

[Home](#)

Dear Reader,

Ok, we're starting again. It happens all the time, we're continually ending and starting something in our life, yet there is this traditional agreement that January 1st is a new start. And whether you are sentimental, reflective, or pragmatic, it is difficult to avoid having some special feelings around this time. What does it mean, to end a year? I invite you to use the next ten minutes to pause, read and reflect on your life. Does it get more personal than that?

Enjoy the reading!

Isabel Rimanoczy  
Editor

#### Quote of the Month

*"There is only one thing that all people on this earth have – independent of race, age, nationality, health, status – twenty four hours a day to do something with them."*

Uncle Wilbur



Issue 125

 Send by email

 Share on Facebook

 Tweet it

January 2011

## Make It Different

By Isabel Rimanoczy

We look back, we review what we have done. What happened to us and in our life? What were the big surprises, the major challenges? Or if you are not into deep reflection, what do you still have

pending on your list, and want to make happen in the new year?

### **The tradition of resolutions**

When I arrived in the USA I learned a custom that I found interesting: making New Year's resolutions. At this time of the year people take some minutes to reflect on what they would like to achieve or do in the new year, and decide to set personal goals. In a goal-oriented culture this is very appropriate and the reflective moment definitively resonates with my personal style.

The goals come in different categories: love-life, family, career, work, leisure, health. What about time?

I think we need to have a new category, called Time Allocation. What I suggest is that we take a specific look at how we are allocating our time, the 24 hours we are given a day. How much time do you spend at work? How much time is work related, such as getting there or coming home? The answers will be different depending on if you are fully employed, or unemployed. And how do you feel about the time you allocate to work? If you are passionate about what you're doing, it will be different than if you're just making the money you need.

An anthropological study suggested that some aboriginal tribes spend an average of 18 hours a week providing for food and shelter. Half-way through the past century we envisioned that technology promised to simplify and eliminate work, making it easier, faster, more efficient to produce the same things. I still recall the fears associated with it: Will computers replace humans? Will robots dominate the world?

Some decades later we see that things happened differently than imagined. Technology indeed sped processes up, but this didn't mean less work and more free time. Actually the opposite is true. With more gadgets transmitting information across the whole globe 24/7, we developed a tacit expectation that we needed to be permanently "updated", via constant news over the Internet, and of course, everything connected with our work. We send out emails that reach people immediately, who in turn process the email and shoot out their replies, and the more people copied in, the more replies we may get. We all have seen people checking their Blackberries on public transportation, at a dinner party, under the desk during a meeting, or even during vacations. And maybe you do it yourself.

Author and Harvard Professor Juliet Schor wrote in her book "The Overworked American" that demands of work, commuting and family life have been joined by escalating expectations in consumption, technology and education. Filmmaker John de Graaf called this "Affluenza", a way of life that undermines eventually the basic sources of well-being, such as strong community and family ties, our sense of meaning, and also our mental and physical health. All research agrees that since the 1970s hours of work have increased in the US. According to government survey data, the average working person was putting in 180 more hours of work annually in 2006 than in 1979, and married couples are jointly putting in 413 more hours than in 1979. This is different than the trend observed in other wealthy nations like Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands. US Americans work an average of six and a half weeks more than wage earners in those countries. Schor cites a 2004 study that found 44 percent of respondents felt often or very often overworked, overwhelmed at their job, unable to step back and process what's going on. A third reported being chronically overworked, with high stress levels, worse physical health, higher rates of depression and reduced ability to take care of themselves than their less-pressured colleagues. Prozac, anyone?

### **So how did we get here?**

If we look back in time, we find that at some point we were able to produce most of what we needed for our family or our community. With the Industrial Revolution, farmers began to seek employment in manufacturing. Technology developed new objects for our comfort, which helped making housekeeping easier. Soon women joined the industrialized workforce, and benefited from the more progressive products they helped to produce. If we take a closer look at how this trend evolved, we can see that we collectively are producing new objects and services, which in turn we buy, and to pay for which we need to work more! My mother shared with me many times that she had to make a tough choice, whether to continue earning a salary, paying for a nanny for us, or to give up her salary and stay with her kids. She chose the latter, thinking that being there for our education was more important, even if that meant she had to provide for things she could not afford, such as clothing.

This may sound like less of a dilemma in the present times, where young female college graduates take it for granted that they will work on their profession, and accommodate the family to it. However, there is a toll to pay in this, especially since it's not the family but the worker herself who begins to feel the stress and the endless expectations of the system we have collectively developed. Are we working to keep up with an image of who we are? Are we getting burnout to pay for medical bills, a nanny, eating out, handymen, and vacations to lower the stress? As a high earning female professional working in Wall Street shared with me recently, "is this what I want out of my life?"

May be it's time to review our priorities. But priorities are responding to a deeper question, the question of how we see ourselves. Who are we? In other words, How do you define yourself? By what you do? What you own? What are the anchors of your identity? Where you live? The size or type of your home? The model of your car? The brand of your shoes, the trendiness of your clothes? The sports you play, or maybe the type of vacation you take? Or perhaps the restaurants you go to? Our consumption habits are meant to send a message to the others, about "who we are". This is something communication and marketing professionals know very well, and intentionally tap into to get our attention — and our money.

Money that we work harder and harder to earn. So we can keep up with what we want to buy, or rather, what we feel we "need". We need to take vacations! We need to have a better phone, we need a faster computer, it's time to get a newer car, or a home with one more bedroom. And we need some balance in our life, so we need some money to pay for "well deserved" entertainment. How else would we recharge the batteries?

Juliet Schor, in her 2010 book "Plenitude", suggests a new alternative: work less and use the freed-up hours investing in new skills and activities; for example replacing processed foods by making food, seek homemade or community produced services and products that can be exchanged or purchased at lower prices. Invest in social relationships, with family, friends and community: this is a form of wealth that filters into the soul and creates mental health. Hours spent in leisure activities that require little monetary outlay substitute for expensive entertainment of a higher income lifestyle. Think connecting with Nature, playing, spending time with children or animals.

So, as you start this new year, how do you want to make it different?<sup>[1]</sup>




#### References:


Juliet B. Schor: Plenitude: The new economics of true wealth. The Penguin Press, NY (2010)

Juliet B. Schor: The Overworked American: The unexpected decline of leisure. Basic Books, NY (1991)

---

[\[1\]](#) If you want to learn about a reflective workshop to making it different by making a difference, contact **Isabel Rimanoczy**.

 Send by email

 Share on Facebook

 Tweet it

---



LIM News is published by LIM LLC  
Editor: Isabel Rimanoczy  
Editing Support: Tony Pearson  
21205 Yacht Club Drive, Suite 708  
Aventura, FL 33180, USA  
Ph/Fax: +1 (305) 692-4586  
E-mail: [newsletter@LIMglobal.net](mailto:newsletter@LIMglobal.net)  
<http://www.LIMglobal.net>

ARL - Action Reflection Learning™ and Earning While Learning™ are registered trademarks, owned by LIM LLC.  
Copyright © 2010 LIM LLC. All rights reserved.