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A monthly column about business and more — by contributing writers, pictured left to right, Laura V. Page, Lori Silverman, Eve B. Scheffenacker, Julie Hedlund and BJ Pfeiffer.



How did I get here?

By Lori Silverman

It was the last week of June 2007. I'd sold my home in Madison and was driving to Mesa, Arizona, via Topeka, Kansas (to visit my Web master, with whom I'd worked for six years and had never met), and Amarillo, Texas (to visit a high school friend I hadn't seen in over 25 years). Somewhere during the first 100 miles, it dawned on me that I was actually home "less." While I'd filed the paperwork to purchase a condo on a private golf course, I wouldn't know until a few days after I arrived if I'd receive title. A litany of thoughts crossed my mind: Did I really need to show up in Mesa? What if I was to veer off course and go elsewhere? After 48 years, how exactly had I gotten to this point in my life?

If you're my age or older, you may remember the TV show *This is Your Life*, hosted by Ralph Edwards. As if someone had turned the cameras on me, I began to replay my life. Not what I'd done, the men I'd married or all the places I'd lived, but more in terms of how I'd gone about making these decisions.

First and foremost

The main criterion that has guided me since I was 22 is a new take on an old adage that Larry Cummings, a UW-Madison business professor, had shared in a graduate class. He said, "Success is not about being in 'the right place at the right time.' It's really about being in so many places at so many times, that you just happen to find yourself in the right place."

If I had an open week in my consulting/speaking schedule, chances are you'd find me writing an article, hopping a plane and showing up at a conference/event or visiting a new place. Through these behaviors, I was able to meet a few folks who've become close friends, pick up a new client, unexpectedly get a book contract and partake in some

amazing experiences, like riding an elephant through the jungles of northern Thailand.

A close second

I attribute my second principle for making life decisions to my dad. When I was five years old, he decided to quit being a bricklayer and become a real estate broker. Over the years, he and my mom built a very successful real estate and construction business. Only, I don't recall him ever not working. He always said, "I work hard and I play hard." He'd follow this with his formula for success, "Find something you love to do in life and do it better than anyone else." This translated for me into "work is play and play is work." Now, I've come to realize this is only possible if two things happen simultaneously: You find something you're passionate about doing and it collides head-on with a "calling" — something you're meant to do in life.

It's why I don't believe in the concept of life-work balance. Life-work balance assumes it's possible to compartmentalize various parts of life in ways that can actually be measured and controlled. Frankly, I don't see a benefit to compartmentalization if balance were indeed achievable. If I'm sitting at a baseball game and an idea for a blog article comes to mind, so be it. And, during "normal" work hours, why should I feel obliged to work if I don't have energy to give to the task at hand? I prefer the phrase, life-work integration. In fact, it's the guiding principle for this magazine column.

I just know

Ever experience a deep sense of "knowing" and then trust it enough to follow through on it? I wouldn't be in Arizona without this feeling.

I based my move on a single picture I cut out as I was putting together my vision book in December 2006. As I held it in my hand, I "knew" it needed to be the view out the back of my home and that I would find it in Mesa. Never mind that I'd never toured Mesa. I sold a home, gave away most of my belongings and set out for a city where I didn't know a soul, all based on that photo. While I treasure that very view today, I still don't exactly know why I'm meant to be here. However, I trust the answer will reveal itself in due time.

How you make decisions

If the spotlight were on you, what principles would you say guide your life decisions? And, how well have they suited you?

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