy.

### Education and Lifelong Learning

Throughout history, education has played the role of the 'great leveler.' Social structures and societies have been transformed through education. We have clear examples that when education and creativity are stifled or reserved for the elite, our progress as a species is limited. When educational access is limited, entire swatches of the population are left behind.

Those of us blessed with a path to continuous learning must embrace it, and watch as the benefits from that education only grow.

### Think Globally, Act Locally

As our world gets ever smaller through increasing digital interconnectedness and becomes more complex as humans work with and alongside machines of ever-greater capability, we must instill new competencies into the workforce of the future. This is a sentiment shared by the World Economic forum, UNESCO, the OECD, the Brookings Institution, the Pew Research Center, the Harvard Business Review, and many other institutions.

### The Reskilling Revolution Versus the Clay Layer

Resistance to change is a natural tendency that stems from a fear of loss of control and a desire for consistency, what could be referred to as the ‘clay layer.’ Both change and learning rely on consciously wading into uncharted territory and being purposefully uncomfortable. Hence, doing the hard work of adopting a lifelong learning attitude and being both agile and accepting of change run counter to our human nature.

### The Value of a Personal Continuous Improvement Journey

The beauty of a continuous improvement journey is that it can be truly eye-opening. Adopting a continuous improvement leadership stance helps us understand how we can be a little bit better tomorrow than we were today, and how we can ensure that our mistakes and failures are viewed as opportunities to learn and grow— not as barriers to future success. You’ll be more open to new information, perspectives, and ideas; to being creative; and to exploring with curiosity and discovering new ways of disrupting old habits that may have persisted for years or even decades.

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## Four Core Competencies of a Future-Ready Workforce

There are four core competencies that everyone needs in order to work effectively across departments, understand how their individual contributions fit into the bigger picture, and ultimately thrive in a future of increasingly advanced technology. These four competencies are financial acumen, data literacy, commercial acumen, and human skills.

### Financial Acumen

We need to apply more effort as a society and as educators to making math more approachable and relevant. Why? Because our businesses and institutions are populated by millions who lack the necessary numeracy skills to be effective in their jobs. They’ve been conditioned to think that

math doesn’t matter in the real world, when math is literally the language of business.

### Data Literacy

Whether you’re a small business owner or running a Fortune 500 company, you’re generating more data today, relative to your size, than ever before. As a leader and an individual contributor, your ability to be creative and drive your business forward is going to rely, in large part, on how you’re leveraging the troves of data that your business generates.

That is why a base-level understanding of how data works, where it comes from, and what it can do is going to be an essential skill for employees and leaders of the future.

### Commercial Acumen

Many people within businesses, institutions, and governments don’t understand how the products and services they’re involved in creating make it to market. They struggle to move from an inward focus— what they do on a day-to-day basis— to a much more outward focus— how their product, service, or brand interacts with the outside world.

Understanding how the activities of the organization fit together within the broader marketplace can help individuals become better contributors, break down silos between departments, and rally employees around objectives that are bigger than their individual roles.

### Solving the Leadership Shortage

Teachers and mentors are critical in changing attitudes towards personal growth through education. The leadership shortage currently underway will become much less acute if we all do our part to promote the benefits of lifelong learning, balance education between technical and human skills, and begin leaning into the upcoming Reskilling Revolution.

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## Effective Communication

You don’t have to be a performer or actor to benefit from the value of effective storytelling. Honing your skill as a multimodality storyteller can pay real dividends. More importantly, you should always be considering how you’re telling your corporate story and whether you’re doing so in enough and varied ways. Like a muscle, storytelling must be exercised to be strengthened.

### Listen Up

The epidemic of disengagement that plagues businesses

of all shapes and sizes can almost always be traced back to some sort of failure of communication: failing to respond to important requests in a timely manner, failing to respond to critical feedback, failing to acknowledge those who deserve recognition, and/or failing to address a difficult subject.

### Responsiveness: The Neglected Leadership Trait

Failing to respond promptly to the people around you can significantly erode interpersonal and team trust. It breeds uncertainty, puts people on edge, and can throw your team off balance. Viewed through this lens, striking the right balance in responsiveness is of critical importance to team cohesion and how others view you as a leader.

### The Whole Self

Balance is hard to achieve and needs constant attention to maintain. Purposefully reflect on the concepts of work/life balance and become more multidimensional. Once you determine the path forward, start small. Test the waters. Take a class or talk to some experts about how they achieved their level of competency. Make the time to pursue your passion.

Meanwhile, hire multidimensional individuals who share their talents with others, as they will reward you with mental agility, persistence, and perseverance.

### Alignment

Most business leaders espouse the value of teamwork and collaboration across departments, product lines, and divisions. Most business leaders are also frequently disappointed by the lack of success in most collaboration efforts. The most common reasons for collaboration failure is the lack

of standardization in process, procedure, and data, as well as misalignment of goals and incentives across teams.

### Leader Standard Work

Managers and leaders play an essential role in any value stream. Just like the definition of standard work for an individual or team applies to a specific process or activity along the value stream, leaders must adopt their own standard work to ensure they are providing accurate, reliable, and repeatable guidance to their teams. You can have the most well-defined set of processes and the most awesome value-stream map, but if leaders function in an ad hoc or random manner, optimal flow along the stream cannot be achieved. In other words, a leader who injects chaos into a system is likely doing more harm than good.

### Conclusion

We all live in a state of imbalance. Fortunately, our subconscious minds work continually to help us correct and adjust as we move forward in our daily lives, but we rarely make the time to consciously contemplate how we can return to center. Becoming more aware of the balancing acts we constantly play will help us to be better colleagues, leaders, friends, and family members. We must all work to find balance between strength and vulnerability, confidence and selflessness, passion and measure, single-mindedness and inclusivity, determination and curiosity, and leadership and followership.



As President and Global Head of Corporate Learning, **Dr. Andrew Temte, CFA**, spearheads Kaplan's efforts in helping employees remain relevant in the future world of work, as well as in helping companies continuously improve by attracting the right talent and upskilling/reskilling their workforce. A thought leader on issues related to professional education and workforce skilling, Dr. Temte has been published and cited in a number of media outlets. Dr. Temte earned his doctorate in finance from the University of Iowa with a concentration in international finance and investment theory. He holds the CFA designation and has over 14 years of university teaching experience in the areas of corporate finance, investments, and international finance.

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