



Work –Life Balance Strategies for 21st century

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Abstract -The “work-life balance” literature is mainly concerned with the provision and up-take of flexible employment patterns. The purpose of this qualitative study of women managers' coping strategies for reconciling work with their other roles and responsibilities is to provide a complementary perspective. Recruiting and retaining highly skilled staff is a challenge facing all types and sizes of organizations in the 21st century. It requires taking a strategic approach to the attraction, selection, development and retention of employees, in order to meet staff, business and societal needs. Work/life balance consultant Hayley Dunne explains how introducing work/life balance initiatives can help organizations to achieve this.

Keyword: Women, Managers, Hours of work, working patterns

Meaning of the term Work Life

Work–life balance is a concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) and "lifestyle" (health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development/meditation). Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle calm balance" and "lifestyle choices"

Definition

A comfortable state of equilibrium achieved between an employee's primary priorities of their employment position and their private lifestyle. Most psychologists would agree that the demands of an employee's career should not overwhelm the individual's ability to enjoy a satisfying personal life outside of the business environment.

History

The work-leisure dichotomy was invented in the mid-1800s Paul Krassner remarked that anthropologists, use a definition of happiness that is to have as little separation as possible "between your work and your play" The expression "work–life balance" was first used in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. In the United States, this phrase was first used in 1986.

Most recently, there has been a shift in the workplace as a result of advances in technology. As Bowswell and

Olson-Buchanan stated, "increasingly sophisticated and affordable technologies have made it more feasible for employees to keep contact with work". Employees have many methods, such as emails, computers, and cell phones, which enable them to accomplish their work beyond the physical boundaries of their office. Employees may respond to an email or a voice mail after-hours or during the weekend, typically while not officially "on the job". Researchers have found that employees who consider their work roles to be an important component of their identities will be more likely to apply these communication technologies to work while in their non-work domain.

Many authors believe that parents being affected by work-life conflict will either reduce the number of hours one works where other authors suggest that a parent may run away from family life or work more hours at a workplace. This implies that each individual views work-life conflict differently.

Employee assistance professionals say there are many causes for this situation ranging from personal ambition and the pressure of family obligations to the accelerating pace of technology. According to a recent study for the Center for Work-Life Policy 1.7 million people consider their jobs and their work hours excessive because of globalization

Stress and work-life balance

The number of stress-related disability claims by American employees has doubled according to the Employee Assistance Professionals Association in Arlington, Virginia. Seventy-five to ninety percent of physician visits are related to stress and, according to the American Institute of Stress, the cost to industry has been estimated at \$200 billion-\$300 billion a year.

Steven L. Sauter, chief of the Applied Psychology and Ergonomics Branch of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati, Ohio, states that recent studies show that "the workplace has become the single greatest source of stress". Michael Feuerstein, professor of clinical psychology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences at Bethesda Naval Hospital states, "We're seeing a greater

increase in work-related neuro skeletal disorders from a combination of stress and ergonomic stressors".

It is clear that problems caused by stress have become a major concern to both employers and employees. Symptoms of stress are manifested both physiologically and psychologically. Persistent stress can result in cardiovascular disease, sexual health problems, a weaker immune system and frequent headaches, stiff muscles, or backache. It can also result in poor coping skills, irritability, jumpiness, insecurity, exhaustion, and difficulty concentrating. Stress may also perpetuate or lead to binge eating, smoking, and alcohol, consumption.

Objectives of Study

- To bring a good quality of work life in balancing the official work and personal life
- To study about the benefits of Work life programs at different levels
- To bring a positive engagement culture in the work by formulating a work life Model

Benefits of Work-life balance

Benefits at employees level

Employees in companies already implementing work-life balance practices enjoy significant benefits such as:

- Being able to effectively manage multiple responsibilities at home, work and in the community without guilt or regret.
- Being able to work in flexible ways so that earning an income and managing family/other commitments become easier.
- Being part of a supportive workplace that values and trusts staff.

Some things employees may want

- a good quality of life
- an enjoyable work life with career progression
- training and development
- good health
- affordable childcare or eldercare
- further education
- more money
- time to travel
- time with friends and family
- time to do sports and hobbies

Benefits at Organizational level

Good work-life balance policies and practices are good for business. Some of the benefits for you and your staff are:

- Getting and keeping the right staff
- Getting the best from staff
- Being an 'employer of choice' and future proofing
- Improving productivity

Getting and keeping the right staff

Finding and keeping good staff can be difficult especially in a tight labor market.

Employers who can offer work-life balance and flexible work options are likely to have the competitive edge, gain access to a wider recruitment pool, and are more likely to hold onto existing staff.

