

NASFAA's "Director Download" – Episode 2

- Justin Draeger: Hey everyone. Welcome to "Director Download." My name is Justin Draeger.
- Joelle Fredman: I'm Joelle Fredman from NASFAA's communications team.
- Beth Maglione: Beth Maglione from NASFAA.
- Brad Barnett: Brad Barnett from James Madison University.
- Justin Draeger: Welcome everybody. This podcast is relatively new. We're doing several of them through the fall and winter. All leading up to our NASFAA Leadership Conference, which will be happening this February 25th through 27th. We are starting a new track. It will be advanced topics in leadership in management. This podcast will be exploring a lot of leadership and management topics over the next several weeks.
- Justin Draeger: Today Brad, welcome. Thanks for coming in.
- Brad Barnett: Good to be here.
- Justin Draeger: We wanted you to come in because we are talking about something I think is an eternal struggle, work-life balance, and you've got it all figured out. You look pretty balanced.
- Brad Barnett: Oh yeah, absolutely. Yeah, sure. No problems ever. Yeah.
- Justin Draeger: But we're all going to kind of delve in here. We have an expert that actually does coaching and training on this. We'll be checking in with her and talking about some of the principals and tactics associated with this, but I think it would be helpful if we first started with the identification of the problem. Okay. Let me ask, when was the last time each of you felt overwhelmed? When was the last time you felt like behind the eight ball, overwhelmed, when am I gonna ever catch up?
- Brad Barnett: I think for me, probably a couple of weeks ago. Literally.
- Justin Draeger: Pretty recent?
- Brad Barnett: Absolutely. It's just the ebb and flow of life and then you have to get yourself back in balance.
- Justin Draeger: But right now, we're like fall enrollment. You're feeling okay right now.
- Brad Barnett: I'm feeling great about fall enrollment and school start up.
- Justin Draeger: Yeah yeah. Okay, so you're good there.

Brad Barnett: Absolutely.

Justin Draeger: All right. Beth?

Beth Maglione: I would say workload is not a pressing or oppressing thing right now, but I would say I feel a little overwhelmed every single morning because I have two toddlers at home, so even getting out of the house and trying to get here to accomplish my work goals and do all that ...

Justin Draeger: That's like a whole thing.

Beth Maglione: Oh, I'm in a flop sweat by the time I get in the car. Yeah.

Brad Barnett: Just getting out of the house is hard.

Justin Draeger: The DC summer don't necessarily help with that, but yeah, lifting any child and trying to wrestle them into compliance is overwhelming.

Beth Maglione: Good Lord. Yes. Maybe the work side is okay and the life side needs a little readjusting.

Justin Draeger: Alright. Joelle, how about you?

Joelle Fredman: I'd also say, pretty much, pretty often, I think as a journalist, I also have to be prepared for when my plans get all skewed by things just popping up and so, yeah, pretty much on the daily.

Justin Draeger: For me, a lot of people may not know this, we're kinda like counter-cyclical in NASFAA because colleges are super busy in July and August and September.

Brad Barnett: Oh yeah.

Justin Draeger: Congress actually leaves in August. D.C. tends to slow down in August, so I'm actually doing vacation around late summer, but vacation itself creates stress because you're trying to compact everything that you would normally get done in a compressed time frame so even when you're striving for the more balance, it actually can create more stress, so this is like an eternal struggle. Yeah.

Brad Barnett: And I will say that's ... you said when was the last time I really felt stressed. A couple of weeks ago, and the reason was because I just got back from vacation and I had completely unplugged on vacation, so you know what happens as soon as you get back. Your email box is just blown up and you have meetings and you have things you need to take care of. It takes little while to get back and decompress when you get to the office from being away.

Justin Draeger: Yeah. So, this is a struggle where we are not alone. I feel like it's ubiquitous. Beth, we have some stats here. We just kind of went out and did some "what is the state of our culture here, of work life balance." What do you got?

Beth Maglione: I don't have anything good to report in terms of where we are as a country, at least, we tend to fall towards the bottom of the balance scale for developed countries. To your point just now Brad, we also don't tend to unplug on vacation. I was impressed that you said you did that.

Brad Barnett: It's not a thing I've done always. It's a thing I'm trying to get better at doing.

Beth Maglione: So, I was at the beach for a week with my toddlers, and I'll also say that checking email is a welcome respite but I couldn't bring myself to completely unplug. Some of it was that fear of what awaits me. I didn't want mystery at the end of my vacation. If there was some big thing blowing up or some exciting thing happening that I was missing out on. FOMO. Big FOMO.

Justin Draeger: Right? When you say culturally we're not where we should be, is anybody collecting stats on this? This sort of feels like the happiness factor, this might be hard to quantify.

Beth Maglione: Yeah. Well, okay, so the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development said that "Eleven percent of US employees work hours or more a week and the average Americans spends 40% of their day dedicated to their jobs." We're not the worst out of these groups of countries. Japan, Korea, Mexico, Turkey all did worse than us. The UK did about the same. Netherlands is going great you guys, we need to all move there.

Justin Draeger: They're doing great in everything, except for the ...

Beth Maglione: Because they have it figured out.

Justin Draeger: ... water levels, yeah, except for the rising sea. But yeah, they're doing great. And they bike everywhere.

