Dear Mr. Doan:  
I question whether a business career will allow me to attain what I would consider a proper balance among all aspects of my life. In business today so demanding that one would have time for little else? A job is a major part of life but is not the whole of it. Raising a family is a very important part of most people’s future plans. Therefore, of prime concern would be the possible adverse effects a career in business might have on an individual’s family obligations.

Are basic family ties weakened as a result of a preoccupation with business? With respect to family ties, Dr. Feinberg in the January 1968 Dun’s Review says, “In the family of the typical business executive there is very little knitting together of diverse environments.” It would appear that an executive cannot adequately fulfill his role as a husband and father. The family unit is subordinated to his job. A preoccupation with business can mean more than just a Back of time to spend with one’s family. In the same article, Dr. Feinberg says, “Many youngsters ... feel that their fathers know the price of nothing.” There appears to be the tendency to emphasize the economic side of life and to ignore the equally important personal side.

My question is whether being a good husband and father will necessarily conflict with being a good businessman, Draw on your own personal experience, Mr. Doan. Can you honestly say that en route to becoming a successful businessman, you were an equally successful husband and father? Need these roles be contradictory? If not, how did you resolve the conflict?

Sincerely,
David M. Butler  
Electrical Engineering  
Michigan State

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Dear Mr. Butler:  
You ask about conflict between the time demands of a job in industry and the time we need for our family life.

Well, first of all, I’m not sure there isn’t any real difference between this problem as it occurs in business and as it occurs in any other occupation; the same problem occurs in education, in government, or in the ministry, in any field—and this is the basic problem—the more responsibility you assume, the less time you’ll have for your family.

In many cases this factor has a built-in balance: the heaviest responsibility usually comes to us at an age when our children have grown up, so that in an idealized sense there may be no problem at all.

My own view is that you can have both a satisfying career and a good family life, but I recognize that for the young business executive this is a very real problem, and one that requires some choices to be made—or consciously or unconsciously, ignoring the equally important personal side.

You are perfectly right that you cannot carry a very large business or educational or governmental responsibility and also have an ideal family life—particularly in the standpoint of time. Perhaps the saving grace of this dilemma is that each of us can make our choice as to what we want.

When Dr. Feinberg says that many parents “know the price of everything and the value of nothing” he is right, but I’m sure this phenomenon is not exclusive to businessmen. It is more a condemnation of individuals than it is of the business system. There are great numbers of businessmen who have excellent value systems, and in many cases these are based on a self-acquired liberal education. The man who knows the value of all things (and the price of nothing) is inevitably of more value to the business system, just as he is a more valuable man to education or to the government.

Mr. Doan:  
Is the top of the corporate ladder worth the pressure?

WHO CARES ABOUT STUDENT OPINION? BUSINESSENMEN DO  
These chief executive officers—the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company’s Chairman, Russell DeYoung, The Dow Chemical Company’s President, H. D. Doan, and Motorola’s Chairman, Robert W. Galvin—are responding to serious questions and viewpoints posed by students about business as a profession, business organization, business and society... and from their perspective as heads of major corporations are exchanging views through means of a campus corporate Dialogue Program on specific issues raised by leading student spokesmen.

Here, David M. Butler, completing his studies in Electrical Engineering at Michigan State, is questioning Mr. Doan. A member of the Doan’s Advisory Committee, Mr. Butler also participates actively in professional engineering organizations on campus as a campus representative of the Engineering Society of America. He also is a member of the Management Engineering Program. 

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On the personal side, to some extent I am a victim of the problem you pose. Having raised a family in an imperfect and, I suppose, short-handled (in the sense of lack of time) way, I can readily agree that there are conflicts. But, having raised a family, I’m convinced as well that no one has an idea how this really should be done. It may well be that more time would not have solved problems that were personal short-comings in the first place.

In any event, the central point is that we are free people with free wills. If you want to work a 40-hour or a 30-hour week so that you can spend more time with your family, that is a noble goal and one you can probably achieve—if your goal is not to assume a large amount of responsibility in your chosen field.

Your question is not related solely to business, but to any occupation; and if you are wise enough you can figure out your own best balance in this matter. But I think it should be perfectly apparent to you that not many people are as wise, and that this balance—like many of the elements of Utopia—is not really attainable.

To summarize: if you want to achieve the maximum success in any field you had better be prepared to work long, hard, dedicated hours. This kind of advice admits a heavy imbalance in the way you spend your time, as I am quite aware, but the choicest is yours.

Sincerely,
H. D. Doan, President, The Dow Chemical Company

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All of these Dialogues will appear in this publication, and other campus newspapers across the country, throughout this academic year. Campus comments are invited, and should be forwarded to Mr. Doan or Mr. Galvin.

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