



FINDING BALANCE

By **O Leonard**

If conferences were a key part our first year, then collaboration would define year two. In the last 12 months, I've met and worked with several remarkable individuals. Some of my most meaningful connections have been those I never expected.

But just as alluded to in the company name, this progress has been the outgrowth of underlying secondary themes of squandered momentum and uncertainty.

Roads Not Taken

There were so many opportunities I let pass! To name a few:

- Although I'd planned to attend **Ignite** all year, I didn't act fast enough to purchase tickets before they sold out.
- I skipped **CollabDays New England** because I was afraid I'd feel out of place.
- I passed on both the DC **Small Business Expo** and **The Microsoft 365 Community Conference**.
- I even sat out the **DC M365 Community Day** although I'd already paid for it.

All year, at every turn, I had to make hard choices and find my balance. As I drafted this reflection, it dawned on me that for everything I didn't do, I still did so much.

The choices I made, even while not always the best for business, were often the best for *me*. My choices reflected my values and my priorities.

Instead of constantly "*hustling*" to get more business by any means necessary, I spent time catching up with and supporting my friends.

Growth through Community

Unlike **Southwest Airlines**, I made a deliberate choice to continue to support the important people in my life over profits. If personal milestones were all that I gained, I would be okay. But that was NOT everything I accomplished last year.

Starting in the fall, for six months, I participated in the Introverted Entrepreneurs Mastermind group with **Gabriela Casineanu**. Last December, I attended the SB Expo in Atlanta where I met people with whom I'm still in touch over a year later. I attended the **Microsoft AI Tour** in both Atlanta and San Francisco and made valuable connections.

I finally joined **Alignable** and also joined a lead magnet swap group. Add to that, the people I've met through **Candice Dorsey's Hey Boss Ladies** and **Rebecca Foley's Phoenix Growth Systems** networking community and my expanded community has provided me with the chance to partner with and learn from people at every stage of business.

Difficult Decisions

Through one of our **Meetup** groups, I sponsored a Guest Speaker series. Although interest was high, turnout left much to be desired. After the series ended, I made the decision to shut down all three Meetup groups although it was home to my largest audience and a source of recurring revenue because it was a drain on my time and energy.

This year has been a test of what I stand for and whether I'll truly stand by my values. Whenever I reach a low point, someone from my community comes through at just the right time. At one point, when I was ready to "*burn it all down*," within a few days, several contacts provided me with just what I needed.

Just like last year, I've learned a lot but my biggest takeaways have been things I already knew:

- **No is a complete sentence.** Follow my instincts about people, no matter how much I'd like to help.
- **Community is everything.** Be mindful of who you surround yourself with and the energy that they bring.

There is still so much work to be done. I have the rare opportunity to do EXACTLY what I've already wanted, so I want to be sure I take full advantage of that gift.



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