Beth Maglione: Yeah.

Brad Barnett: Yeah, it's great. It's great.

Justin Draeger: It's fantastic.

Beth Maglione: They're doing great with their work life balance so they're working fewer hours and spending more time on leisure than the rest of us and getting it done apparently, that's the good news. They're-

Justin Draeger: Not seeing a drastic reduction in productivity.

Beth Maglione: That's right.

Justin Draeger: All right. Before we delve into our conversation, we did talk to an expert on this. Her name is Elizabeth Saunders. She is an entrepreneur, she does training and coaching, trying to help people sort out this work life balance. She's also the author of several books, *The Three Secrets to Effective Time Investment*, *How to Achieve More Success With Less Stress* and *How to Invest Your Time Like Money*. She has a website, reallifee.com where people can go and learn more. I talked to Elizabeth about this topic so let's go to the interview.

Liz Saunders: Hi. It's Elizabeth.

Justin Draeger: Elizabeth, thanks for joining us. We're really glad that we could have a bit of your time to talk about what seems to be one of the eternal struggles of any professional today, this work life balance. And I wonder if, before we start picking your brain apart on this topic, this is something that ... I was reading through your bio that you have some personal experience with because as I understand it, you sort of fell into a world of entrepreneurship that very quickly took over your life and you yourself might have needed like a reset at some point. Do I have that right? Can you catch us up on this?

Liz Saunders: I basically solved my own issue, and now I help others. I've been an entrepreneur for almost thirteen years. My first business, I did. I was an accidental entrepreneur. I did not intend to start a business. I was doing writing, editing, and photo styling for about 50 magazines around the country, and no work-life balance. I was so excited I had a business. I was so excited it was working. I never said no, and I never felt like I could relax without guilt. It was really tough because I loved what I was doing, but I didn't feel successful if I felt like there was never a time where I couldn't stop working. That really led me to define work-life balance for myself. It does not mean it has to be the same for everyone else, but for me, as not having to work at night, not having to work on the weekends as a general rule, and really feeling like I could commit to a certain number of hours and then stop. I worked on that in my own life over the course of about a year and was able to accomplish that. My entrepreneur friends said Elizabeth this is amazing, you really need to help others. That's how we started doing time management coaching at the beginning of 2009.

Justin Draeger: Does it seem like we're getting better at this as a society, or getting worse?

Liz Saunders: The need for my services are ever increasing. The reason for that is just the huge up kick, in my opinion, of technology, and with the increasing pace of technology, and how it is part of so many areas of our lives. I really feel like work-life balance and time management is just increasingly difficult.

Justin Draeger: One of the words that you used earlier in our conversation here was guilt. I'm curious, I'm sure there might be a little bit of both, sometimes this is guilt that is maybe coming from an organization or clients or, for members of my

organization, from students, or from their own bosses, or the college president. But, some of that has to be self-imposed guilt, right? I wonder how often is it that organizations are really demanding 24/7 attention from people versus if you're giving it up because of whatever personal guilt you feel, they're willing to take it.

Liz Saunders: Unfortunately, there's some management situations where you are working for someone who likely doesn't have work-life balance themselves, and then because they have trouble prioritizing, they can then impose their value system onto you and try to make you feel badly for what you're doing or not doing. But, I would say if we put that aside, so we assume you have a manager that's within the realm of normal in terms of work-life balance, then most likely it is internally imposed. Guilt arises when there's an incongruence between our expectations and the actions that we're taking. If you're wanting to not feel guilty, what you need to do is get really clear on what are realistic expectations for what you can accomplish and what you should be working, and then make sure your actions are aligned with that. You're focused, you're clear, you're really moving ahead on what's most important, and there's still more to do than you can get done. In my opinion, I don't think you should feel guilty. I think you should feel great about what you're doing and then work on renegotiating expectations with anyone you might need to renegotiate with.

Justin Draeger: I like that definition, this alignment between expectations, reality. If it's self-imposed, then it seems to me that you could find yourself in a downward spiral where you've got so much to do and your work day should be done, but all you're doing is thinking about all the stuff you didn't get done, and then that bleeds into your personal time. What kind of strategies do you talk about or do you coach people on in terms of being able to leave work at work and move on?

Liz Saunders: One of the things that I think is really, really important, I know it's so exciting to talk about, but it's planning. It's so basic and it's so simple, but it really helps people to leave work at work. In regards to what I mean by planning, you could be doing weekly planning or daily planning. I talk about both of them quite extensively in my first two books. What that is is getting a sense of what's the lay of the land in terms of the commitments you have, so the meetings you're attending, the things you have to go to. Then, what are the key, most important activities that you need to get done and getting time for that on your schedule. When you do that planning process, you can let go of guilt because you recognize, oh, this is all I have time for this week. So, how can I make sure that I really focus, feel great about what I did this week or what I did this day, and then stop when I'm done? By planning ahead, thinking about what you want to do, it does help you mentally because you know everything has a place instead of lying in bed at night not being able to remember what you even need to do and having no idea where it's going to fit in your calendar.

Justin Draeger: I remember, there was a quote once from Marissa Mayer, who started Google and then became the CEO over at Yahoo!, she had talked about, and I can't remember in what setting, but I saw a video of her talking about to-do lists and

saying that she has, like all of us, a very long to-do list and it was not her objective to do everything on the to-do list.

