

## Data Trends



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### Father's Day

In my column this month I will once again attempt to walk the thin grey line between what technical readers want to read and what I actually feel like writing about. Being non-technical by nature, I prefer to make fun of 'technical stuff' as a way of disguising my lack of intellect. Long integers and simultaneous equations are easy targets, so why not take advantage...right?

But this month I am not going to make fun of hapless numbers, instead I am going to talk about a complex matter sure to delight the technical few who read on. This article covers an area that I am more familiar with than most, and I feel no need to hide my lack of intellect or to make fun of the subject. I should add that the idea for this article came to me on Sunday 6 September – Father's Day.

To preface this – I am the father of five children, have been married for 25 years, and am 46 years old. Three of my children are boys and two are girls and their ages range from 4 to 15 years old. I work in the oil and gas industry, and I struggle every minute of every day with this subject. End of preface.

I am going to talk about the data trends we are seeing in 'work life balance' in the oil and gas sector. Like many things in life, it can take a hard knock to the head before you start to see the wood for the trees, especially when looking at a subject you have been immersed in for a long time. You think that after all your years of being a husband or wife and parent that you must know how the whole thing works – but when it comes to kids and marriage nothing is certain or predictable. I have received many hard knocks to the head in my life, and if you have ever had the displeasure of meeting me, you would have been confronted with the visual evidence of these as I approached.

My most recent smack to the cranium came in the form of a beautifully written Father's Day card sitting on my bedside table on Sunday morning. The card, written by my 14 year old daughter, detailed a story that she recalled about the two of us when she was 4 years old. She printed a photo of me holding her as a baby for the front cover and put glitter and sequins around the outside of it – the card clearly took some time to make and for that work, I was very grateful.

I sat in bed on Father's Day with my token cup of 'coffee in bed' looking at the photo for quite some time and wondered where all the time has gone? This drilling programme, that project, this new venture, and that conference I attended – all occupying the time that could have been spent on the loved ones – the ones that really matter when you reflect. I began to think that she chose to write about that single event because there was nothing else she could write about that we had done together in the last decade and, scariest of all, I had a sinking feeling that she might be right.

So many studies show that work life balance, particularly in the declining oil

and gas sector, is not trending towards improved quality of life. In fact, the decreasing workforce in the oil and gas sector is seeing many of us working harder and longer to ensure we can survive the market conditions and budget cuts. We hope to be one of the lucky few that get to keep our jobs. Sadly, budget cuts in major oil and gas companies often don't take into account how hard anyone works. Further to this, in an article I wrote previously for *Preview*, I suggested that new entrants to the industry get very focussed on their role and find a niche to make themselves indispensable. Working smarter, not harder is the measure that many larger companies look for in the quality of their employees.

This great quote by Brian Dyson, former CEO of Coca Cola, is one that after 25 years in the industry I am only just starting to get: 'Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends and spirit – and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends and spirit – are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life.' So further to this quote, he offers a quote that rounds out this article very nicely. Even in this industry of decline and uncertainty, one must 'work efficiently during office hours and leave on time. Give the required time to your family, friends, and have proper rest.'

If even one person who reads this goes home on time as a result, even if it is just for one day this week, I will be one happy chappy.