

WORK LIFE BALANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

V.Tamilarasu.

A/P (MBA) Tagore institute of Engineering and Technology Attur Salem Tamilnadu

Abstract

This paper is discusses the development of the concept of the 'work-life balance' as a means of tackling the problem of increasing amounts of stress in the work-place as people try to juggle a wide range of factors in their life/work environment, including: work; family; friends; health; and spirit/self. It is argued that, of the factors involved, work is the one which is most elastic and can be managed in such a way as to avoiding jeopardizing the other factors. A major driver of the trend towards achieving work-life balance is the fact that younger people are not prepared to work in the same way as their parents, wanting greater control, and a bigger say in the structure of their jobs and what they could potentially offer in the future. The search for work-life balance is a process in which people seek to change things in accordance with changes in their own priorities, physical, psychological or both, and these can be triggered in their turn by factors such as: age; changes in working conditions; the demands of new technology; and poor management. Employees benefit through: having a greater responsibility and a sense of ownership; having better relations with management; avoiding bringing problems at home to work, and vice versa; having the time to focus more on life outside work; and having greater control of their working lives. The achievement of better work-life balance can yield dividends for employers in terms of: having a more motivated, productive and less stressed workforce that feels valued; attracting a wider range of candidates, such as older part-time workers and careers; increased productivity and reduced absenteeism; gaining the reputation of being an employer of choice; retaining valued employees; achieving reduced costs; and maximizing available labor. The paper considers some of the issues which might arise when implementing a work-life balance strategy and offers advice on implementing such a scheme.



Work life balance

1. WHAT IS WORK LIFE BALANCE?

Work life balance is about individual choices that enable employers and employees to manage the interaction between work and the demands of life that affect health, families and communities. There are increasingly more employees who care for children or elderly family members, manage work and study, seek graduated retirement or balance demanding work and life commitments. This necessitates a new approach to working arrangements. The key to a healthy work life balance is flexible work and leave arrangements. Work life balance is for every business and everyone.

2. Why is the WLB Concept Still an Issue?

Despite the best intentions of organisations to implement WLB policies, there remains considerable contention about their effectiveness in delivering flexibility and reducing stress and job-dissatisfaction in the workplace (Eates, 2004; Kirrane & Buckley, 2004). Researchers have identified two empirical shortcomings within the WLB literature that have served to undermine its theoretical usefulness. The first relates to the WLB literature's almost exclusive focus on the work-family interface. Buzzanell et al, (2005) notes that the WLB literature typically portrays role conflicts for white, married, professional and managerial women, with little reference to the many other demographics represented in the modern organisation. Shorthose (2004) and Wise and Bond (2003) go so far as to state that the WLB discipline is essentially flawed, as it is 'one-dimensional', assumes a unitary perspective, and that its underlying management has been one of maintaining status-quo rather than supporting the development.

3 . Three Work-Life Balance Models

You should balance your work (career, professional goals, etc.) and life (family, health, self-improvement, etc.).

In order to lead a happy, successful, and meaningful life, there should be a balance between "work" and "life".

But, the real question is, are you balancing it in the right way?

When geeks hear the term "Work-Life Balance", they try to run away as fast as they can.

I believe the term "Work-Life Balance" itself causes confusion, and let people take a wrong

approach to this subject. The term "Work-Life Balance" gives you a feeling that work and life are separate entities that needs to be balanced to lead a happy life.

We geeks love technology, and we spend countless hours (sometimes days) on fine-tuning a piece of code that already works, to make it better. We love new bleeding edge technologies, and we are always trying to stay on top of it, by reading about it, playing with it, and figuring out how to implement it in a real-life scenario. There is lot of Linux distributions available. Learning and playing around with them is time consuming, but it is lot of fun.

In the process of enjoying technology, many tend to give less importance to the personal life. Geeks are very enthusiastic when they are in front of a computer, than when they are with their family members. Talking a walk in the park with kids or loved ones are the perfect time for them to catch-up on their work emails, or check the news, or check the twitter/facebook updates on their phones.