Liz Saunders: Exactly.

Justin Draeger: It's sort of what you were talking about. It's setting up a plan every day and these are the most important things and this is what needs my focus today, and if the other things don't get done, we'll figure it out in some other planning session or do it later. We talked about internal/external. If this pressure is coming from externally, whether it's a boss who, their work-life balance is out of whack, or if it's coming from unrealistic expectations, how do you manage up, how do you set the expectations for who you report to in terms of what's realistic?

Liz Saunders: If you want to have a conversation, it's really helpful to lay things out. Get clear: what are my projects I'm working on, what are the tasks that I need to do, what are maybe some recurring themes that come up every week that are taking a certain number of hours of my time. Then, start to lay that out over your weekly schedule. Maybe you map out a week or two weeks or a month, and show that to your manager and say, okay, I planned this out. I seem to have time to do xyz, but I'm not really actually seeing that I have capacity for this or that project. Can you help me? Is there something I need to prioritize in a different way? Should I be spending less time in certain areas?

Justin Draeger: What I like about that advice is that, from a manager standpoint, I oversee some folks in-house, and hearing that somebody's overwhelmed, that's good information, but it's not, from a manager's standpoint, actionable information.

Liz Saunders: Right.

Justin Draeger: It's sort of like, okay, I don't want you to feel overwhelmed. I want you to be able to dedicate the time you need to do the tasks you need to do well, but it's not actionable unless, as you said, you come to the table with, I think you called it a time budget, this idea of here's the hours that I have to work and here's what I can fit into those hours, and I need some help prioritizing. To me, from a manager standpoint, that's like their job 101.

Liz Saunders: Right.

Justin Draeger: Managers are there to help prioritize. What is the most strategic or important thing you could be doing? It might be shifting, but they should be able to answer that question, right? The time budget. Help us flesh that out a little bit.

Liz Saunders: At its very basic, a time budget is where you start with, basically your 24 hours in a day, and then you begin to count down. You take out how many hours do I need to sleep, how many hours do I commute, and then from there, we're looking at how many hours remain. Perhaps we're looking at an eight or nine

hour work day. When you look at that, you can see what sort of sixth expenses you have in your day. A sixth expense, in a day or a week, would be something that happens on a regular basis. Perhaps a daily or weekly recurring meeting that happens, or perhaps you need to spend about an hour answering emails every day. Those sorts of things. You start to subtract those from your total number of hours that you have within your time budget and that leaves you with your disposable time income. From there, make choices on what are the key priorities in your position. The key that people need to think through is that every task, or every project, comes with a certain time cost attached to it.

Liz Saunders: Let's say your manager asks you to put together a proposal. That proposal takes a certain amount of time and if you look over your time budget, you need to see in your schedule, do I have spaces or gaps of time where this could fit in? That's when I go to my manager and say, I'm seeing here that I have these meetings, I'm going to this conference, where do you want me to fit this in?

Justin Draeger: I've got a couple of follow up questions on this.

Liz Saunders: Sure.

Justin Draeger: I think this is great advice. Number one: this assumes that then they have to be able to assign times to how long it's going to take to do project or a task, right? You can't just have 20 things on your to-do list for the day, but have no estimate of how long it's going to take to do each of those things because if you've only got one hour of free time to work on these things-

Liz Saunders: It's not going to happen.

Justin Draeger: It's not going to work. That was my first question. Second question: When you look over a week, is it possible to do, it'll catch up with you, but I'm positing here, is it possible to do a deficit spend. For example, maybe there's a week or two weeks every year, where you're closing out projects, maybe it's year end. On a college campus it might be the couple weeks right before fall enrollment starts, but you know those are just going to be really hairy weeks. You plan on deficit spending during those periods knowing that it's temporary and at some point you're either going to take that time back or find your balance back. Does that fit into the equation somewhere?

Liz Saunders: Regarding time estimate, certain people definitely have a better sense of how long things take than others, I think just intuitively. If you're someone who doesn't tend to naturally have a very clear sense of how long things take, I recommend you just do a time audit on yourself for about a week. You can make that very simple by literally writing down in a notebook what you do throughout the day and how long it takes. Or, if you prefer to use an app, there is an app called Toggl that is a time tracking app. There are others of course, but those are a few simple ideas.

Liz Saunders: What that does is that it starts to give you a sense of, how long do I spend on email? How long do I spend answering phone calls? What does my time look like? If you're taking on a big project, and it's not something you've done before, or it's rather complex, the first step is to really step back from it and to try to make an initial estimate of how long you think something will take.

Liz Saunders: In terms of your second question about the time deficit, I think that is a natural part of everyone's job. No matter how balanced you are, I think we all go through times where there's a big push. Professionally, if you know it's going to be really busy for two weeks or three weeks, then think about what are those professional tasks that are going to need to get done within the next month that I can do in advance.

Justin Draeger: One of the things I think we've all been told is that if you turn down opportunities, you say no to projects that are coming your way, that you might be shooting yourself in the foot because people may be less likely to come to you in the future. Not only how have you deal with it, but what do you advise folks who feel like they may be shooting themselves in the foot professionally by drawing those lines?

