
Work-Life Balance in Modern Era

Abstract

In today's business environment, the work pressure is growing quite rapidly among the corporate employees. They spent a major part of day's productive time at work-place and this is an important facet of his life. His productivity depends, not only on factors related to his work, but also on the other factors related to his personal life. Work-life balance aims to attain equilibrium between professional work and other activities so that it reduces friction between official and domestic or personal life. Moreover, work-life balance enhances efficiency and as a result the productivity of an employee increases. It helps in enhancing satisfaction, in both the professional and personal lives. An effective work-life balance is essential for ensuring high productivity in the corporate world: Companies need to focus on well- organized programs so as to bring a balance in the work and individual life. To cope with the coming changes, an organization should adopt a strategic approach.

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Introduction

In today's organized sector, work- life balance assumes a critical importance as this facilitates the development of a productive work culture and minimization of tensions between work and other aspects of people's lives. There are three key components that are needed to achieve a healthy lifestyle, namely paid work, unpaid work and personal time. Bringing a balance between all these there is the optimum one can accomplish. The ideal work-life balance varies from individual to individual with respect to changes in a period of time. One should regularly find out the responsibilities and chalk out a plan of action in meeting both the professional and the personal expectations.

Many a time, we do not enjoy routine official work. Our mind gets engrossed in one or other issues that may or may not be related to our work or workplace. Sometimes, excessive partying the night before or worrying about repayment of the next installment of a house or car loan can affect our work productivity. It can also be that one is in a foul mood because of a disagreement with family or friends before leaving for work. If answer to any of these questions is yes, it is highlighted that many times the work of an individual is affected because of personal reasons. No individual exists in a cocoon. He affects and gets affected by the surrounding



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environment. If personal factors affect the work life of any individual or the workload impinges upon his personal life, then there is surely an imbalance in his working and domestic life. In order to achieve success on both fronts, it is necessary to maintain a balance between professional and personal life, which is called Work-Life balance.ssss

Importance of the Work-Life Balance

We come across individuals who leave their frustration at work, either by criticizing their friends, colleagues or family members. This kind of behavior, not only waste valuable time, but also our energy. Balancing work with life will help in enhancing focus on positive side of all things. It tries to avoid criticism. It concentrates on the simple principle of doing what should be done. Maintaining such a balance we can improve the overall performance of an individual.

Work is one dimension of life and should not distort our personal life. The vice-versa is also true as work is a means of livelihood. The concept of balancing work and life is important in more than one way. The concept is gaining prominence since it helps in leading a balanced life, at the work place as well as at home. Maintaining balance encourages optimum working hours that ultimately enhances overall efficiency. It is a common fact that an increase in quantity tends to deteriorate quality. If the employee is not over loaded with work, he is motivated to shoulder responsibilities. He does not feel exhausted and is ready to perform every day. Workload does not kill his working spirit and he is eager to work. When someone works willingly, he attains satisfaction and a contented person: is bound to succeed, not only at work, but also in life. Thus, with a perfect balance between work and life, the individual is motivated to perform better and achieve more. The onus of striking the right balance is more on the individual him- self, though organization also has a role to play. An individual has to demarcate between his official and personal matters, such that these do not affect each other. Both aspects of any individual's life should run parallel like railway tracks and should not mingle in order to avoid failure in performance. The organization can help employees to j achieve the balance by framing effective policies and following ethical practices. The image of the organization also depends on the achievements of its members. Thus, the organizational environment should be conducive for this purpose.

Literature Review

The successive paragraphs present a comprehensive review of literature on the subject. Purohit, in his paper entitled "Organisational Effectiveness : An HRD Way" International Journal of Management and Tourism, Vol. 1, No. 3, January-March, 1993, pp. 397-400, has made an attempt to understand the possible relationships and interlinkages among sub-systems falling within the realm of tourism. He has also studied how these relationships help in achieving the organizational effectiveness. However, the contents mentioned in the Paper, do not give specifically deal with HRD and productivity in the India's tourism industry.

Mathur, Navin in his Paper entitled "Manpower Management for Improving Productivity in Public Enterprises", International Journal of Management and Tourism, Vol. 1, No. 3, January-March, 1993, pp. 373-381, has suggested measures to improve Manpower

Management which is one of the ways to increase productivity and efficiency of Indian Public Enterprises. However, the Paper does not base its study on survey and primary data.

