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## *Communications Digest*

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*Because Good Writing Should Grow on Trees!*

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### **Welcome Mid-September!**

With autumn now upon us (with crisp fall air and the crunch of dry leaves beneath our feet), I'm pleased to send you another issue of "Communications Digest."

In last month's issue, I visited some of the highlights of a TED Talk given last April by the brilliant (and hilarious) American novelist and essayist, Anne Lamott.

Thank you to those of you who responded so positively to her talk. Lamott's a gem!

Since a new program year begins this month, I'm dedicating this issue to the fallacy of work/life balance. The concept still seems to dog entrepreneurs in ways that venture capitalist Arlene Dickinson and journalist Jesse Brown can help us to displace.

Special thanks this month to Deanna Litz and the women of the GroYourBiz entrepreneurial board in Saskatoon, for helping me to keep motivated, during a long, hot prairie summer.

Enjoy the beauty of early autumn and best wishes for the year ahead.

Sincerely,  
*Elizabeth*

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### **IN THIS ISSUE:**

**ARTICLE 1:** Escaping the fallacy of work/life balance

## **Article One: Still striving to achieve "work/life balance" as an entrepreneur? One way to break free from that fallacy . . .**

It surprises me to find other entrepreneurs who still strive to “find work-life balance,” even if they don’t call it that. A graphic designer wonders aloud how to find the time to attend her children’s school plays. A self-employed medical consultant says, half-jokingly, that he won’t be able to get regular, physical exercise until his youngest child enters college.

Do you know of anyone in your professional or personal lives who run themselves ragged, trying to serve everyone’s needs and meet all of their criticism? These people have “burned out” in the past and yet often continue to fail to set healthy limits.

Autumn is now upon us and with the new business and program year comes optimism for change. And yet, as Canadian journalist Jesse Brown wrote over [www.you.inc](http://www.you.inc), last year, entrepreneurs (and other business types, too) continue to “swallow whole the notion of ‘work/life balance.’ ” Or if we have been aware enough to denounce the idea, many entrepreneurs may unconsciously “kneel down before the idea like it’s a religion, certain that reaching this magical state of harmony will bring us health and happiness.”

But for entrepreneurs, especially, work and life simply don’t function in a mutually exclusive way. Brown writes that running your company isn’t a job: “It’s a way of life and life doesn’t cease to exist between 9 am and 5 pm . . . You can . . . love your family and friends *and* be present for them without ignoring your passions, projects and responsibilities.”

He recommends replacing the wrongly termed “balance” with the concept of “flow,” of integrating our professional and personal lives in a “seamless” way. I’m not sure how realistic “seamlessness” is, but the concept of flow sounds useful to me.

If you're a freelancer, you've opted not to “sit in a cubicle,” or to “complete some pre-determined checklist of tasks.” Or as part of the “post-industrial world,” you know that the marketplace no longer values employees who punch the clock in such ways. But in whichever working situation we participate, caring about what we do now means, as Brown says, “there’s no such thing as being off the clock.”

He reminds us that if that sounds self-shackling and oppressive, keep in mind that we work from home, often make our own hours, and are independent in the ways that we ensure our “goals are met and problem solved.” (Even our “day job” cousins tend to telecommute at least some of the time, make personal calls, do online shopping or check social media, while they do their jobs. Many successful startups invest in “nap rooms, great food, social events, on-site massage” and so on, “to create vibrant teams who *want* to burn the midnight oil,” Brown writes.)

Expressed in another register by entrepreneurial expert and Dragon’s Den investor, Arlene Dickinson, entrepreneurs “can’t achieve work/life balance,” and shouldn’t “even be trying.” She

views entrepreneurship as a calling, not a career, and argues that “a calling defines you as a person. It’s who you are. . . . That’s why it’s not realistic—or even advisable—to ask an entrepreneur to shut the door on work at the end of the day. It’s like asking someone to shut the door on their entire being.”

So not forcing a separation between various parts of our lives makes sense. And those of us who find our calling love what we do, “so much that you don’t want your workday to end—how awesome is that?” Dickinson observes.

Pretty awesome, I know, based on the feeling I have when I write late or because something I’ve read or someone I’ve met inspires me to keep going. I think also of Humboldt-based artist and entrepreneur Bob Pitzel, who walks the land of his acreage, musing about potential subjects to paint. Or one of several friends of mine who dictate insights they have, pertaining to current projects, into a cell phone recorder, as they drive long distances on our province’s highways. So: sometimes the flow surrounds work; sometimes it surrounds family and rest.

