

# Work Life Balance – Work or Home? Why Not Both?

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**Abstract – Women in India have always been given a choice Do you want to marry and settle down or have a career? Why not both? Why can't she have a family and still be a CEO of an MNC? Why can't she cook rotis and still be a Nuclear Space Scientist? Why not? From time eternity women, they say, know how to strike a balance – be it work and home OR in laws and parents. She is the best juggler, the best source to manage time, the best powerhouse of resource. However, it has been impacting her health now, with stress at work, managing home, kids, and parents and in law seems to taking a toll on her health. Many organisations are working to provide a Balance in work life and their personal lives. But the gap still seems to be way too much to bridge. Most of the work life balance policies are evidently seen in new age organisations – IT companies, Multi nationals and the likewise. For other non-contemporary Organisations there is still a long way to go to consider Work life balance practices as Strategic Human Resource initiative.**

**Key Words: Dual Career, Haywire, Digital Breaks, Flexi Timings, Flexi Schedules, Juggle, Demographic, De Stress, Onus, Prioritize, Key Responsible Areas (KRA)**

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## INTRODUCTION

Striking a balance between work and personal life is not only the onus of the employee but largely also the responsibility of the Employer. Demographic changes as seen in the increasing number of women in the workplace and dual career families have generated an increasingly diverse workforce and a greater need of employees to balance their work and non-work lives (Bharat, 2003)[1]. To cope with this, employers come up with innovative ideas to assist women workforce to strike the right balance. With the new age, women have chosen to have a perfect balance. In case the balance goes haywire, they do not think to quit jobs. This has led to high attrition rates vis-a-vis demand for balanced work and personal life.

To cope with this HR practices like, Work from home, Flexi hours, Leave policies and benefits which are more family friendly have been introduced generously in organisations. It is often noticed that assisting women employees to strike a healthy work life balance has not only helped her but has also been beneficial for the organisation in totality. Studies show that women who have a healthier balance of professional and personal life are usually more productive, engaged and committed to the organisation. (Grover & Crooker, 1995), (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), (Lobel & Kossek, 1996). [2][3][4]

## Why is work life balance important to women?

Home and work are equally important for women especially in India. An Indian woman is expected to carry out her Key Responsible Areas (KRAs) at office dutifully and come back home to take charge in the kitchen. It is often seen that a woman works 40 to 45 hours a week and major of them struggle to strike the right balance.

Women employees are given no rebate in terms of lesser work load. It is often seen that women employees strive hard to cope with various responsibilities like meetings, outdoor trips, daily schedules and home. Having a near to perfect work life balance results in employee satisfaction, and a satisfied employee results in successful productivity output.

## Practices that can be inculcated:

Below are some practices that the organisation can introduce to have a healthy work life balance with the employees, especially women

**Flexi timings:** Most women juggle the work at home and then rush to reach work place on time. She has to prepare food, drop kids to school and help elders at home and also reach on time. Instead of stressing the employees to reach on time and then penalising for not coming on time, HR can inculcate practices

like Flexi timings so the employees are not stressed to reach office. There are some organisations which allow late coming for a minimum of three times a month and other practices that allow employees to not stress about reaching on time.

**Health is wealth:** There are health related practices that allow employees to de stress at work. Yoga sessions, training on good eating habits, and other health related sessions. These sessions are helpful of employees. However, it is also the responsibility of the employee to inculcate these practices in their life.

**Digital Downtime:** Many organisations have introduced “Digital Breaks”. With usage of technology increasing by passage of time, it is important to allocate a working day that allows employees to have a break from all kind of digital technologies. Simple actions like these encourage employees to have breaks in between and come back to work with a fresh mind. Such people help in increasing productivity.

The Onus of taking efforts to strike a perfect work and life balance is not only on Employers but the employee is also equally responsible for maintaining a balance. Here are some ways by which the employee can take efforts by himself or herself to maintain a balance.

**Prioritize:** Maintaining work and home is not an easy task, and hence the individual has to take an extra mile to prioritize what is more important. Some days it would be the office work that would need more time and efforts whilst other days it would be personal life seeking that attention. The person should be able to identify and prioritize work based on the level of importance.

**Delegate:** Not all that is assigned to you needs your personal attention. There are always things of lesser value that can be delegated and just needs a bit of supervision. So instead of taking the task up your sleeve personally and juggling other important work, it is always better to assign the task to someone else and timely monitor the same.

**Bifurcate:** Work remains at office, and never comes home! Whilst trying to bring work home will only make the individual confused on how to tackle the matters. The best example would be no talking about work at dinner table and neither forwarding jokes on Whatsapp while at work.

**Have “Me” time :**The way it is important to give time to your family and work, equally important it is to have time for yourself! Always chalk out plans for yourself. Do what you like – read, paint, cook, trek – whatever activity you enjoy should be taken up. This will rejuvenate the mind!

## CASE STUDY – IT SECTOR

Considering IT the fast growing and ever evolving – I am taking the case studies of some huge IT companies to show how introducing HR policies pertaining to Work life Balance helps employee – employer relations

One of the giant IT companies - IBM India practices flexi schedules, work from home options for all of their employees. IBM believes in helping employees achieve career balance.

Apart from this, IBM also offers, payback schemes for Higher education programmes, recreational activities, health clubs, gyms all in house to help employees strike a balance. These practices have proven to motivate and retain the human knowhow in the company.

Another IT Giant, Zensar Technologies have come up with Child Care facilities for the employees. The organisation allows crèche facility to take care of the toddlers of the employees so as to keep the parents stress-free. Managing a toddler and work is tedious and introducing this practice allows the parent to be calm and the child to be just a call away from the parent. Apart from this, Zensar also has Concierge Department – this helps to take care of miscellaneous activities like – paying bills, dropping cheques, pay school fees, withdraw cash etc.

We should not forget to mention the TATA group of Industries when employee benefits are being discussed. TATA Group is known for being the “People Focused Company”. Considering TATA is a big group, they have different levels of people working under one roof and hence the policies are custom made as per the needs and requirements. For the Labour Force, which forms the major chunk of the workforce of their manufacturing units, considering these people are not highly qualified but skilled, the organisation offers, adult education programmes about family planning for the betterment of these people. Apart from this, Crèche facility is provides where the majority of workforce is women.

The off shoot of TATA Group, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is a rising new economy under Tata group. TCS has major workforce who are educated and Executive class employees. HR Initiatives like Work from home, flexi timings with mandatory working hours, 5 day working week are provided to employees to help them strike a perfect balance between work and personal life.

TCS is also running a Maitree programme – an initiative for the employees’ spouses. This initiative has brought together the families of employees.

TCS also carries out seminars on regular basis on topics like nutrition, stress management, healthy and

better living and other topics that help employees understand the importance of Work life balance.

To help employees reduce work stress, TCS has also formed groups of people with similar interests like reading, writing, hiking etc. Such groups allows people from different departments but similar interests come together to carry out their likings.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Striking a balance between work and personal life has always proven beneficial for employees as well as employers. IT helps improve morale, productivity, retains good people, on the other hand it also helps curb absenteeism. These are very important from Organisations point of view in today's times when the focus of every organisation is to reduce costs, and retain organisations existing knowledge.

Introducing work life balance programmes is a win-win situation not only for the employee but also for the employer.

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