



handling interruptions in an open workspace
(continued)

2 | band together

Talk with colleagues and come up with a silent "do not disturb" signal. (Chances are, your coworkers are experiencing the same challenges as you.) It could be an orange armband, a red baseball cap, or even a small raised flag. Employing the signal doesn't mean that you're not nice or don't want to be helpful; you just need an hour to get things done.

3 | "Look at the time!"

Place a clock behind you in view of visitors. Every once in a while, turn and glance at it. Not while the interrupter is talking (too rude), but when you take your turn to speak. Just glancing, then finishing what you're saying, sends a subtle but unmistakable signal that you need to get on with your day.

4 | ask for help

If all else fails, initiate a positive conversation with your manager: "I'm all for this environment, but there are times when I have trouble focusing because of the noise level." Many organizations with open workspaces set up quiet rooms, where employees can slip away and hunker down for short periods. Your manager may not know that there's a problem. Raising the issue in a constructive way can get results.

—Kaitlyn Pirie



THE VIEW FROM HERE

ROSALIND BREWER

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF SAM'S CLUB

Scientist-turned-CEO Rosalind Brewer worked her way from developing diapers for Kimberly-Clark to running Sam's Club, a division of Walmart. She juggles her life as a mom with her corner-office responsibilities while mentoring as many young women as she can. Brewer took some time to speak with *Real Simple* about leadership, family, and the myth of work-life balance.

WRITTEN BY Jane Porter

When you were growing up, what influence did your family have on you?

I'm the youngest of five and grew up in a blue-collar household in Detroit. With my dad working three jobs, I saw a lot of hard-work ethic. We were never allowed to sleep late. I'm still an early riser. My two kids hate it. They go to bed

late and wake up late. Late for me on a Saturday is 6 or 6:30.

What's your A.M. routine?

I get up around 5:15 and usually meditate before I leave the bed. Then I'll throw a load of laundry in and prepare dinner for later. I juice before I head to the office. (I like kale, cucumber, lime, and cayenne.)

I'm usually there around 7:45, once I get my daughter off to school.

With 103,000 employees, what's the scariest thing about being a boss?

I feel like the decisions I make could impact all their lives. I think about that often. It's the pressure of knowing that I have the responsibility for their careers.

How does that affect your decisions?

I always think about creating an environment where people can stretch and grow.

What's it like to be in a meeting run by you?

I try to encourage direct conversations. If I've got a bone to pick with the team, I will pick it. But I also enjoy the personal part of the business. ▶

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the guide | WORK & MONEY

What do you mean?

When some of your folks come to work, you never know what they've lived through the day or night before. If you want to engage them in the best business conversation, you have to relieve them of whatever is on their mind. That's really the way I operate best.

How do you stay in touch with such a big team?

Once a month, I bring everybody at our headquarters together for an hour. I'll talk frankly about our business with all 1,800 in the room. You would think there were more like 10 of us in there. If they open up with good music, I'll start dancing. In my mind, I call it our family meeting, because we talk about each other.

Tell us about mentoring.

I conduct mentoring circles at work because one-on-ones don't allow me to get to everyone. At Spelman College [her alma mater], I work with about 20 students. We talk about everything from "the boyfriend dumped me" to tuition issues to how to take a certain [academic] concentration into a career.

What do you look for when hiring?

I try to pick talent based on potential. I don't really look at performance. I always look at what kinds of questions people ask. There's something about the inquisitive

"I've never seen a 50-50 day. It's not a balancing act. It's constant compromise and sacrifice."

mind that tells me, "This person has the ability to broaden."

What turns you off?

I don't like when someone comes in and talks too much about progression. They'll say, "What does it take for me to get your job?" instead of saying, "What are the key skills I need to develop?" There are a lot of folks who want that quick pass. That concerns me.

What's your idea of success?

When I see my kids or my husband do great things, it feels like a full package for me as a working mom.

How do you handle the balancing act of work and family?

I've never seen a 50-50 day. It's not a balancing act. It's constant compromise and sacrifice. Some days it's giving 90 percent at work and 10 percent at home. Some days it flips. My son is preparing to attend a program in London. I'm going there to drop him off. It means missing high-priority meetings, but I'm opting to go to Plan B for work and Plan A for the family. I've developed that kind of relationship with whomever I've worked for. They know they'll get it when I can give it and I'll give 110 percent.

Any last words on the idea of "having it all"?

If you're methodical—you might deliberately slow down your fast-paced career at a certain point or choose to have your kids earlier or later—I think you can have it all. But not necessarily all at the same time.



ASK BUCKY

Time Inc.'s* all-knowing, straight-shooting vice president of staffing, BUCKY KEADY, tackles your workplace conundrums.

Q. What if you ask for a raise and the answer is no?

A. Well, in the moment, you can say to your boss, "Help me understand. I'm not going to lie—I'm disappointed. But I'll continue giving this job my all." Then work harder. Anticipate needs; take on a leadership role; become indispensable. And I don't mean for a couple of weeks—I mean for a few months. Then ask again. Ideally you would be functioning at a higher level before you even ask for a raise, so they can't live without you. It also doesn't hurt to do your homework on how the company is doing. Maybe you'll discover that it makes more sense to ask for a bonus, for example, than an increase in salary.

Got a question for Bucky? Send it to askbucky@realsimple.com.

*Time Inc. is the parent company of Real Simple.