Let’s be careful not to romanticize this entrepreneurial flow, however: the implications of it are often not convenient. Dickinson wrote six years ago, in her book, *Persuasion: A New Approach to Changing Minds* (2011), that she doesn’t have much time for friends in her life. Her closest friends become those who understand when she must cancel plans with them, at the last minute, because a “fire” has arisen (in her work) for her to “put out.” The friends who understand tend to be entrepreneurs, too.

Thinking that one can not only separate but even balance two various aspects of our minds and selves is “madness,” to her thinking. She cites film writer Nora Ephron who told female college graduates in the US that paradoxically, they *could* “have it all.” Ephron said that doing so would “be. . . messy, but embrace the mess. . . . And don’t be frightened: you can always change your mind. I know: I’ve had four careers and three husbands.’ ” Maybe Ephron’s entrepreneurial flow was at times a torrent!

So as we face a new entrepreneurial program year, how can you stretch and bend with the “flow” of your life and work? If you are doing something that you find fulfilling, as Dickinson observes, “many good things will flow from that contentment,” and in the lives of those we meet and care for and not only in our own.

Mentor extraordinaire and friend Monica Kreuger challenged me when I asked her recently about her “summer holiday,” what she would want to take “a holiday from?” Her mind and being are deeply engaged as an entrepreneur and entrepreneurial expert, from which she needs and wants no “break.” She chooses to do that work during some of the summer months in a rural home office, where she can somewhat reduce the interruptions and messages she responds to. But she is working and thriving there, just the same.

And as the nearly 900 alumni of Monica and Brent Kreuger’s Praxis School of Entrepreneurship have found, we find success as entrepreneurs, when “we use our gifts to improve our community.” That work’s a joy and privilege that far exceeds the hours of 9 to 5.

*What have you made of the fallacy of “work/life balance,” in your life? Please share your experience with me on my website at [www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com) I'd be delighted to extend this conversation.*

### **WORD NERD'S CORNER: *The case of "lapelled" clothing, with Bryan Garner . . .***



In his blog from late August, American etymologist discussed everyday use of the term, "lapelled," which means " (of a coat or jacket) having a front that is joined to the collar and folded back on each side."

What's unusual about this word is that it is spelled identically in both American English and British English.

By contrast to the past tense of the word "leveled," which in American English uses only one "l," Garner explains that "lapelled" takes two "ls" because the letters fall in an accented syllable: Makes sense!

So here's a simple example: "Stylish men at Toronto's International Film Festival refuse to appear in the press without wearing lapelled jackets."

*Do you have questions involving word use and misuse? Please share them with me on the "contact" page of my website ([elizabethshih.com](http://elizabethshih.com)). I'd be delighted to extend this conversation.*

### **SHOP NEWS**

Thank you this month to Monica Kreuger, Co-founder and Chief Visionary Officer of Praxis School of Entrepreneurship and to her colleague, Deanna Litz, for developing the women's entrepreneurial board of "GroYourBiz," Saskatoon. In that group and in mentoring sessions, Monica continues to train me and like-minded female entrepreneurs to think strategically about our business development.

Thank you to Kanchan Manek for organizing last month's successful Raj Manek Mentorship Program Business Mixer. It was a good opportunity to meet and network with fellow creatives across many industries.

Thank you also (in no particular order) to fellow women of the Freelancers' Roundtable Group which I co-convene--Ashleigh Mattern, Katherine Duncombe, Julie Barnes, Leanne Bellamy, Amy Rederburg and Katee Pederson . . . . Ashleigh is one of the accomplished subjects of my upcoming second eBook, due out in December. Meantime, I'm deeply impressed by the quality of these women's writing, editing and entrepreneurship!



## **ABOUT US**

Since 2011, Elizabeth Shih Communications has chronicled the stories of B2B marketing and communications on the Prairies and across Canada.

Do you need help telling your entrepreneurial stories?

Please contact me through my website, via the CASL-compliant email form, on the right-hand side of each page ([www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com)).

After I have received your permission, I'll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

**I write stories of how small and medium-sized businesses succeed while also giving back to the community.** Those stories take the form of enewsletters, ebook articles, blog postings, and more. I also write and edit applications to business awards (such as ABEX, SABEX and others).

Please visit my website for more information ([www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com)).

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