Getting the best from staff

Poor work-life balance can lead to stress and absenteeism, and low output. Helping employees achieve work-life balance is integral to their general health and wellbeing, increasing their work satisfaction and motivation. They are likely to be more committed, more flexible and more responsive to the business and customers' needs.

"Being an 'employer of choice' and future proofing

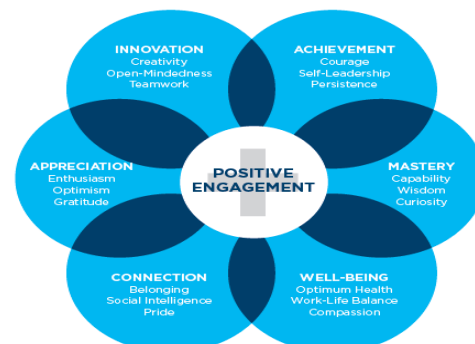
Being an 'employer of choice' can give you the competitive edge for attracting talent. Employees who are positive about their workplace help to foster a positive attitude in the wider community. Increasingly businesses are adopting practices that make a positive difference for the environment and society. Staffs are a vital business resource, so it makes sound business sense to develop and protect this resource.

Improving productivity

Getting and keeping the right staff and getting the best from them will help to increase productivity. Costs associated with recruitment, training and absenteeism will reduce and employees will be more engaged motivated and committed.

Employee Engagement :

Positive Engagement Model. Well Being. This serve as a foundation for superior performance. Well represents optimum health and work life balance



The above model of positive engagement in work life programs emphasis the relationship with different factors for bringing balanced approach to professional and family-run lifestyle.

Employee engagement

Employee engagement is a property of the relationship between an organization and its employees. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and so takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests.

An organization with 'high' employee engagement might therefore be expected to outperform those with 'low' employee engagement, all else being equal.

Definition

William Kahn provided the first formal definition of employee engagement, as such: "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances." Kahn (1990).

In 1993, Schmidt et al. proposed a bridge between the pre-existing concept of 'job satisfaction' and employee engagement with the definition: "an employee's involvement with, commitment to, and satisfaction with work. Employee engagement is a part of employee retention." This definition integrates the classic constructs of job satisfaction (Smith et al., 1969), and organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

A business management concept that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication a worker feels toward his/her job. Engaged employee cares their work and about the performance of the company, and feels that their efforts make a difference. An engaged employee is in it for more than a paycheck.

Employee engagement can be critical to a company's success. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive and higher performing. Employers can encourage employee engagement in many ways, including communicating expectations clearly, offering rewards and advancement for excellent work, keeping employees informed about the company's performance, and providing regular feedback.

Innovation :Key Drivers and Employee Expectations

Employees are seeking "a sense of accomplishment and knowing that they have a chance to create something extraordinary." Creating a culture of participation is imperative, and one proven way to do so is through innovation management platforms. They not only utilize internal crowd sourcing to support ideation and innovation, but employ voting metrics and gamification of processes to augment collaboration and involvement.

Companies that want to drive growth through innovation should create an environment that welcomes new ideas, as well as make engaging employees a key component

of their overall business strategy. Innovation is a basic human skill — it's intrinsic, business contextual, and relevant; a core catalyst for engagement. Employee recognition, employee voice, and crowd input at scale are what innovation management platforms provide.

Rewards and Recognition : Turning Employee Engagement into innovation

Rewards

Rewards—both financial and non-financial—can play an important part in an innovation initiative. For example, GE's Ecomagination Challenge has attracted tens of thousands of participants motivated by the \$200 million purse.

For internal-facing challenges, financial rewards can become problematic, both considering logistics of global application and the ability to sustain motivation overtime. Some issues include:

- Employees may consider financial rewards an entitlement, and continue to expect them in the future.
- Cash incentives may not translate appropriately to different countries with differences in pay and cost of living.
- Legal implications as the challenge and rewards may constitute a contest or gift, and need to be reported and taxed accordingly.
- Financial rewards may not be sustainable for long-term or large-scale campaigns, as well as for smaller companies or departments with limited budgets.

Most importantly, financial rewards may actually prevent building a culture of innovation by promoting participation driven by personal gain.

Nonfinancial and nonmaterial rewards, however, are great ways to motivate your employees while incentivizing being part of a larger team and collaborating for the improvement of the company as a whole. Nonfinancial rewards can be:

- Lunch with the CEO
- Assignment to develop and implement the idea, and see it through to completion
- Days off or workplace perks (e.g. premium parking spots, etc.)