Liz Saunders: What I think has been true across the board is that you want to be saying yes to the right opportunities. I can say for myself, what I have experienced, is that when we say yes to something that feels out of alignment, we know that it's going to overwhelm us and it's not really the best use of our time, the amount of stress it creates compared to what it actually is, is exponential. It's crazy. Not only does it cost us the time of whatever we spend doing it, but beforehand, we're stressed out because we're like I don't even want to do this thing. Why am I doing it? Then, afterwards, we're annoyed. If you can reduce the number of things that are like that in your professional life, I think you'll find that you open up a lot of mental and emotional space for what's actually important to you.

Liz Saunders: One thing that I really, really want to emphasize is that each one of us needs to be aware of what's really important to us. There's certain things like, I am happy working 40-45 hours a week, and there are certain things I love to do outside of work. I love to spend time with friends. I love to spend time with family. I love exercise, you know, pride. I have certain activities that fill me with joy, and I feel amazing when I spend time on them. I think one of the most compelling ways we can get work-life balance, is when we really, clearly define what we would rather be doing instead of working during that time and then make that a priority.

Justin Draeger: Alright, that's Elizabeth's take. I think she brought up a lot of good points. I want to follow up on a couple things. I sort of feel like, from a leadership standpoint, if you've got influence, you're a manager, a leader, a director in your financial aid office ... She talked about the pressure the people feel. Pressure that comes from your organization. That's the external pressure. The other one is self-imposed pressure, or that guilt.

Justin Draeger: Let's start with the organizational pressure. There are ways that I think, from an organizational standpoint, some organizations might just have a culture of, we need you to work all the time, round the clock, and be plugged in. I don't know how somebody fixes that unless you are the leader and can start redefining boundaries. The other though that's probably, at least in my work history, more insidious, is the implied pressure. That might just be a culture of ... It's not overt. It's not explicit. It's just, it's there. I'm wondering, from a leadership standpoint, how we help define these healthy work-life cultures.

Brad Barnett: I think there's some unintended consequences of things we may do with the best intentions sometimes by being a leader. The one I come back to is email. Email is just a blessing and a curse, right? Occasionally, I will check my email in the evening, and I may send an email out to somebody without any intention of them looking at it or seeing it until the next day.

Justin Draeger: You have time to work at night.

Brad Barnett: Yeah.

Justin Draeger: It's flexible. It's like, I have an hour. I'm going to try to plow through some things.

Brad Barnett: That's it. I may be watching a TV show. I may just pull out my laptop and just pursue through the email, and then I'll maybe send a few emails out. But, it's at night, and if you looked at the timestamp, it's at night. Am I unintentionally sending out a message that I'm expecting the people in the office to also be doing the same thing. The reality is, I'm just trying to use some time that I have to be there for people and to help people and to respond to issues. But, I don't want the expectation to be that they do the same.

Justin Draeger: Somehow, you have to be pretty overt or explicit about that.

Brad Barnett: I do.

Justin Draeger: Like hey, I'm doing emails. That doesn't necessarily mean that ... Do you think your staff then knows, if you needed an immediate response, it's not by email that you're going to reach out to them when it's after hours.

Brad Barnett: I think they do. I'll give you an example of what recently just happened. The woman in our office who works as our executive assistant just took some vacation time, and I sent her emails while she was away. Those are emails for things for her to look at when she gets back. Well, I started getting these replies.

Justin Draeger: While she's on vacation.

Brad Barnett: While she's on vacation. I had to email her back, just to say how bad this is, to say stop it.

Joelle Fredman: I feel like as someone kind of new to the workforce, where I'm still trying to really learn the culture and impress my higher ups, that I personally really appreciate that overt sit down, or an email when I'm on vacation that says don't answer this now. You can take care of this in a week, I just want to send this. I could feel a calm wash over me.

Brad Barnett: Is that more because she knows you, or is that just because of her style? And the reason I ask is because we like to do things, again 25-26 people, we'll often do these disc profile workshops or all the different ones, BTI's, and a lot of the purpose is just to get people to understand each other. We do them as a group, so they're kind of group efforts. Once you start understanding how people operate, you can communicate with them very differently. There are some people in our office who I will email something to, and I know when I send it, that they have such a need for closure that they're just going to get single-minded and they're just going to focus on it, but that's not the intention. There's some people that I have to email them, or I have to talk to them and say here's something that I would like for you to do, but it doesn't have to be done now. We're looking at maybe a couple of weeks, we're looking at a month, but turn off your incessant "I have to have everything done this second and put this one aside." There are other people I can send something to and I don't have to deliver that message to. Does that make sense?

Justin Draeger: It does make sense. You are responding to the individual needs. I also think there's something to the amount of time you work with people, you start to get into sync. They understand that they've worked with you for a while. I think where this is really challenging is when you have turnover, or change, or new people, and they might participate in what ... There's one article on the Wall Street Journal, we'll put this article in the podcast notes, they called this executive magnification. This happens when people who are bent on pleasing the leader react far more strongly to the leader's words or actions than the leader ever intended.

