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# HARDWARE Retailing™

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## TOP GUNSAW

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## Mark Schulein

President of Crown Ace Hardware  
Huntington Beach, Calif.

**Hardware Retailing (HR):** What do you do outside of work to relax and unwind?

**Mark Schulein (MS):** I try to do something physical every day—this not only helps me stay healthy and fit but it is a big part of my balancing act. It keeps me sane!

For me, ideally, it is ocean time; surfing, paddleboarding or stand-up paddling. If the weather, surf conditions or my schedule don't allow for it, I go to the gym. I compete in long distance paddling races and train for those in spring and summer. But my perfect day starts with a "dawn patrol" surf before work; it's been that way since I was a kid.

Travel is another major focus. We're a beach family so most of our travel is to warm water destinations and for me a week of surf and sun is the perfect recipe for R-and-R.

**HR:** How do you find time for yourself?

**MS:** I learned a long time ago that you need to consider personal time like any other type of appointment; because it is equally important. You plan for it and plug it into the schedule. It doesn't always work as family and work takes priority, but if you plan for it, and carve out that space, you are much more likely to make it happen.

**HR:** Why is it important to spend "me" time outside of the workplace?

**MS:** For me, I am a much happier, more effective and productive boss, team member, husband, parent, etc., when I'm in a good headspace. That comes from being "in balance." And that balance comes from offsetting work with personal life. It is so easy to get buried in work and the responsibilities and stress that come with it.

I know that if I'm not in balance, it comes through crystal clear to my team and my family, and that is not the example that I want to be setting for either group.

**HR:** What is the biggest struggle of balancing your work and the rest of your life?

**MS:** There are a lot of responsibilities that come with the job and the fact that the speed of doing business and the complexity have both increased exponentially in recent years. Information is coming at us constantly, whether it is at the office, on the computer at home, or the fact that e-mails never stop, 24 hours a day, on my Blackberry.

You need to be able to turn it off, and it's hard! Everyone I know is struggling with this and sometimes we actually think we need it, or even that we "like" being this connected, but you've got to be able to shut it off and live away from work.



Top: **Mark Schulein** believes he is a better husband and father when he takes time for himself.

Above: Paddleboarding is one of **Schulein's** favorite ways to unwind.

**HR:** What advice do you have for other retailers who need to find a work/life balance?

**MS:** Just make it happen. Commit to something, anything, that gets you out of the store and out of the work frame of mind, and make the time to do those things that you love to do. If you struggle with finding that time, schedule it like you schedule any other appointment. There is no time more important than that which makes you a better and happier person. Your team will recognize it...and so will your family.