In my opinion there are 3 models to work-life balance.

3. 1. Work-Life Balance Model

Any time someone says work-life balance, they are typically referring to this model. The following are some of the characteristics of this model:

- ❖ Clear boundaries are defined between work and life.
- ❖ They view work as a separate entity from personal life.
- ❖ This is your typical 9-5 work model.
- ❖ People in this model, don't do any work related things once they are out of office.
- ❖ They don't like to talk about the details of their work to anybody outside.
- ❖ They lack passion in the work they do.
- ❖ They treat work as a means to earn money and nothing more.

Most of them in this model, hate the work they do. They'll complain about the work a lot, and are always looking for a new job that pays more. But, when they get a new job that pays them more, the same cycle continues. There is no end to this.

They are typically stressed at work, and relaxed when they are away from work. They'll show more enthusiasm on Friday evening than on Monday morning.

In my opinion, this is not a good model, as work is used only as a leverage to earn money and nothing more.

3.2. Work-Life Balance Model (with No Balance)

Most of the geeks and entrepreneurs fall in this category. The following are some of the characteristics of this model:

- ❖ They don't view work as a separate entity.
- ❖ The boundaries of work extend into their personal life.
- ❖ They work really long hours.
- ❖ They always bring work to home. "I'm working tonight (or this weekend)" is a typical excuse for them to avoid all personal events.
- ❖ When they are forced to go out and participate in any social activities, most of the time, they are on their phone checking emails, or on phone talking with someone at work.
- ❖ They love the technology aspect of their work (or the business aspect). They are very much obsessed with it, and typically end-up spending lot more time that necessary to complete a project.
- ❖ They typically don't care about how much they get paid. They are just happy doing the job that they do. Sometimes they are even afraid to look for new job with a fear that they might not get to do the kinds of fun things that they are doing in the current job.
- ❖ They are typically relaxed when they are at work. When they are outside work, they are mostly thinking about the work project that needs to be completed.
- ❖ In my opinion, this is not a good model, as this gives priority and focus only to work, at the expense of personal life.

3.3. Work-Life Balance Model (with a Purpose)

In my opinion, this is a good model, and we should strive to get to this model. The following are some of the characteristics of this model:

People in model understand that life is a single entity, and anything we experience (work and personal) is all part of this single life entity.

- ❖ They have identified and defined a clear purpose and meaning to their life. Their purpose in life is typically aligned with the kind of work they do professionally that brings both money and happiness.
- ❖ Family, friends, work, and nature are all part of their life that they enjoy and love.
- ❖ They are extremely passionate about their work. If they don't love what they do, they'll not stop until they find a job that they love to do.

- ❖ They'll bring work to home if necessary, and at the same time, they'll also take a break from work if necessary.
- ❖ Their family and friends are supportive of their work, and they'll encourage to make a difference.
- ❖ They always seem to find a way to spend quality time with their family, friends, and community.
- ❖ They always take a positive attitude towards everything in life.
- ❖ They don't go to work just because it pays money, and gives them the opportunity to work on the technology (or the business) that they love. They go to work, because the work they do is aligned with the clear purpose they have defined for themselves in their life.
- ❖ They love to do the kind of work that makes a positive impact on others life. They strive to make a meaningful contribution to the world in their own small way.
- ❖ When you are working in this model, you won't have to think that you have to balance your work and life. It is already balanced and aligned with your life purpose.

The following Questions are useful to measure ourselves wether our work life are satisfied are not

How much time do u spend outside work every day?
What is the first thing you prefer doing to relax yourself?

Do u carry home to work and work back home?

How often do u extend your deadlines?

How often do u go for an outing with your family?

Do u plan ahead and carry a "to-do-list" with u?

How much do u depend on others for doing your work?

Do u enjoy a good sleep?

