



MEN JUGGLE TOO

Last issue we looked at the plight of the ladies who try to work out a family life and work life balance. It struck a cord.

I read the article in the May issue with interest, but it had a feminist slant – at least, it was from a lady's point of view so it came across as if this dilemma of life/work is one that only affects women. And 'Office Jugglers' are not a new breed!

Nor do working female parents necessarily look disheveled; there's none here at Irongate Group that fit that bill.

In many cases – but not all – women are "the foundations of the family". And my wife knows she is my rock. Back in the 1950s men (allegedly) came home to their pipes and slippers, with the lady of the house specialising in all things domestic. Perhaps that scenario was nothing more than a short-lived and frustrated idyll? I am not a social historian, but surely women have been balancing home and work since at least the 1960s – arguably

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since the 1940s when the war forced women to go out to work en masse? And I remember my granny telling me tales of work in the Lancashire cotton mills back in the 1930s.

Whatever the history, there's considerable teamwork in the home today. I know several working family men who admit to cooking and a couple I know do their share of the ironing! Some are fortunate to be able to pay others to do these chores. I am sure it's not just at my house where we all muck in, even if our house is a little like the Osborne's – but with more swearing.

Male and female alike, the driver for most of us since the 1950s has been the desire to increase standards of living. For many this has necessitated both partners having to work simply to keep up with our aspirational and consumerist society, and in recent years, the increasing cost of our houses.

And spare a thought for that growing breed, as 50% of marriages fail – the single parent. I brought my young daughter up virtually single handed for a couple of years and there were as many men doing the nursery run as women. But I always managed to scrub myself up for work. Crisply ironed shirt and all!

Working women with children often have equally hard working fathers/partners/husbands; many of whom, together, I am sure get the balance right. With the pressures of modern life it's not difficult to see why "work-life balance" has become the topic of the day. Time is a very precious commodity. Perhaps the most fulfilled of us will be those who manage their lives and time most effectively. ■

BY HOWARD FORTON,
THE IRONGATE GROUP

Panasonic ideas for life

This month Office Culture is sponsored by Panasonic who say that the right products can help any office juggler:

"If deciding to work flexibly, all parents need to consider creating the right environment for working from home to ensure they get the right balance. For example, choose part of the house that has lots of light and space, give yourself strict start and stop times and take regular breaks, instead of sitting at the desk all day.

"There is also a whole range of technology to make working from home easy, including Panasonic's versatile, integrated 'Mini Office' (KX-FLB756) which combines phone, fax, printer, copying and scanning features all-in-one to help you create the perfect working environment."