Rao, P. Punna and Reddy M. Sudarshan in their compiled and edited book entitled "Human Resources Development : Mechanisms for Extension Organisations" (2001) have mentioned the importance of Human Resource Development for Agriculture Extension. They realised that there is a need for fresh look at efforts to build the capacity and capability for HRD in the emerging areas.

Agarwal, Nair Banerjee in his book entitled "Human Resource Management" (2004) has mentioned that the purpose of this book is to assimilate new insights from human resource management and behavioural sciences into established concepts. In order to make this more interesting, the authors have utilized the concept of formulating the plan to divide the book contents into small units. Attempts have been made to stress empirically to the practical problems of human resource management.

Prasad, L.M. in his book entitled "Human Resource Management" (2003) has tried to place proper emphasis on the human resources of the organization. It presents the most recent developments in the field and tries to relate how these developments are relevant to Indian Companies. It incorporates the human resource management practices being followed by the leading Indian Companies in their respective fields. It has failed to focus on HRD and tourism.

Tripathi, P.C. in his book entitled "Personnel Management and Industrial Relations" (2005) has stated only that there has been an increase in prestige and power of Personnel Manager in India comparison which recently used their personnel departments as a sort of dumping ground for executive misfits, have now started putting their personnel management in the hands of powerful senior executives.

Kaushal, H. in his book entitled "Human Resource Development" (2004) has made an attempt at making good this vital deficiency of workable case studies in management. A serious attempt has been made to cover all aspects of HRD theory through the case studies and has not included tourism industry.

Reddy, Sumati in her edited book entitled "E-Learning and Technology: New Opportunities in Training and Development" (2003) has highlighted how distance training and education helps organizations to meet the challenge of organizational change reach competitive standards and achieve organizational goals. Distance and online training is considered as an investment in people which helps in meeting pre-determined objectives.

"Managerial Effectiveness", vol. II Concepts and Cases edited by Prasad, V.R.K. (2004) states that effective management is right thinking and right acting and the effective manager has to be a competent theorist and practitioner. Managerial effectiveness is beyond enhancing managerial skills and behavioural competencies.

Nickson Dennis (2007) in his book entitled “ Human Resource Management for the hospitality and tourism industries” cover eleven chapters covering the nature of HRM in hospitality and tourism, organizational culture and the search for service quality, labor markets, recruitment and selection, equal opportunities, training and development, staff health and welfare, employee relations, involvement and participation, performance management, remuneration strategies in hospitality and tourism, disciplinary and grievance procedures, review of HRM in tourism and hospitality and areas for future research which are illustrated throughout with both examples of best practices for perspective teaching and discussion, and international case studies to exercise problem solving techniques and contextualize learning. It incorporates a user friendly layout and includes pedagogic features such as: chapter outline and objectives, HRM in practices boxed examples reflective review questions, web links discussion question and further reading.

Chandrasekar S (2009) in his article” The changing trends of HRM” has emphasizes the concept of innovation and scope of applicability. It is mandatory that innovation have to support the long term vision of the organization that would effectively contribute to its growth, when innovation happens, HR has to be a change agent to motivate employees to adapt to the new system of technology. For HR people innovation means more on recruiting people with innovative and creative skills. This article also touches upon the research to be carried out regulatory methods to be followed, readiness for change management, market analysis, return on investment and monitoring the achievability through optimization, apart from adding a note of caution on applicability and adaptability of innovation.

Srinu Chikati and Rajkumar Chiluveru (2009) in their paper entitled” Challenges and opportunities of hospitality industry- a study of Indian tourism industry” deals with the overview of hospitality and discusses the problems in hospitality sector and top issues which poses a biggest challenges for hospitality industry. It can be concluded that owing to growth of tourism sector, infrastructure will improve, competition will increase, new products will come into markets and better services will be provided. Due to rapid growth in tourism hotel industry is also booming. With government’s full support open sky policies and increased competition, the hospitality industry is getting consolidated and has many more opportunities to grow further.