Do u get interrupted during work and how often?

How do u keep yourself physically and mentally fit?

Benefits of Work-life balance

4. Ten ways to achieve balance work and life

Omitted fathers love spending time with their children, but with today's pressures of work and other priorities, work life balance can be difficult for fathers. Here are some important resources for fathers to help make work life balance work for them and their families.

4. 1. Pace Yourself

Four of my five children have been cross country runners in middle school and high school (the other one is into competitive ballroom dance). All of them have learned the importance of pacing to

maximize their effectiveness. The same rules apply in life try to be successful in our efforts at work life balance.

4. 2. Say No to the Unimportant

One of my favorite stories from management guru and mentor Stephen Covey is about the gracious way his wife has learned to say "no" to the mountain of requests she gets to help with worthy causes. Work life balance cannot be successful without effective priority setting. Learn ways to set priorities on the things that matter most and to say "no" to the things that matter least.

4. 3. Take Care of Yourself: Health and Wellness Tips for Dads

Sometimes, the things that suffer in our busy lives have to do with our own personal health. Fast food, while a convenient time saver, can lead to weight and health problems. Managing your personal health is essential to balancing work and life. Find out the keys to improving and maintaining your personal health and wellness.

4. 4. Get a Checkup

Speaking of the importance of health and wellness to finding balance in your life, it's important to stay in touch with your physician as well. Review our checkups calendar to see if it is time for a physical, and what kinds of questions and tests you should anticipate and expect. Being informed about your health is an important part of work life balance.

4. 5. Stop Being A Workaholic

If you have already found yourself in an addictive pattern with your job, it is time to get out of that habit and commit more time at home. Learn the warning signs of workaholicism and the best ways to climb out of that rut so you can find yourself at home more and make more time for better work life balance.

4. 6. Simplify Your Life

Life tends to get pretty complex, especially for fathers trying to balance so many demands. I was inspired recently by a friend and his wife who set about to simplify their lives and to make more time for the things that were really important to them. He felt that his life and work had never been more balanced than when he started to simplify. This article talks about the whys and hows of getting back to a simpler approach to daily living.

4.7. Find a Family Friendly Workplace

I am always inspired when I read about workplaces that recognize that their employees are real people with real needs - that they are "humans" not just "human resources." Find out how to identify and select an employer which will be friendly to your

family commitments and support your work life balance priorities.

4.8. Eat Together

We have always tried in our family to make sure we eat at least one meal a day together. It doesn't always work, but we try hard. Learn more about the work life balance benefits and methods for making a mealtime together work for your family.

4.9. Join a Fathers' Support Group

Feeling like you need a little emotional support or connection with other dads? Being a part of a fathers' group can help you find ideas for better work life balance and for reducing the stress of parenthood.

4.10. Start Having Family Night

For many years, our family has set aside one night a week to be together - no interruptions, no excuses. We have modified work schedules, set aside other demands and spent the evening together. Find out why the family night concept works and how to make it happen in your family.

5. Current practices and trends in Work-Life Balance

Is the typical UK workplace inclined to be flexible? Or are we all sucked into the long-hours culture, blindly shackling ourselves to the mill like slaves?

The recently released report from the UK Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) Work-Life Balance 2000 paints a mixed picture. It shows growing awareness of work-life issues, quite widespread flexible working practices, but also a dominant long hour's culture

6. Highlights of the report include:

6.1. Flexible work

The most common type of "flexible" work is part-time work

- ❖ 25% of employees work in workplaces which offer flextime
- ❖ about 20% of employees work from home occasionally
- ❖ 24% of men work from home occasionally, and 16% of women
- ❖ 35% of managers work from home occasionally.
- ❖ 80% of those who work from home are managers

a third of employees not currently working from home said they would like to

The most frequently cited reasons for working from home given by employees were work related. Few employees cite factors related to caring as a reason.