Justin Draeger: Here's one of the examples that was in the article. There was this CEO who commented once that there were no blueberry muffins at a breakfast meeting. It wasn't like the leader was especially fond of blueberry muffins, just this one time he wanted blueberry muffins. You can guess what happened. The staff then sent strict instructions to catering that there always to be lots of blueberry muffins. So, he gets down the road, like a year, and he's like, what is the deal with all the blueberry muffins? They were like, you said ... That was never his intent, but it's sort of like, do you realize the impact that your words might have. This whole article is couched in leaders need to be more cognizant of being explicit about expectations. Sometimes they might actually need to say ... I think I'm very guilty of this because as a person who loves to go on rants, sometimes I might not realize that my rant will result in some action when really, I'm just ranting. I don't necessarily want anything to be done.

Brad Barnett: Many, many times I'll leave meetings going, to myself in my own head, so secret to everyone who's out there, is did I say anything that is going to lead to some

sort of a negative misinterpretation or have some sort of a bad, unintended consequence?

Justin Draeger: I think that's something as a leader I've had a hard time coming to grips with because I do tend to be a person who jokes a lot, mostly for my own entertainment. I do feel like, Beth, you mostly get when I'm joking.

Beth Maglione: I think you're hilarious.

Justin Draeger: But for those who don't know me, sometimes I'm surprised by the weight that they would put in something that I'm saying. Other times, I might just be brainstorming. The other day I was in a meeting, and I was thinking about our national conference, and I thought, at this other conference they had therapy dogs at their conference. I thought, what would be funner than going into an exhibit hall and playing with puppies. I threw this idea out. I think I've worked with everybody long enough to know that you would take this and you be like, alright maybe, whatever.

Beth Maglione: That's an interesting example because I have a note in my notebook sitting in front of me that says "have therapy dogs at the next conference."

Justin Draeger: Okay.

Beth Maglione: Kid you not.

Justin Draeger: I enjoy brainstorming. That doesn't mean that every idea I come up with, I believe is a winner. You have to be cognizant that just because it left your mouth doesn't mean it's an edict or an order. That could be how people take it, and to that end, they may spend a lot of energy, a lot of work-life balance out of whack implementing something that you've just said on the fly.

Brad Barnett: Do you clarify? Because I have the same issue, that you're saying it on the fly. I have to be very intentional when that happens, to say "I'm just thinking out loud."

Justin Draeger: That's probably a better question for Beth. I'm not sure Brad.

Brad Barnett: Does he?

Justin Draeger: I don't know that I'm all that good at...

Brad Barnett: Again, not perfect, but I have to be intentional to try to do that.

Beth Maglione: You do at times. I think every manager benefits from self-awareness, or at least their employees benefit from self-awareness of a manager. I think you're relatively ... I'm not just saying this because you sign my paychecks, but you're a

self-aware person, so at times we're all busy ... I really did write down that we're having therapy dogs, so I think in that example-

Justin Draeger: Put it in the books folks. NASFAA 2019.

Brad Barnett: That's great.

Beth Maglione: Maybe in that example, you could have said, "I'm just spit balling here."

Justin Draeger: Let's talk about the culture, the staff. I think there is this self-imposed guilt sort of thing that can be overwhelming. This goes back to the implicit part. I don't think employers, some do don't get me wrong, but I don't think employers or leaders are insidiously trying to suck 80 hours out of people's lives every week. I think that if you are going to give 80 hours, employers would take 80 hours. What are we supposed ... From a leadership standpoint, it has to be overtly saying you need to relax. I'm wondering ... I've actually had those conversations with staff. I'm wondering Brad, if maybe you have, or Beth you have in your position, where you've had to sit somebody down and say I need you to tone it back because we need you here for the long haul. I can't have you burned out every week.

Beth Maglione: There is such a thing as self-imposed burnout for sure. Some people really just drive hard, and have a problem disconnecting. Maybe because of that for mentioned FOMO, the fear of missing out, or just fear of things stacking up. It is kind of brutal to get back from a few weeks out. On the other hand, I can say I've taken ... We are a busy office. We do a lot of stuff, and I've taken two maternity leaves in the last four years, and I'm grateful that I had them, and when I got back, the lights were on.

Justin Draeger: Exactly.

Beth Maglione: Everything was fine.

Brad Barnett: It was magic.

Beth Maglione: Yes. It was okay. That was educational for me, not that I thought it was all going to go to hell in a hand basket because of my absence, but it very much illustrated to me that you'll carry on without me. Folks will fill in. It was painful at times, I'm sure.

Justin Draeger: Totally. You know what, the thing about a team though is also ... Your leave did put work on other people. That's okay because then when I leave, we're all a team. I feel like it's an opportunity to come together, too.

Brad Barnett: I think it is, yeah. What I found was when I had an extended absence from the office a couple summers ago when I went to London and ran our London program for JMU. I was away for a summer, still working remotely on email, but

there were certain tasks on a day-to-day basis that I had to let go of and let other people do because I wasn't there. What I found was there were people that wanted to do them. There were people who wanted to learn and wanted to expand their knowledge, but they couldn't because I was doing it all the time. In a way, that extended absence I think gave them kind of some insight into a whole 'nother part of what we do on a day-to-day basis and a whole 'nother appreciation. I will say those are some the same people who I do have to sit down with and say, I really want you to take some time off. Back to your point. Because you're a hard worker, you work more hours than I want you to work, and I really want you to get out of here and take some vacation time. There some people we have to talk into it.

