**Ask SCORE**

*I own a small advertising agency, as well as being a wife and mother. I constantly read about women who “have it all” and would love to be one of them. How do they do it?*

“If only I had more time….”

Most every small business owner has uttered that sentiment more than once. And for good reason. Though entrepreneurship can be rewarding in more ways than one, achieving success requires a huge investment of time and energy—commodities that are always in short supply.

The challenge is particularly daunting for women entrepreneurs. It’s great to think you can still be “SuperMom” or “SuperWife” in addition to “SuperBoss.” But familiarity with stress doesn’t mean you can easily take on more of it. Something almost always has to give. And if you’re not careful, the consequences could be disastrous and difficult to repair.

Balancing your business, family and personal responsibilities is easier than you think. As with most everything else related to being an entrepreneur, it simply takes some upfront planning and continual monitoring. Here are some tips to get started.

• Put your health first. Set aside time every day for rest and exercise, whether it’s taking a walk, a yoga class or simply watching the world from your back porch.

• Learn to say no. This is particularly important for single-person and microbusinesses. It’s great to keep your business growing, but taking on too much compounds your stress and carries the risk of producing less than your best work. Most customers will understand if you’re honest about being unable to do a job. In fact, they may well respect you more for it.

• Delegate, delegate, delegate. Offer employees the opportunity to take on some of your responsibilities. This will boost their morale and skill levels, and ease some of your burden. Also consider outsourcing routine administrative tasks like accounting.

• Set aside “sacred” times. Make it a point to never miss certain activities or events—meal times, movie nights, soccer games, birthdays, etc. This is particularly important during holidays; if the rest of the world is taking a break, you should too. (Obviously, if your business prospers during these periods, you will need to be “on duty.” Just be sure to schedule a comparable amount of “downtime” afterward.)

• Get out of town. An American Express survey found that 40% of the smallest business owners—those with less than $200,000 in annual revenues—plan no vacation time whatsoever in any given year. Don’t be one of them. Take a trip—the longer, the better—and keep business check-ins to a minimum while you’re away. You may also want to consider a getaway with some fellow women entrepreneurs you’ve met through your networking activities. That way you can relax, share some ideas, and come back refreshed physically and mentally.

*This column is brought to you by the Merrimack Valley Chapter of SCORE, with nearly 70 current and former business executives available to provide free, confidential, one-on-one business mentoring and training workshops for area businesses. Call 603-666-7561 or visit merrimackvalley.score.org for information on mentoring, upcoming workshops and volunteer opportunities. SCORE is a national, non-profit organization and a resource partner of the U. S. Small Business Administration.*