WORK LIFE BALANCE: NEED OF THE HOUR

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Abstract

Work life balance has become a major issue nowadays in every organization. With the fast growing competition in every field, every sector of any organization pressure of work load is becoming very high on every employee to achieve the targets. Female employees are mostly effected by the work load because they have to look after their families also they faces lot of stress in maintaining a good work life. As the present article put a glance on the meaning of work life balance its components and the reasons of work life imbalance. For those who think that the main objective in life is to work, their career becomes the core of life. However, people have limited time and therefore have to balance between the two; many mishaps can be experienced in both. This study has the potential to enable the working people to consider their stand point in terms of work life balance and to gain new prospective in order to cope with such a problem.

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Work Life Balance: An Introduction

Work-life balance refers to a person's effort to be effective in his / her work life and in family life, as well. It is about effectively managing the juggling act between work and home. The topic of work-life balance connotes that work should not completely crowd out the other things that matter to people like time with family, participation in community activities, voluntary work, personal development, leisure and recreation.

The right balance for today will probably be different for tomorrow. The right balance when one is single will be different when one is married, or when one has children; when one starts a new career or when one is nearing retirement. In short, there is no perfect, one-size fit, for work-life balance. The pressures of work have been intensifying in recent decades, for both men and women. Factors such as the advances in information technology demand for speedy response, existence of tight deadlines, importance attached to quality customer service - demand the time of those in the labour force, which frequently lead to tremendous stress and pressure.

Concept of Work Life Balance

Work life balance is ingrained in employee's need to strike a healthy balance between employee's desires to participate fully in the labour market while giving the best of him to his loved ones, in essence, between our job and personal responsibilities. The concept of the quality of work life can be viewed as "the degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization" The notion of work-life acknowledges the fact that all employees (inclusive of managers) have to balance between their work and own personal lives, regardless whether they have family responsibilities. Aside from family responsibilities, an employee may require some personal time for other

matters such as socializing and studies. Hence, a fundamental problem facing growing numbers of individuals is how to balance their growing work and non-work demands.

Benefits of Good Work Life Balance

1. Reduced Human Costs

Employees today are generally more stressed which reduce performance levels. Absenteeism due to family commitments and stress could be a major reason for low performance levels. Work-Life initiatives improves employee performance by reducing absenteeism, lateness, health care and sick-leave and hence their related costs. People who are free of worry about what is going on at home can be more productive at work.

2. Improved Employee's Engagement

Work-Life helps employees lead a healthier and more balanced life by allowing them to better concentrate at work, improving the work environment by increasing motivation and job satisfaction. Other studies have shown that improved staff morale lead to more committed staff and better performance.

3. Improved Customer and Employee's Satisfaction

Better customer response is possible through telecommuting and the longer operating hours that can be arranged by giving employees flexibility. At the same time, more motivated employees who have their personal needs addressed are more likely to go the extra mile to keep customers happy. Turnover, and the subsequent need for re-establishment of relationship and rework, is also listed as major factor contributing to loss of customers.

4. Reduced Costs

Office rental and utilities savings due to telecommuting are the strongest quantitative researches to show the financial benefits of Work-Life Programmes.

5. Improved Recruitment, Retention and Reduced Turnover

Work-Life initiatives give organisations a human face that allows prospective employees to distinguish one employer from another. To attract employees and hold on to them, forward thinking companies are letting their employees know that they are just as concerned about their employees lives outside work and about helping them to manage their work and personal commitments and aspirations. Work-Life Programme's key advantage is therefore positive branding in recruitment and retention of talent. Employee referrals also increase.

The Six Components of Work Life Balance

1) Self Management

Managing one's self can be challenging, particularly in getting proper sleep, exercise, and nutrition. Self-management is the recognition that effectively using the spaces in our lives is vital, and that available resources, time, and life are finite. It means becoming captain of our own ship; no one is coming to steer for us.

2) Time Management

Effective time management involves making optimal use of your day and the supporting resources – you keep pace when your resources match your challenges. Time management is enhanced through appropriate goals and discerning what is both important and urgent, versus important or urgent.

It entails knowing what you do best and when, and assembling the appropriate tools to accomplish specific tasks.

3) Stress Management

In the face of increasing complexity, stress on the individual is inevitable. More people, distractions, and noise require each of us to become adept at maintaining tranquility and working ourselves out of pressure-filled situations. Most forms of multi-tasking ultimately increase our stress, versus focusing on one thing at a time.

4) Change Management

In our fast-paced world, change is virtually the only constant. Continually adopting new methods and re-adapting others is vital to a successful career and a happy home life. Effective change management involves making periodic and concerted efforts to ensure that the volume and rate of change at work and at home does not overwhelm or defeat you.

5) Technology Management

Effectively managing technology means ensuring that technology serves you, rather than abuses you. Technology has always been with us, since the first walking stick, flint, spear, and wheel. Now, the rate of change is accelerating, brought on by vendors seeking expanding market share, but you must rule technology, not vice versa.

6) Leisure Management

The most overlooked of the work-life balance supporting disciplines, leisure management acknowledges the importance of rest and relaxation- that one can't short-change leisure, and that "time off" is a vital component of the human experience. Curiously, too much of

the same leisure activity, however enjoyable, can lead to monotony. Thus, effective leisure management requires varying one's activities.