Justin Draeger: I wonder if ... This is something that happens in other countries, and we might have even talked about this on maybe Off the Cuff, our other podcast, occasionally. Other countries, where it's either national law, or they've instituted for all public employees where, and some large companies have done it as well, where email ... You can send as many emails as you want, but they sit in the server until 7a.m. or 8a.m. the next day.

Brad Barnett: Really?

Justin Draeger: Yeah. It sort of reinforces put your money where your mouth is. You can work, Brad, at nine or ten o'clock, but your server collects them and wouldn't actually deliver them until the next morning. Now, I wonder though if people just find ways around that, you know what I'm saying? Cause if you have an urgent need, you still have to do it. But, it creates a culture of, we're going to put practice where theory is.

Beth Maglione: And that's how we'll just get around that, by using Slack or texting each other.

Justin Draeger: That's it, yeah.

Beth Maglione: But, I would direct the question. Joelle, does give you anxiety when you think about breaking news. Joelle is a person who's reporting daily news. What do you think about that. If there was something that came in late, would you have anxiety if you weren't able to address it until first thing in the morning, or would it make your jobs more stressful or less?

Joelle Fredman: Definitely a little bit of both. There is this feeling of, my workday is done, but I don't ever ... I always have Slack on my phone. I always have Twitter, and I have my email just in case something does come through because I know in my position, I would be responsible. I'm not constantly checking it when I'm home, but there is part of me that's ... My workday, it's technically over, but I still have to be half on in a way.

Justin Draeger: This is similar probably to public policy too. Congress drives work. From a campus, students and parents can't all come in during normal business hours.

Processing has to get done, disbursements. Workdays don't always end, and how do you from a leadership standpoint then deal with those anomalies?

Brad Barnett: I think a lot of depends, especially on a campus, on the time of the year. There are expectations on certain ... For example, we're getting ready to start dispersing for the Fall. We're hitting that ten day before the Fall semester begins, so I have asked everyone who is responsible for dispersing, please don't take any time off that week, and please make sure you're here.

Justin Draeger: Right.

Brad Barnett: Right. That's just a nature of the job. There are weekend events that sometimes we have where you this big open house and you invite all these perspectives students to come in. There's a Saturday where we have to have people come into the office and work. That's not a normal work schedule. Those are the challenging times. There's High School workshops that happen at night, but we try to accommodate that as a leader. If somebody comes in and works on a Saturday, then we give them another day off during the week, and usually it's not a time for time change. If you're gonna come work half a day Saturday, just take a day off during the week. I don't care. That's great. I appreciate you volunteering your time to come in a work on an odd hour when all your family is off.

Justin Draeger: I want to transition to modeling. The question I have is: Have you ever left vacation time on the table?

Brad Barnett: Every year.

Justin Draeger: Every year.

Beth Maglione: Not as much as I used to, but yes. Before children, I did it all the time.

Justin Draeger: Joelle?

Joelle Fredman: Yeah, definitely.

Justin Draeger: One of the things that statistically was cited in a presentation that happened at the NASFAA conferences last year, Phillip Hawkins did it, they've been doing surveys of aid offices, and they found that a significant percentage of aid administrators are leaving vacation on the table. We all know, just by doing math, that when you do that, you are taking a pay cut, because you are not utilizing a paid benefit to you.

Brad Barnett: I hadn't actually thought of it that way.

Justin Draeger: There you go.

Brad Barnett: Now, I'm a little depressed right now.

Justin Draeger: You have taken a pay cut-

Beth Maglione: Extra motivation.

Justin Draeger: I think of it that way because I've also ... I'm actually pretty good about not leaving time on the table, and maybe it's because of the pay cut mentality, but I did it. A year ago I left time on the table, and I thought, I don't want to do this again. Now, from a leadership standpoint, you don't want to be the bottleneck, right? There's some guilt associated with that. If all these people put work in, and it needs to go across your desk, you being out affects some of that work. But, if you're modeling good behavior, the way you might do that is maybe you've got to delegate more. Maybe to your number twos or threes, you've got to say, you've got the approval on this. You know the process. You can take it. I'm going to model good behavior by being out, and really being out. Do you feel comfortable doing that in your office?

Beth Maglione: I do, and I'm feeling more comfortable. We just went through a complete reorganization this past year. The reorganization is challenging in a lot of ways, and you become busier during a reorganization because there are people who have to pick up extra duties and do other things while you're hiring new people and training new things to kind of keep the ship moving. Part of that is, there are a lot of things I used to do that I have to delegate and I have to let go of. I'm very honest with the people who I'm delegating them to or letting go. I've sat down and had conversations. I had one just the other day with someone in our office who's taking over some compliance responsibilities I used to do. She asked me a question, and I immediately went into giving her the answer, and I stopped myself halfway through and I said, you know this is hard for me because I have to let go and let you make the decision. So, I'm not going to give you the answer. I'm happy to consult if you need to, but this is a challenge for me to continuously let go of things.

