

An Empirical Study on Work- Life Balance Achieved Through Integration

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Abstract - In this Modern era it is a challenge to get the four aspects of life i.e. Work, health, relationship and society fall perfectly in place every single day, since priorities keep changing. Work-life balance creates a competitive and stressful environment for everyone-personally and professionally .That is the myth of work life balance. In this article it focuses on how work life balance is achieved through proper integration and focused less on balancing and more on integrating the different needs of our daily life and implementing the best practices on how an organization can implement a successful work-life integration programme which not only facilitates telecommuting along with flexible working arrangements but also makes the organization an attractive place to work for employees.

Keywords - Work, health, family, employees, integration

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INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance refers to the level of prioritization between personal and professional activities in an individual's life and the level to which activities related to their . Because of the growing amount of technology that negates the significance of physical location in defining work-life balance, work-life balance has become a hot topic. Previously it was difficult or impossible to take work home and so there was a clear line between professional and personal. The increase in mobile technology, cloud-based software and the proliferation of the internet has made it much easier for employees to be 'permanently' at work, blurring the distinction between professional and personal. One common symptom of a bad work-life balance is stress. Because of employees' perceived need to accomplish more tasks in less time, mental stress has been identified as a major economic and health issue in the information economy.

The question of who is responsible for making sure employees have a healthy work-life balance is central to the work-life balance debate. Most people agree that companies have a duty to ensure the health of their staff; in addition to this moral obligation, stressed-out workers are less efficient and more prone to make mistakes. An optimal work-life balance has the potential to enhance employee enthusiasm, boost retention rates, decrease absenteeism, draw in fresh talent, and alleviate stress levels among staff members.

WORK LIFE INTEGRATION

The buzzword of the day for characterising the comprehensive work-life experience that modern organisations want to offer is work-life integration. HR directors are looking at work and life as one integrated experience, rather than measuring how much time work takes away from other employee obligations or hobbies.

This article examines the transition from work-life balance to integration and how HR departments are implementing it to better serve their workforces and companies.

Understanding the Term Work-Life Integration

Businesses used to talk a lot about the value of work-life balance not too long ago. The phrase covered an idea that saw an employee's experience at work as one aspect and their interests outside of work, such as their family, friends, hobbies, and health, as another. The idea was to make sure that employees performed at the level required by employers without taking too much time away from their lives outside of the office.

"Work-life balance" came into use in the 1970s and 80s, as stressed baby boomers strove to achieve a balance between career, family and other areas of their lives. Yet shifting generational experiences have encouraged HR leaders to reevaluate the term. According to Forbes, Generation X has focused heavily on the balance aspect, embracing remote

work trends and using PTO to focus on family and work outside the office.

As millennials have risen through the professional ranks, however, Forbes notes that "they are more interested in finding a career path that will support their 'lifestyle,' which in this context means their life outside of work." These generations are thinking about the lives they want and seeking jobs and employers that support that experience. This inverts the more traditional approach of finding a job and then building a life around what that job's hours, income and other factors permit.

The Rise of Work-Life integration

As work-life balance has shifted toward work-life integration, organizations have worked to understand the gap between the concepts. UC Berkeley offers a smart description of the difference between the two. Instead of referring to work-life balance, they advise using work-life integration since "the latter evokes a binary opposition between work and life."

In an essay, futurist Jacob Morgan proposed that this is just an evolution of the way we conduct business. Morgan said that people today should align their goals and experiences to create the life they want, since it's practically impossible to avoid work and life mixing.

The Reality of Burnout

Another reason the discussion has changed and organisations have assessed their perspectives on integration and balance is burnout. "Crafting and sustaining a multifaceted identity is challenging for today's workers and their organisations," write researchers for the Harvard Business Review. We need to learn how to manage our portfolio of many identities and the expectations that go along with them because of the greedy nature of our work, which asks us to wear more hats, do more, and be always on, as well as the demands of our personal lives and social pressure to be and focus on just one thing."

Many people found that adhering to work-life balance best practises left them disappointed or increased their stress levels as they found it difficult to fulfil multiple jobs. Given how much time they needed to spend on meetings, office work, commuting, and travel in order to succeed at their jobs, some individuals even experienced increased stress when they were unable to strike a balance. Employees can develop distinctive career trajectories by first identifying what's important and then focusing on the concept of integration.

It's never easy to strike a balance between work and life; you could find it difficult to decide when or how to focus on goals that occasionally contradict. Perhaps you wind up devoting too much time to your personal life, which negatively impacts your career, or perhaps you work so much that you lose out on opportunities to unwind or spend time with loved ones. What if you instead concentrated more on integrating the various

demands of your everyday life and less on balancing them? We asked members of the Young Entrepreneur Council how someone may accomplish work-life integration, as opposed to work-life balance, to find out what that actually means and how you might do it. Here's what they said:

1. Blend responsibilities.
2. Keep a schedule.
3. Work with a purpose in mind.
4. Don't try to compartmentalize.
5. Work in short bursts.
6. Truly love what you do.
7. Take advantage of your phone.
8. Find your ideal work environment
9. Focus on productivity, not on time spent.
10. Adjust your expectations.
11. Change your mindset.

Traditionally, Most modern professionals strive for "work-life balance" since it immediately affects productivity and business success and helps them feel harmonious in their entire lives. For a long time, work-life balance has been defined as maintaining a strict separation between work and personal life. However, due to technological advancements that enable people to be constantly connected and businesses to be active and accessible without boundaries, these boundaries have gradually become more hazy.

With the capabilities of modern technology, "Work-Life Integration", a new concept in which work and life are intertwined, is emerging and is perceived to be the future of the working world.

