

Summary of Results of 2009 Copreneur Study

By

Dr. Jill Helmle

- This study took place between September, 2008-September, 2009. 105 married couples who own and operate their own businesses (aka: copreneurs) completed a survey about their personal and professional relationship. Additionally, 20 of those 105 couples were interviewed as a follow-up to the survey. Some highlights of the results are discussed below.
- The results indicate that the more copreneurs successfully negotiate their needs in their relationship with their spouse (need for independence/connection, need for relationship predictability/novelty, need for openness with partner and also some things to remain private, and work and family needs), the more satisfied they will be in their marriage.
- Also, the more copreneurs successfully negotiate their needs in their relationship with their spouse, the more balance they will experience between their work and family lives.
- Husbands (male copreneurs) reported that their marriage satisfaction is only related to experiencing more work-family balance, WHEN their wives are satisfied with their marriage, (but it is not related when their wives are not satisfied).
- Wives reported that having the flexibility to run errands or take care of family matters when needed also helped increase their sense of work-family balance. While husbands were supportive of their wives having this flexibility, the flexibility was not personally important to the husbands.
- However, having the flexibility to take care of work matters either at home or during personal time was important to both spouses and was related to an increase in their work-family balance.
- Copreneurs reported that the more autonomy or independence they had in their work, the better they perceived their family functioning.
- Copreneurs also reported that their work-family balance was related to their perceptions of how their family and business were functioning (both positive and negative).
- Spouses also indicated that the more commitment they saw from their partners to their work and family roles they saw demonstrated by their partner, the more they perceived their business as functioning well.
- Copreneurs agreed that the more work-family balance they had, their perception of business functioning also increased.
- Copreneurs reported that being able to talk about work at home or on personal time with their spouse was related to higher work-family balance (often because the spouse/family had a better understanding of what they were going through).

- Copreneurs also reported that being able to discuss family matters at work was also related to work-family balance, but less so than discussing work matters at home. Sometimes discussing family matters at work was viewed as unprofessional (so were kept to a minimum), but being able to discuss work matters at home was viewed as a benefit in terms of increasing understanding between spouses and among the family.
- Copreneurs reported some things they do to help them balance their work and family lives, these included:
 - Not having a set work schedule with specific days and hours for work.
 - Having some downtime when they come home and not necessarily interact with their spouse.
 - Managing conflict situations as they occur and not letting them stew. Copreneurs in the study were very good about addressing their conflicts in a timely manner so that it wouldn't interfere with business or personal relations.
 - Some copreneurs prefer there to be full integration between their work and family lives and see no separation, as one copreneurs phrased it, "It's just our life.
 - Other copreneurs actively try and maintain a separation between their work and family lives in order to achieve balance. They say that having the separation allows them to focus on other things not related to the business.
 - There are also those copreneurs who try not to talk about or do work when they are at home, but they recognize that sometimes it's unavoidable and that is ok sometimes.
- Copreneurs said the best things about owning and running a business together with their spouse include:
 - Having a greater understanding of the partner's perspective or where they are coming from because they know the kind of day they had, first hand.
 - Being able to completely trust your business partner and know that they are fully committed to the success of the business.
 - Sharing the good with the bad with someone you love.
 - Just being together – a lot – with their partner, the person they love.
- Copreneurs said the worst things about owning and running a business together with their spouse include:
 - The arguments and stress that comes about from working together/having a business.
 - Not having enough downtime or time away from the business.

If you have any questions or would like to hear more about this study, please contact Dr. Jill Helmle – jrhelmle@yahoo.com. Thanks again to the 105 copreneurial couples who made this study possible!