Justin Draeger: I think that is, and we've talked about this in a previous episode, but this is one of the differentiating factors between leadership and management. Leaders have to actually delegate more so they have more time to be focusing on big picture and strategy. I've talked to people who have moved up through the ranks about this, because usually with a promotion comes a larger salary. What we are paying for is not the same tasks or output you did before. What we are paying you for is your judgment, your experience, your higher-level, big picture thinking. When you've been doing a job and you're promoted and you're overseeing the jobs you used to do, it's really hard not to get sucked right into the way you used to do it. Cause you know you could do it. You have done it.

Justin Draeger: One other thing I want to say on the culture piece is, Beth, you talked about just in general the poor job we do of culture. I don't think you said it this way, but I sort of feel like for a lot of years, we've been operating under a societal culture of the humble brag about how busy I am. It's the, I'm super busy, no I'm busier. I

see it on social media posts. I see it when you ask people how they're doing, it's just always how busy I am. "Crazy busy" is the phrase that was hot for a while. The way culturally I try to change that is, when I have my out of office message, I'm pretty cognizant of saying I'm having a great time of doing something else. I put in there what I'm doing. I'm camping. I'm celebrating the fact that I am not busy right now. I'm off, intentionally vacationing. I know that almost sounds like ... I feel kind of like an ass doing it, but I also feel like I'm purposefully trying to tell people, I'm taking time, you should take time.

- Beth Maglione: It comes right from the top. That's what I've experienced from other organizations. If there's a culture of everybody should be working past seven and doing this and that, it's what they're seeing from the top. If they see a CEO or a top leadership that is taking time and enjoying that, that is gaining emotional and psychological sustenance from their time off, then I really do think that staff will be like, "Oh okay. We can do this too. We're not transporting hearts in igloo coolers on helicopters."
- Justin Draeger: Those people cannot have work off.
- Beth Maglione: No those people should not have any time off. Always-
- Justin Draeger: Especially if it's my heart.
- Beth Maglione: That's it. This is not brain surgery ... Even brain surgeons, by God, need their time off.
- Justin Draeger: Especially brain surgeons.
- Brad Barnett: Well rested.
- Beth Maglione: Well rested brain surgeons, yes.
- Justin Draeger: The other piece of all this is then, as a leader, how do you make sure that you have the right work/life balance? One of the things that Elizabeth talked about was this-
- Brad Barnett: Time budget.
- Justin Draeger: Yeah. Have you employed something like this? This might just seem like another to-do, frankly. We're not trying to heap more work on people, but-
- Brad Barnett: Yeah, I never really thought about it in the terms of the way Elizabeth had described it. I just kind of did it. Again, let's set the stage clear. Far from perfect. Work/life balance is, I'll use the word struggle for lack anything else. It's a constant effort, let's put it that way.
- Justin Draeger: It's like mowing the lawn. You have to keep doing it.

Brad Barnett: You just have to keep doing it. You don't reach a point and all of a sudden you're in this Nirvana balance place and you never have to do anything again. It's constant. The time budget, I think the way she described it and the way I have kind of accidentally implemented it, I think has been very effective for me. An example is, about a week ago, we had a pretty major re-awarding project we had to do. Nothing bad, it was all good stuff, but it was going to require manually intervention of touching a couple thousand records. I sat down and said, let me set my stopwatch for ten minutes and see how many of these students I can do in ten minutes. Okay, now I know how many we have left on this work to do, I know roughly how long it's going to take to do the entire project. I don't have twelve and a half hours to sit here and do this entire project, so how many people can we pull in? Pull an hour out of each person, knock it out, and we're done. That's time budget type of mentality from what Elizabeth was talking about, but that's work. I think it also goes into the play aspect.

Justin Draeger: How so?

Brad Barnett: I try to be very intentional in the office. You mentioned having small kids, Beth. We want to be as flexible as we can with your mental health and your family health as well. People who have small kids, I'm completely flexible. If you've got to maneuver your schedule around during certain times of the year for daycare or for school activities, you work out your time, just make sure you can handle the things in the office. Work out your time other ways, kind of that flexibility piece. Then, when I map my week out, every week there are certain tasks that I have to allocate a certain amount of time to, and those are times when I will close my door, and my door is open probably like 95% of the week. From a time perspective and budgeting my time, there are key things I know I have to get done. So, they're strategically put on my schedule and that door is shut with a sign that basically says do not disturb.

Justin Draeger: Open door doesn't mean it's open 24/7, it means that I have an open door policy that I will talk to anybody, we just have to make sure it's a time when we both have availability, because I do think there's this feeling as a leader that you don't want to close yourself off from you employees. But in terms of modeling good behavior and balancing your own work life, you have to have time to think, to get planning done.

Beth Maglione: Physical environment plays in here for sure. In fact, there's a study that I saw recently that was talking about restfulness and napping midday. Justin, as my boss, how would you feel if I took a 45 minute nap every day at two?

Justin Draeger: I would love it. Well, I honestly wouldn't care at all. I think 45 minutes is actually too long for a nap. Just-

Brad Barnett: I'm a bad napper, so...

Justin Draeger: Biologically speaking-

Beth Maglione: It would take me that long to fall asleep.

Justin Draeger: A power nap is a good 20-25 minutes.

Brad Barnett: We try to look at it holistically, so there's physical, mental, spiritual, the whole aspect of work/life balance, and we've talked some about family time and trying to be flexible with our family hours, and children, and those types of things. There's also this idea of just your mental and your physical health, and how do you do that while you're at work?

