

When you gotta go with your heart

In 1988, at age 33, Miles White turned down the chance to head the Asia Pacific region for a division of Abbott Laboratories. Why? His wife wanted to open a children's bookstore and he didn't want to transplant their three young sons. The COO responded that he was "making a mistake in my career for my wife's hobby."

As it turned out, the decision didn't hold him back. Eleven years later, he was named CEO of Abbott Labs.

White's takeaways from his career:

Purpose. You don't "solely exist to make money for shareholders. You have got to find a balance, and I can tell you that no one ever thinks you are in balance or that you have it right."

Persistence. On his wall is a large print of Sisyphus, the mythical Greek king who was cursed to forever push a rock up a hill. "You can count on the fact that you are going to take a blow here and there," White calmly explains, "and you just have to keep rolling the rock back up the hill. It's about perseverance."

—Adapted from ["It's a Balancing Act,"](#) Lawrence Strauss, *Barron's*.