Need for Work Life Balance

The new age workforce includes mostly of qualified workers, who are techno-savvy, aware of market realities, are materially focused and have a higher propensity to switch jobs. In Singapore and in many parts of the world, the increasing emphasis on knowledge-based competitiveness in the current turbulent environment also accelerated the importance of human capital. Under a knowledge-based economy of India, the attraction and retention of a mobile and educated workforce is fast becoming a challenge to many employers.In addition, changing demographics such as the rise in dual income families and other social and economic trends such as an increase in female workforce participation rate, an ageing population i.e. which lead to an ageing workforce and falling birth rates are the main impetus behind this drive for the Government to encourage companies in Singapore to introduce work-life programmes within their workplace.

Work-life strategy is still in its promising stage despite the fact that the Government has been actively promoting it over the past few years. One of the main factors behind this drive lies with the fact that as Singapore develop into a knowledge-based economy; the notion that people are the organization's primary asset will be further entrenched. Under a knowledge-based economy, the attraction and retention of a mobile and educated workforce is fast becoming a challenge to many employers. In short, the focus on a competitive, fast-paced global economy has forced profound changes in how we define work and the workforce.

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Reason for Work Life Imbalance

The past two decades has seen an increase in the number of working women, dual earner and single-parent families, increased responsibility of adults and changing demography. Employees have seen downsizing, restructuring and right sizing, increased job insecurity, increased time at workplace, etc. Technological changes have blurred the boundary between work and family life. These linked factors have contributed to increased work life conflict

1. **Women in Workforce and changing Family pattern**

   There is a growing involvement of women in the labour force and hence the concomitant shift towards dual income family.

2. **Population Ageing**

   As the population becomes more ethnically diverse, it is also ageing; putting as yet unfathomed stress on businesses. In a company in India, employee retirees are being lured back into the fold as part-time employees because some have very valuable skills and experience that takes time to cultivate, .And, with women comprising nearly half the work force (66 per cent of the human resource professionals), there is a need for greater flexibility surrounding family issues. Another 44 per cent reported an increased need for reduced work hours and increased use of flexitime.

3. **Downsizing, Restructuring and Declines in Job Security**

Last decade has been the era of management strategy where the focus has been on cost cutting rather than people development. The changes in the economy world over and the need to compete globally led many organizations to reduce staff, restructure and outsource in order to lower the operating costs. Other companies engaged in boom and best cycles (i.e. periods of growth alternating with periods of considerable restructuring and downsizing as. products and compilation changed.

4. Technological Change

Technological advances have fundamentally changed the nature of work. They have changed when and where one work, blurred the boundaries between work and non-work, increased the pace of work and changed service delivery.

- It has led to a decrease in job security and/or increase in unemployment/underemployment for those without the skills to compete in today's labour market.

- It has led to a blurring of the boundaries between work and life as it becomes increasingly easy to work anytime and anywhere.

- The use of office technology such as email and fax is associated with increased work goals and greater job stress.

At a time when technology was supposed to be reducing the work week and fixing up leisure time, a large segment of employees are actually working longer hours.

Types of Provisions for Work life Imbalance

Policy on work life balance varies from organization to organization; various combinations of options are offered to the employees.

1. **Job Sharing:** Job sharing is a voluntary arrangement of one full time position in such an arrangement that the individuals carry out all the duties of the job, simply picking up the work where other one left. In a divided responsibility arrangement, the duties of the position are divided between the two, each being able to provide cover for the other where necessary. The split may be morning/afternoon, weekly, midweek, a week on, a week off, etc.

2. **Part Time Working:** Part time working is a system whereby the employee is contracted to work fewer than the standard number of contractual hours per day.

3. **Staggered Working Hours:** Staggered working hours allow for the start and finish times than the normal business hours. The number of hours remains the same but can be staggered during the day; one can come late and go late in the evening or can work for certain hours in a staggered manner.

4. **Annualized Hours:** Annualized hour system whereby the employees' contractual working hours are expressed as the total number of hours to be worked over the year, allowing flexible work patterns to be worked throughout this period.

5. **Compressed Hours:** Compressed working hours permit the employee to work their total number of contractual hours to complete the assignment. Contractual hours are compressed over fewer working days. Either five days week is compressed to four days or a fortnight into nine days or so.

6. **Term Time:** working Term time workin^g is a system whereby the employees work under the contract but can take unpaid leave of absence to fulfil personal commitment.

7. **Voluntary Reduced Working Time**: This is a system whereby it is agreed that the employee will work reduced hours for a certain period of time, with a return to full time hours at the end of this period. Generally the benefits (salary, holidays, etc.) are prorated during this time.

8. **Occasionally Working at Home:** This is a system whereby employee carries out a portion of their duties at home. It includes work that can be done effectively from a remote location or is a specific task that requires high level of concentration or minimum interruption.

9. **Career Breaks:** Career breaks allow an employee an extended period of time away from paid work, where possible with a return to the same or similar job at the end of the time.

10. **Leaves:** Certain leaves under the legislation, are already discussed in the Chapter on 'Compensation and Benefits', and provision of other leaves like flexitime leave, adoption leave, time off for health appointments, special leave, etc. help employee in addressing and fulfilling their personal commitments.

Conclusion

Work life programs have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organizational knowledge particularly during the difficult economic times. In today's global market place, as firms aim to reduce cost, it is necessary to understand the critical issue of work life balance ant the champion work life programmes. Certain policies and practices were implemented to improve work life. Benefits of a good work life are reduced costs, less turnover, reduce stress among the female employees. Provisions for work life

imbalance can be opted by organization such as job sharing, part time working, compressed hours, term times, career breaks etc to retain the employees in the organization and also to reduce work stress so that they can work effectively and efficiently.

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