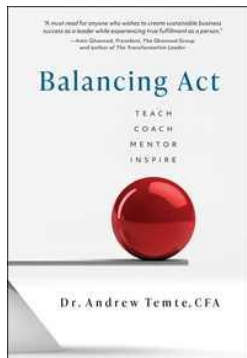


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Balancing Act: Teach Coach Mentor Inspire***

Author: **Dr. Andrew Temte, CFA**

Publisher: Kaplan Publishing

List Price: \$24.99      Format: Hardcover, 216 pages

Publication Date: April 2021      ISBN: 978-1506276649

Reviewer: **Jessica L. Clark, PMP**

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### Introduction

Exposing his shortcomings and regrets, Dr. Temte demonstrates vulnerability and the insights that come with learning from his mistakes. Readers are asked to take an honest look at themselves and are guided through the process of finding balance in every facet of their lives and in bringing others along for the journey. *Balancing Act* provides timely advice about emerging trends in leadership, continuous improvement, interpersonal skills, and business best practices.

### Overview of Book's Structure

*Balancing Act* is book-ended with an introduction and conclusion. Both the introduction and the last subchapter of the conclusion cleverly start with the same three impactful sentences. It is divided into seven chapters, or “parts”, which themselves are broken down into subchapters that introduce new thoughts and anecdotes. Dr. Temte employs the use of footnotes throughout to include source citations and inject a bit of humor and personality.

The parts of *Balancing Act* are separate yet tightly interwoven subjects that occasionally repeat themselves from one chapter to the next. If it were a different book this might seem redundant, however, Dr. Temte undoubtedly does this on purpose. He asserts that not only should you follow the “rule of seven” but that he “would alter this adage to ‘You have to say things seven ways through seven modalities’ for the message to be received...” While he cannot employ all the modalities he discusses in the book, nonetheless, the message is received loud and clear if you’re paying attention.

### Highlights

“Leadership for the Next Generation” discusses the shift from stoicism and the “do as I say,” mentality toward leadership that balances technical skills with emotional

intelligence. Dr. Temte describes how leaders both positively and negatively impact and influence others, and how a healthy culture makes people feel safe and engaged. He shares what he looks for in potential employees and how important it is to help them keep the enthusiasm and vigor with which they start.

In “Education and Lifelong Learning” we are encouraged to think globally and act locally, which becomes increasingly important as our already small world becomes more connected. Dr. Temte shares what he believes are the “Four Core Competencies of a Future-Ready Workforce,” and posits that if we do not understand their importance we will be left behind.

“Effective Communication,” is one of the essential skills every professional should have. We are told not to create our own narrative, and to listen and pay attention to the cues people give us. Dr. Temte takes us through how different personality types communicate in different ways.

In today’s workplace, leaving your work life at work and your home life at home doesn’t work. *Balancing Act* teaches us that we must embrace individuality and bring our “Whole Selves” to work every day. He offers us the words he lives by and asks us to create our own.

In “Alignment” Dr. Temte makes a brutal but accurate point that, “Trust is not the baseline assumption.” As companies grow people retreat into their silos. Disparate values, technologies, and processes are clung to. To avoid this, transparency and accountability must be driven from the top to the bottom. Leadership and followership are discussed and how it is important to take on both personas - when appropriate.

“Leader Standard of Work,” emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership and finding a balance between the bottom line and people. Dr. Temte makes timely observations about how distracted we all are and how we can become more focused and productive.

Lastly, *Balancing Act* uses the Covid pandemic as the perfect example of how crises are inevitable. We learn more about how an agile organization will fare best, and inversely why an unhealthy and rigid workplace will not.

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

“You are Responsible for Your Own Wake.” In boating terms, the wake that a vessel produces has a significant effect on both the safety of others and on the surrounding environment. The bigger the boat, the more powerful the wake. If the boater is careless and irresponsible, they can put others in danger and damage sensitive ecosystems. When applying that as an analogy to leadership, consider the impact your interactions with others may have on them, those around them, and the organization.

I’m a firm advocate for lifelong learning and continuous personal improvement, so I am glad this is brought up frequently throughout *Balancing Act*. Unfortunately, I have

seen what happens when leaders don't support, and even worse, discourage continued education and training for individuals and teams. It wreaks havoc in so many ways, and every one of those ways has a direct and observable impact. Not upskilling both technical and soft skills will make it impossible to stay relevant in the future.

In addition to adopting the continuous development of the self and others, it is invaluable to do the same for the organization as well. As Dr. Temte points out, "When you adopt a continuous improvement mindset, waste becomes visible everywhere, as do opportunities to improve even the most basic tasks and processes." I also appreciated his observations, hard facts, and advice on dealing with individuals in the organization who comprise the "clay layer," and are resistant to change.

Technology can be a force for good... and not so good. *Balancing Act* contains a subchapter "Why Email is the Worst." It is not outdated to believe that picking up a phone or getting on a video chat is a better option than email in most cases. Readers are given great advice on when an email is appropriate, and how to use it wisely to avoid miscommunication, adverse interactions, and waste.

As Dr. Temte himself has done, I also found myself asking several times, "If I had a time machine, what would I travel back and tell a young Me. What advice would I give myself to be a better leader and mentor?" I also pondered what red flags I would tell myself to look out for, to avoid moments in my career where the light in my own eyes was almost extinguished.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

*Balancing Act* is for anyone who works with people, regardless of their profession or position. I think it would be especially valuable for high schoolers, college students, and young adults entering the workforce because one doesn't need to be an executive or in management to be a leader. The sooner that the skills, values, and lessons Dr. Temte imparts upon his readers are harnessed and applied, the more likely the reader will be to thrive, be a champion for positive change, and inspire others to become their best "whole self."

### **Conclusion**

*Balancing Act* asks us to challenge our own narratives, increase our self-awareness, and learn from our experiences. Take the advice within the pages to heart. Doing so will improve readers' skills, help them to find balance, and influence others to do the same. We shouldn't expect the journey to be easy, "Balance is hard to achieve, and it needs constant attention to maintain." I recommend that readers show themselves grace through the process of introspection and while taking inventory of their successes and failures. As Dr. Temte so correctly says, "Reflecting on and learning from negative experiences is a necessary first step toward continuous improvement... it's a constant struggle – nobody has it perfectly figured out."

For more about this book, go to: <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Balancing-Act/Andrew-Temte/Kaplan-Test-Prep/9781506276649>

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## About the Reviewer



### **Jessica L. Clark, PMP**

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At just nineteen years old, after having left art college and with no experience, Jessica took a job as a temporary receptionist with a small IT value-added reseller (VAR). She was quickly hired permanently and joined the marketing team. Having no shortage of moxie, she began reading the proposals she was designing collateral materials for and started asking questions. Within a year she had won a \$70 million federal contract, her first of many. Working for a small company, she was involved in nearly every facet of the business including marketing, public relations, business development, sales, government contracts, administration, and operations.

The ability to try something completely foreign and excel at it led her to become a founding member of a startup IT/physical security integrator. Tapping into her creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, she built and operated a business that within just a few years was growing up to 200% a year, earning industry awards, and winning tens of millions of dollars in government business. She was able to sustain quality during explosive growth because she fostered a culture of collaboration and never stopped innovating and adapting business operations, processes, and tools.

Now, Jessica is the president of JLC Consulting, where she works to help startups and SMBs in IT, security, and related industries to grow, overcome operational challenges, and thrive. She is currently back in college upskilling to earn a degree in cybersecurity.

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