Brad Barnett: Are there things on your campuses that you can take advantage of? We have a great, we call it a talent development office of JMU, that has a whole bunch of professional development opportunities people can do. They're free. They're on campus. Some of them are half-day events. Some of them are couple day events. We encourage people to sign up and go and just do them. Do as many as you want, as often as you want. Make sure you're here during the key times. Dispersers, don't go do a whole week of events during the week we're dispersing, but do those. We've got a great Rec facility on campus. A major gym. There's four of us in the office, who every day at lunch go work out. Hopefully, we're modeling that it's okay to do that.

Justin Draeger: Right.

Brad Barnett: Cause that's where I found out it was okay. When I first came to JMU, one of the vice presidents was talking to me about it, and I saw him working out in the gym.

Justin Draeger: In the middle of the day?

Brad Barnett: In the middle of the day. And I thought, well that's cool, cause at my prior institution, you could never do that.

Justin Draeger: It was the culture of eat at your desk, keep working, plow through. Right.

Brad Barnett: That was the culture. Now, we encourage people to go out and do it. There are some people who don't feel comfortable working out with students, but there are other facilities in town that they use, and they may come in a little late, or leave a little early. Kind of like you guys with biking into work. I think you have to look at somebody from a holistic perspective with work/life balance. It's not just work and family, which is what we tend to think about.

Justin Draeger: There's the self.

Brad Barnett: There's the self-part of that balance. For me, that physical exertion in the middle of the day is a stress relief and it's a mental relief. I often actually have clarity of

ideas while I'm in the middle of a rep in the gym. Things that were stressing me out earlier then all of a sudden pop into my mind because I'm not thinking about them and I'm in a different place.

Justin Draeger: I think that's a really great point, Brad, because I will say, in my position as I look for leaders in our profession, in the financial aid world, and I look for leaders internally as NASFAA, I'm not talking about managers, I'm talking about leaders. What I'm looking for are people who can make connections between disparate ideas. That requires free thinking. That requires flow. That requires exposure to more than your specific job duties. It's taking what seem to be unrelated concepts and tying them together in a meaningful way that can be implemented maybe functionally in your office. Maybe it's a principle you can teach at an in-service staff meeting. But, it's this grabbing multiple things and making connections. You can't do that when you're in the day-to-day 24/7.

Brad Barnett: Couldn't agree more.

Justin Draeger: It's that creative space.

Brad Barnett: I love listening to podcasts. I'm kind of podcast junkie with a few different ones. I was listening to an interview of a guy named Larry North a couple weeks ago. He's a big-wig in the fitness industry. He came from a very bad background and now has all this kind of stuff, and in the podcast he said, "you know what, I'm never busy." At first, I was kind of taken aback by that. I was like, what do you mean you're never busy? You run this multi-million dollar ... And then I listened to him talk about it a little more and I started thinking about it and reflecting on it, and I get it. Really, he is more intentional about his time, and he trusts people to do the in-the-weeds stuff so he can do the leadership stuff.

Brad Barnett: I know in a financial aid office, as we get closer to school starting, we all feel busy, and it's hard to have that time to take back. That's just the ebb and flow of the work because we have 20,000 students coming back, and we have 200 million dollars of money to get ready, and it pretty much funnels into a time. We kind of talk in our office that August is just busy. We can do everything in the world to try to make it as not as busy as it is, but August just kind of is what it is. I have tried, and I am trying, to be more cognizant of time as a leader. To let go of those other things so if someone does come to you, and they have these issues and challenges, you can have the time to work with them on it. Not, I can't do it because I have to process all this stuff.

Justin Draeger: Personally speaking, great point, because besides the daily time mapping, I feel like there's something within an academic year, and at NASFAA it's similar to an academic year, where you can do an annual time map. I could say ... On campus you might say July and August, no good. But, because I know that, then how do I rebalance in the months where I can relax. For NASFAA, October, November, into December are no good for me. I know at every December, I'm gonna be worn out, tired, it's going to affect your psyche. I say every year, when I get to mid-December, what am I going to do to unwind? What am I going to do to re-

center? It's sort of like not only do you have the daily time mapping, but the annual.

Brad Barnett: Who helps you time map? Is that Justin time maps? Is that a leadership team time maps? How do you look at that as an organization?

Justin Draeger: I think it's a little of both, but it's going again from the top down. I try to model good behavior, but then as a management team, we actually map out all of our vacations annually. Part of that's tactical because you need to know who's where when, but part of it's also, I think, it gives me an opportunity to say, alright, guilt free can I take this time in December? Because I know Megan for example is going to be covering, and I know Megan's getting her time off at this other time of year where I'm covering. It is like to me a team dynamic. I can see where everybody else is, and we're going to cover for each other, and we're all going to re-center on our own schedules.

Justin Draeger: Okay, thanks for joining us for another edition of "Director Download." Brad, thanks for coming in.

Brad Barnett: Yeah, happy to be here.

Justin Draeger: Sharing your insights.

Justin Draeger: We'll put Brad's contact information in the podcast notes. Feel free to reach out to him or us to continue the conversation. And, till next time.