



WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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ABSTRACT

Human beings need to work because work is a source of income that helps us to access the not only the necessities but also the comforts of life. The world is increasingly unpredictable and fast paced and technology and communication offers instant access that it is no surprise that the world of work and personal life is constantly overlapping. Work-life balance is the level of prioritization between personal and professional activities in an individual's life. The idea of work-life balance is perhaps too ideal to be attained. Technology has made physical location in defining the work-life balance redundant. The line between professional and personal life is blurring and thanks to mobile technology, cloud-based software and the proliferation of the internet employees are often 'permanently' at work. The outcome is poor work-life balance which is often reflected in stress and poor performance on both the personal and the professional fronts and marked by a general sense of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in employees. The work-life balance discussion therefore revolves around identifying ways to create a good work-life balance for employees because stressed-out employees are less productive and more likely to make errors.

KEYWORDS: *work life balance, employee performance, stress, low productivity, individual and organizational strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The fine line that demarcates work life and the personal life of executives across the world is getting blurred. The recent pandemic has made 'Work From Home' the new normal. This has resulted in the spilling of work into personal life and vice-versa which poses a huge challenge to an individual's efficacy in either area. A question that is often asked is whether work /Life balance is only a myth or is it actually possible to achieve it? Is it possible for someone to lead a meaningful life at the workplace, at home and within the community simultaneously or are they likely to breakdown and lose their own sense of well being in trying to have it all?

Who is able to achieve work-life balance?

Analyses of employees who are perceived to have succeeded in striking the balance successfully were found to share certain similarities:

- They are focused and decisive about what opportunity they want to choose and which one they want to opt out of.

- Their families are involved in and an integral part of their work decisions and activities.
- They value themselves, are aware of their self-worth and are constantly up-dating, up-skilling and up-grading themselves.
- They have concrete long term plans and a clear vision about what they want to achieve- both professionally and in their personal life.

The reality of today's business world is that work life balance is something people realize is crucial for their lives but very few are able to achieve it. The use of Technology like mobile phones, applications like whatsapp etc. result in a situation where an employee is 'always available'- both to the bosses, colleagues and subordinates when at home and to family and friends when at the workplace. The current scenario of Covid 19 has made the situation worse as 'Work From Home' (WFH) has become the norm rather than the exception. One thing is clear that both the work and the home are just as important and the two institutions must coexist,



rather thrive. This is why seeking work-life balance is amongst the most important issues for employees.

CHALLENGES IN THE PATH OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In the pursuit of this balance, it is important to keep some important things in mind:

1. The best laid plans can go awry

People tend to ignore work/life balance until “something actually goes wrong.” It’s a reality that everything doesn’t always work out fine. There are emergencies and crises both at work and in one’s personal life. Accepting that things may not go as per plan and sometimes going along with the flow is the only way to deal with it.

2. There is no one best path to success, nor is there only one path.

“For forms of government let fools contest, whatever best administered is best”

There is no magic route to success; there are no “right” answers. It is imperative however that everyone asks himself or herself questions about priorities and choices that need to be made.

3. Work-Life balance is a collective effort.

There may be many paths to success but none of them can be walked alone. A support network is crucial both at and outside work—and members of that network must get their needs met too. You need all the support you can get—both at home and at the work place. You too need to be a team player—one who is always ready to lend a helping hand.

Interestingly, while people who exhibit a harmonious work-life balance do exhibit the similarities mentioned above yet even they feel that there is never a feeling of being in complete control. The idea of work-life balance is therefore to cope up with life’s challenges rather than aspire for an ideal life. The exigencies of life creep up unannounced—children fall sick, elders need help, a child’s annual day clashes with urgent office meetings, the list is endless. The idea is to sustain work challenges and still stay connected to family, friends and indeed to oneself.