By thinking outside the box and creatively tapping the spirit of co-creation and collaboration, non-financial rewards can have a positive impact on sustaining participation from employees in a variety of different internal innovation campaigns.

Recognition

Recognizing employees for their contributions can provide much more than just a psychological benefit.

Management consultant and author Cindy Ventrice states that, as long as employees have what is considered a fair wage, "money is not really a factor in how motivated they are." Instead, it comes down to feeling valued in the workplace, that their thoughts and opinions matter, and that there is opportunity for learning and advancement.

Managers can recognize employees in a variety of ways:

- Employee of the month plaque or featured on the company website or internal intranet, or campaign homepage
- Email newsletters or company blogs
- Department leader boards that highlight the top performers and create friendly competition
- Public acknowledgement during meetings or other events
- A personal note to say "thank you"

While these are all virtually without cost, they are essential to building trust between employees and managers, and can encourage your employees to achieve more and continue to think outside the box.

There are several practices to take into consideration when approaching employee recognition. Some of the most important practices are:

- **Consistency:** It's crucial that recognition is consistent to avoid confusion and hurt feelings. It will also make it easier for other employees to model the desired thoughts and actions. Establish a guideline for desired performance or actions to help keep recognition consistent.
- **Communication:** It's important to be clear about what and why your employee is being recognized. Not only is it a chance to make it apparent that you're paying attention, but also you have the opportunity to provide other feedback—areas of improvement, weaknesses, etc.
- **Personalization:** Different employees want different recognition. Some may want to be publicly recognized, others may simply want a pat on the back. It's important to always keep your recognition personal. A boilerplate note given to every team member does little to inspire them to go the extra mile.
- **Reward Effort, Not Just Success:** Enthusiasm and effort are as just as important to recognize as success. Even if it ends in failure, constructive criticism along with praise will build trust and encourage employees to take meaningful risks.
- **Recognition in the Innovation Community**
- **Recognition is a crucial component to a building a sustained and thriving innovation community.** First, encouraging greater communication and

transparency builds trust between employees and managers. In this environment, employees can contribute ideas without the fear of being "wrong" leading to a free flow of thoughts and ideas. Business innovation author Steven Johnson claims that this environment is "where good ideas come from." Outlying and disruptive ideas often come from these "liquid networks," where information is freely traded.

- Employees also want to be acknowledged for their ideas. But it is also crucial to acknowledge the efforts of contributors. The support players who contribute and help develop an idea are essential to the ideation process, and should be recognized with their own feedback and praise. In recognizing along the entire innovation lifecycle, and closing the loop of communication from initial idea collection through implementation, you increase the likelihood of garnering participation in future campaigns.
- Finally, rewards and recognition are not mutually exclusive. Together, they can jumpstart your workplace by getting people excited and making meaningful contributions. However, while rewards can help keep your workers motivated, it's recognition that builds a truly innovative culture. In the end, it's showing your employees that their contributions are seen by their managers, respected, and valued that will have the most positive impact on your business and bring real results for your innovation initiatives.

Achievement

- Courage often is overlooked in business, yet it provides the needed push for taking risks and experimenting with new ideas and opportunities.

Mastery

- In a rapidly changing environment, employee skill building and personal development ensure that the business can grow and change over time. Deep expertise also contributes to Innovation and propels the organization into positive cycles of change.

Well-Being

- This serves as a foundation for superior performance. Well-Being represents optimum health and work-life balance. If the goal is to build a thriving workplace, it stands to reason that feeling fit physically and mentally will set the stage.

Connection

- Relationships are the thread that links employees to each other as well as to the business. Healthy internal relationships also contribute to healthy customer relationships.

Appreciation

- Enthusiasm and optimism bring energy to a business, and expressions of appreciation reinforce

the unique value each person offers. Appreciation also fosters gratitude, which nurtures a strong service orientation.

Innovation

- Creativity is required to solve today's problems and to build a vision for the future. An innovative organization also fosters openness and diversity

CONCLUSION:

As the organizations are undergoing a tremendous transformation in bringing the Human resource always as an asset, the work-life programs proves to be the most elegant strategy to retain the potential employees. As every employer wants to enhance the standard of living of the workforce, they bring out work life programs in turn as a contribution towards productivity. Work life programs helps to facilitate a happy, peaceful, healthy and energetic life style both with the family and official work. The positive engagements of the employees

involved in the work enables them to be more motivated, dedicated and committed toward the sense of achievement and recognition. This will pay rich dividends for the work force in upgrading their standards in the form of achievement, mastery, well-being, relationships, appreciation and innovation. Hence work-life programs are instituted as a part of strategy for professional enhancement in their official work as well as to manage their personal family life with fun and loving.

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