Work-Life Integration Trumps Work-Life Balance

We now work in a 24/7 corporate environment. Professionals across all sectors want to make the most of their limited time and seek fast gratification and connectivity.

As individuals become more integrated into the workplace and frequently manage work-related tasks from home, the lines between their personal and professional lives become increasingly blurred.

They have been compelled to find a way to combine their professional and personal obligations, eschewing the idea of work-life balance in order to develop stronger work-life integration practises, as a

result of the effects of technology and globalisation on the workplace.

A survey on "Work-Life Integration" was recently conducted among 200 business executives by The Executive Centre, Asia Pacific's leading premium serviced office provider. The purpose of the survey was to assess the executives' attitudes and thoughts regarding the quality of their personal and professional lives, and how those aspects may or may not have changed in response to the demands of the workplace.

Ninety-two percent of respondents to the study agreed with the global trend of work-life integration, which is fueled by the ability to work nearly anywhere with access thanks to the Internet, mobile technologies, video conferencing, and email communications.

Because of the rise in globalisation and mobile technology, which forces many of them to be available outside of their regular working hours, thirty percent of the respondents reported having less free time and personal time.

Most of the respondents are so in-tune with each other that they even make themselves available when on vacation. Ninety-one percent of them are either occasionally available and can be contacted at particular times on vacation, or they are always available to respond to emails.

According to the survey results, even though modern executives work longer hours and in more locations than in the past, more than half (56%) are still extremely satisfied with their overall work-life balance, which they attribute to the work-life initiatives their companies have put in place. Eighty percent of the participants stated that their employers provide part-time schedules and flexible work arrangements.

Perspectives from Business Executives on the New Norm

To attain a positive work-life balance through work-life integration, telecommuting and flexible work schedules are ranked as the most valuable non-financial employer advantages by the majority of executives surveyed.

They believe that deliverables and outcomes should be used to gauge an employee's performance at work rather than hours worked or physical presence in the office. They also believe that every employee has different needs when it comes to work and life, and that they should be able to adjust their schedules to fit in with their family's, their children's, and other personal obligations.

Thus, it is believed that flexible work schedules enhance commitment and loyalty, boost retention, and boost productivity and job satisfaction. Their favourite flexible work arrangement is taking unpaid time off

throughout the workday or conducting ad hoc telework for critical personal and family requirements.

They also prefer taking sabbaticals - leaves paid or unpaid of six months or more for personal reasons.

Best Practices on Work-Life Programmes

It appears that professionals of today are looking for work settings that are accommodating to their needs and interests outside of the workplace, in addition to intellectually stimulating work and the chance to contribute to organisational goals.

Organisations must acknowledge that, in the current competitive business environment, providing for the wide range of needs of employees across their various life stages through work-life programmes can be a strategic business tool for win-win outcomes in order to gain an advantage in talent recruitment and retention.

Workplace cultures that are built on reciprocity and trust, wherein managers, employees, and the organisation all share responsibility for work-life integration, are essential to the implementation of successful and long-lasting work-life programmes.

These three best practises outline how a business may successfully adopt a work-life integration strategy that not only allows for flexible scheduling and telecommuting, but also attracts top talent to the company.

1. Assess employees' different work-life needs

There is no one-size-fits-all work-life strategy since the workforce is diverse across industries, with people from different age groups and cultural backgrounds, at different phases of life, and with distinct requirements.

Therefore, determining how well one manages potentially incompatible family and work commitments is the first step in effectively designing work-life projects. This can take many different forms, such as having on-site child care facilities, flexible work schedules, and family care leave.

Regularly surveying the entire workforce can yield incredibly useful information that helps organisations improve their work-life policies and programmes while introducing new, more employee-focused ones. Work-life integration must adapt to the evolving demands of the company and its workforce in order to be effective, and these needs may alter over time.

2. Cultivate a supportive and trusting environment

Establishing a culture of trust and personal accountability is crucial for developing successful

work-life programmes, and this should be a collaborative endeavour between the company, management, and staff.

The organization's mission should be to support managers in eschewing the image of the "ideal worker" and face time in the office in favour of the principle of "Work Smarter, Not Harder." By establishing clear performance goals for their staff members and gauging their success against these goals rather than the number of hours worked in the office, managers should be urged to maintain their attention on the end result.

In this approach, employees can feel more comfortable utilising flexible work schedules and wisely allocating their time, and job flexibility and outcome-based performance management can serve as effective instruments to enhance workers' output and efficiency.

3. Provide the right tools and technology

Working while on the road is now easier than ever thanks to the quick improvements in technology, and companies must give their staff members the appropriate tools so they may work whenever and wherever they choose. Employees may remain connected and cooperative from within and outside of the office with the correct software and tools that enable live file sharing, mobile access, video chat, and video conferencing.

CONCLUSION

In general, individuals are admitting that work will occasionally disrupt personal time and that work will occasionally interrupt personal time, and they are reevaluating the conventional notion of work-life balance as two distinct things. It is unlikely that one will ever find "true" balance, yet work-life integration can help one achieve harmony. The ability to use mobile technology in conjunction with schedule flexibility is the ideal approach to strike a work-life balance. This is a trend that is gaining traction in organisations and is highly desired by employees. Job happiness, productivity, performance, and retention may all be significantly impacted by giving employees the tools and resources they need to take charge of their work-life issues. In today's cutthroat business environment, work-life integration techniques that completely involve employees and are responsive to both individual and organisational demands have become essential. While attaining a true work-life balance may seem unattainable and out of date, work-life integration can nevertheless lead to happiness and harmony. In the sophisticated world of management that we all encounter today, "Working Smarter Not Harder" makes perfect sense.

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