6.2. Long hours

- ❖ Most workplaces have staff working in excess of standard hours
- ❖ almost half of all employees work additional hours
- ❖ those who work extra hours do so by an average 9.6 extra hours per week
- ❖ almost 11% of full-time employees work 60 hours or more per week - typically those in professional or managerial jobs
- ❖ the employees most likely to work long hours are men in couple households with dependent children

6.3. Measures to create a balance

The majority of women returning from maternity leave switch to part-time work

more women (56%) prefer greater flexibility on return rather than longer leave

very few employers provide workplaces crèches (2%) or subsidised nursery places (1%)

employers are more willing to pay for facilities to relieve symptoms of stress than to prevent it in the first place

7. Benefits of Work-life balance

7.1. Benefits for you

Employees in companies already implementing work-life 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.

7.2. People want to be able to have :

- ❖ a good quality of life
- ❖ an enjoyable work life and 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
- ❖ time to do voluntary work

7.3. Benefits for your business

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

8. Conclusion

Work-life balance of an employee is as important for the employing organization as it is for individual employee. Work-life balance of an individual employee when viewed collectively for the total workforce of an organization results into a colossal impact on the qualitative and quantitative organizational performance. Employees who achieve improved work-life balance with the assistance of the policies implemented by the employing organization tend to be more productive as their work engagement enhances. In the current economic slowdown an organization which neglects issues related to employee work-life balance will end up with lower employee productivity and in turn will find it more difficult to overcome the recessionary challenges. Organizations which are neglecting work-life balance due to recessionary pressures need to comprehend the long-term relevance of employee engagement and productivity and need to continue promoting work-life balance initiatives. Or else, recessionary pressures coupled with lower employee engagement and lower employee productivity will create new challenges for medium and long-term organizational survival.

References:

Frone, R.M., Russell, M. & Barnes M.G., 'Work-family conflict, gender, and health-related outcomes: A study of employed parents in two community samples', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 1, No 1, 1996, pp. 57-69.

Eurofound - European Agency for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2005). *Living to work-working to live: Tomorrows work-life balance*

in Europe. Retrieved 23 November 2011, from: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef04121.htm>

Allen, D.T., Herst, L.E.D., Bruck, S.C. & Sutton, M., 'Consequences Associated With Work-to-Family Conflict: A Review and Agenda for Future Research', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 5, No 2, 2000, pp. 278-308.

Maxwell, A.G., & McDougall, M., 'Work-Life Balance: Exploring the connections between levels of influence in the UK public sector', *Public Management Review*, Vol. 6, No 3, 2004, pp. 377-393.

Kotowska, E.I., Matysiak, A., Styrz, M., Paillhe, A., Solaz, A., Vignoli, D., Vermeylen, G. & Anderson, R., *Second European Quality of Life Survey: Family life and work*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2010, pp.1-96.

Greenhaus, H.J., Collins, M.K. & Shaw, D.J., 'The relation between work-family balance and quality of life', *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Vol. 63, 2003, pp. 510-531.

Carlson, S.D., Kacmar, M.K. & Williams, J.L., 'Construction and Initial Validation of a Multidimensional Measure of Work-Family Conflict', *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Vol. 56, 2000, pp. 249-276.

Adams, A.G., King, A.L. & King, W.D., 'Relationships of job and family involvement, family social support, and work-family conflict with job and life satisfaction', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 81, No 4, 1996, pp. 411-420.

Albertsen, K., Kauppinen, K., Grimsmo, A., Sørensen, B. A., Rafnsdóttir, G. L. & Tómasson, K., *Working time arrangements and social consequences - What do we know? (Rep. No. 2007:607)*, Nordic Council of Ministers, København, 2007.

Joyce, K., Pabayo, R., Critchley, J. A. & Bambra, C., 'Flexible working conditions and their effects on employee health and wellbeing', *Cochrane.Database.Syst.Rev.*, 2, 2010, pp 1-89.