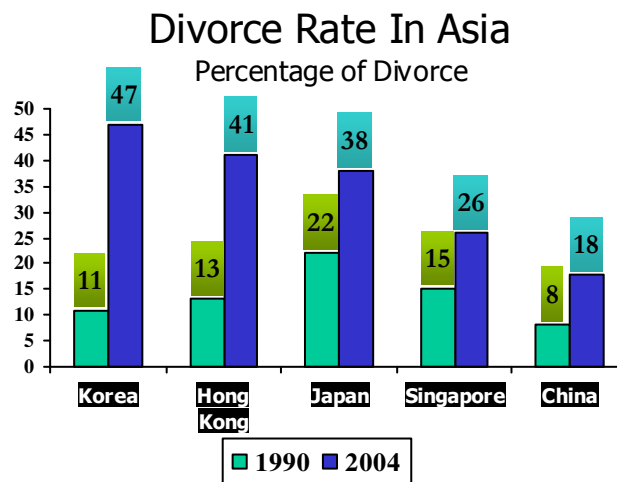


Character – The Tension of Work/Family Balance

“You can’t regain your children’s childhood; no amount of professional success can compensate for the loss of that family time. At the end of the day, if you aren’t a success at home as well, success at work probably won’t count for much.” *Michael Jenkins, Managing Director of Centre for Creative Leadership*¹

The family is in crisis today. One of the greatest tests of character is the ability to balance work and family. Look at the statistics:



In a recent article in Time Magazine², it was reported that, since 1990,
 In Singapore, the number of divorces has gone up by one-third.
 In Thailand, the number of divorces has doubled.
 In China, the number has also doubled.
 In Taiwan, the number of divorces has tripled.
 In Japan, there is one marriage every 42 seconds, but another couple will divorce before 2 minutes are up.
 In Korea, the divorce rate is 47% and has exceeded many European countries.

Singapore reported a record of 6,561 marriages ending in divorce – a 13% per cent rise since 2002.³

From my personal experience in mediating divorce couples, I had listened with a great tinge of sadness when a high profile banker wife shared, “My husband is a millionaire many times over. He has always said, ‘I am building my business empire for you and the children so that they can live a more comfortable life. But now, he has the empire but not the family. We are leaving him.’”

In another cover story, “Why Grade A Executives Get an F as Parents”, Fortune Magazine reported that children of successful parents are more likely to suffer a range of emotional & health problems than children of ‘less successful’ parents.

¹ Voigt, K. (2004). The Work-Life Juggling Act. The Asian Wall Street Journal. July 23 – 25, 2004.

² Fitzpatrick, L. (2004). Getting Out. Time Magazine. April 5, 2004

³ Teresa Tan & Vivazainol. (2004). Rising divorce rate still one of the lowest. The Straits Times. June 26, 2004. Singapore Press Holdings.

36% of children of successful chief executives undergo treatment for psychiatric or drug abuse compared to 15% of children of non-executives.

In the same report, finding balance between family and work is cited as a No. 1 priority than any other issue.

I suspect this pressure arises from:

- Executives working long hours, due to quarterly performance pressures,
- Self-interests driven by greed
- Personal characteristics (perfectionism, impatience, & efficiency).
- Narrow focus in defining success as accomplishing organizational goals to the exclusion of personal objectives like emotional and family well-being.
- Overachievement drive, resulting in juggling too many balls without achieving quality.

Indeed, the greatest test of our character is our ability to keep our family intact. Chief executives in our society need to put family as Number One priority again. Without that, we may even lose credibility to lead.

Gallup recently did a study on the relationship between work/family and concluded that, "Recognizing and understanding the emotional links between the two – and determining how workplace conditions can best promote harmony between them – can potentially improve employees' lives at work and home."⁴

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META SURVEY: Please take time to answer two questions.

1. Do you agree that finding balance between family and work life is the most difficult struggle in a chief executive life? Yes No

2. The No. 1 factor that affects work/family balance is:-
 - Executives working long hours.
 - Self-interests driven by greed.
 - Personal characteristics (perfectionism, impatience, & efficiency).
 - Narrow focus in defining success.
 - Overachievement drive.
 - Others, _____

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How has the issue of character in leadership been eroded? Read ***Does Character Count?***

Finding and developing Talents is one of the most difficult tasks of leadership. Find out how to do this in ***Power of Shared Leadership.***

⁴ Crabtree, S. 2003. Bringing Work Problems Home. The Gallup Management Journal. June 12, 2003. New York, NY. USA.