IDENTIFYING BEHAVIOUR THAT LEADS TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In order to develop the ability to balance work pressures with family responsibilities it is important to cultivate certain behavior patterns:

1) Realize that success is a personal measure and everybody has their own version of it

An organization enables its members to work purposefully towards a goal. Similarly individuals too must envision where they want to be after say 5 or 10 years and what according to them would be their idea of success. For some it could be enough time for family, for others it could be reaching a particular rank or position and for yet another it could mean taking home a big salary! Gender, of course, has a great impact upon how individuals perceive their success, and social conditioning may pressure women to take a step back at work but by and large most individuals want to have a bit of both— success on the personal as well as the professional front. This requires that each person learns to become aware of exactly what it is that they want in life and how they measure success. Organizations can support their employees in such awareness through sensitivity training and workshops.

2) Recognize that technology can both enable and disable life

Technology has pervaded lives and it is critical in today’s world. In order to achieve work-life balance individuals must decide when, where, and how to be accessible for work and organization structures and processes must support the personal –professional boundaries. The struggle to be at two places at the same time results in not doing justice to either. Technology is a good servant but a bad master. Human resource policies should be formulated in such a way that employees are available but not *too* available to their work team .It goes without saying that there should not be any compromise on work efficiency.

3) Work towards building and sustaining support networks

Executives across the board realize that for work-life balance to become a reality a strong network of behind-the-scenes supporters is critical. At home it could be a supportive spouse, a family member, a close friend or paid help. At the workplace it could be an understanding boss, a helpful team member or an efficient assistant. Support may come in the form of help with routine tasks like picking up kids from school, or cooking to listening to a rant during an emotional crisis. Once in a while everyone needs to vent when they feel frustrated at work, or need a sounding board to bounce off ideas with a neutral audience.

4) Make Traveling or Relocation plans very selectively

Work/life balance is very often about managing time and in this global world it often means managing your



location. The jobs of spouses, the education of kids, the requirements of aging parents or other such reasons could hamper travel plans or relocation which in turn may adversely impact career growth. On the other hand travelling excessively or relocating in the pursuit of career growth may harm the balance and harmony at home. The key is in being able to prioritize which travel plans to accept and which to cut back on. Organizations must also take note of personal considerations when implementing their HR policies.

5) Appreciate a Supportive Spouse and be one yourself

Your vision for your own success must necessarily include the vision of your partner or spouse. Strong bonds with family must reflect in common goals for couples. Emotional support is the greatest contribution that a partner can make to your career but it is a two-way street and you must offer the same amount of emotional support as you expect to receive to keep your life on track. A partner's support comes in many forms: to take care of the family, to help in everyday chores, and to help make the right choices about work, travel, household management, and community involvement.

6) Schedule in recreation and relaxation activities into your routine.

Work grabs our attention and refuses to be ignored so individuals, especially women, end up compromising on activities which are relaxing. Make sure you keep such activities on your schedule and give them the time allotted to them. Happy people spread happiness...overworked; unhappy people only increase the gloom.

7) Identify activities that add value to life and avoid activities that drain your time or energy

Identify activities that you can delegate or hire someone else to take care of and focus on only the valuable ones. For example if you don't have time to cook, hire a cook but take out time to eat at least meal together with your family

8) Exercise regularly.

Schedule workout activities that increase your fitness, help you channelize your energy and keep you healthy. Spread your exercise between cardio workouts, weight training, and activities that emphasize stretching, strength and agility. Organizations can support employees in this by having their own gyms and trainers or providing memberships to their staff and encouraging physical activity.

9) Celebrate the little moments, small victories keep you on track

It is the "small wins" that keep motivation and commitment high. Every little drop contributes to the

ocean. Celebrate not only your own victories but those of others. The people around you, both at home and at the work place have a stake in your success as you have in theirs!

CONCLUSION

Thus, the issue of work-life balance is so significant that it is imperative that both employees and employers need to focus upon developing and deploying strategies to reduce the imbalance between employees' work and their personal lives. We have seen that there are several steps that individuals can take towards a more harmonious work-life balance. Organizations too can support their employees in implementing many of these efforts. If this important aspect is ignored it will not only result in reduced productivity levels, low job satisfaction and high stress levels amongst the employees but it will also reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization preventing it from achieving its goals.

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