Srivastava Kailash B L (2000) in his article entitle “Rethinking HR: Role of HR professionals in a changing business environment” has examined the issues that will be to the forefront for HR professionals into 21st century HR managers have to understand the challenges and realities of the business, so that they can facilitate a smooth transition of organization and work force in the next millennium. The major concern of the HR managers will be to figure out how to build organizational capacity to maximize the potential of the business in the market place, first a brief history of HR is being presented to explain the role of HR professionals that have moved from being administrative affairs to a strategic business partner, then issue related to a diverse work force and changes in the work environment are being presented and finally the role of HR professionals in a changing business environment would be discussed.

Kang Lakhwinder Singh and Singh Raghbir (oct2006) in their article entitled “Stress at work: An assessment of the magnitude of various organizational stressors identifies

frequently reported stress symptoms and assesses the magnitude of various organizational stressors producing stress. The study was carried out in six organizations dealing with electronics equipment and services “poor interpersonal relations” has been identified as the biggest sources of stress followed by poor organizational structure and climate “work inhibitors” and “inconsiderate superior” the nature of organizational stressor identified suggests that organizations should develop an environment of trust, respect, cooperation, effective communication, rational allocation of resources and rewards making superior sensitive to the needs of employees.

Balancing Work and Life

The ultimate performance of any organization depends on the performance of its employees, which, in turn, depends on numerous factors~ These factors can be related to work or can be familial or personal matters. How an individual manages various aspects of his life helps achieving in balance at work and in private life. Work-life balance can be understood as the balancing point on the seesaw, one side of which is work, while the other side is domestic and personal life. A major portion of any employee’s productive time is spent at the work place. Any problem, either at the work place or in the family, will definitely disturb the balance and, thus, it is necessary to address the various factors related to work and family that can directly or indirectly affect the overall performance. Maintaining balance also requires emotional intelligence. Better emotion management is necessary in order to accomplish day-to-day objectives of life. Nowadays, more emphasis is laid on efficient emotion management, as it is the key to achieve the desired balance between work and life, which ultimately leads to success in the professional as well as personal.

During the course of this study a number of books, journals, research papers, periodicals, annual reports and articles have also been consulted and review. The fore going comprehensive review of literature on work-life balance, it peters out that very few researches are found to be relevant. However, there is a dearth of research studies on work-life balance. The present study is an endeavor of the authors to present the various dimensions of work-life balance precisely.

Impacts of Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance in real life generally has two types of impacts: Those outside the workplace and those at work. Most participants tend to focus on impacts outside the workplace. These seem to be the areas where most participants feel they were missing out and were imminent under significant pressure from others. Impacts of work-life imbalance on: Their lives outside work are as follows:

Relationships

In almost all groups there were a few people who claimed to have .problems with their relationship with their partners due to work encroaching into personal life.

Health

This is considered one of the areas affected by poor work-life balance. The drawback behind this seems to be the death of a colleague or a family member that leads to work pressure or to have health problems.

Pressure and Stress

The maximum impact on work-life balance tends to be pressure and stress. As the majority of the participants in this situation felt that they don't have enough time to do the things they wanted to do and certainly no time to just reflect on life and take stock because they feel they are always under substantial pressure and stress.

Social Networks

Day-to-day life becomes busier, it has been noticed that social networks became less significant. Turning away social allegiances was seen as a comparatively easy way to free up time for other activities which results that social networks often decreased or were lost.

Voluntary Work

So as to make up some time for other commitments, a few players have given up voluntary work that they enjoyed.

Let's look at the other end of impacts of work-life imbalance at workplace. Participants raised a number of professed impacts of work-life imbalance on the workplace which are discussed as follows :

Relationships

Relationship with colleagues in workplace were also seen to be affected by poor work-life balance, this may result in getting into disputes with colleagues when under pressure.

Mistakes

It has been seen that mistakes are likely to take place in jobs because of a person's poor work-life balance. It has also been noticed that many employees claimed either personally experienced or witnessed incidents where accidents had occurred due to work pressure.

Quality

The work quality also decreased if an employee's work and life were out of balance with increased mistakes.

Job Satisfaction

Employees feel that overwork will impact on the level of job satisfaction, while some were satisfied working hard.

For example, Work-Life programs in IBM have been established to help employees better manage their work and personal lives to cut down the imbalances at workplace. These programs accomplish this by creating a flexible work environment which is sensitive to an individual's needs and

responsibilities. According to IBM, it is in its best interest to help its employees balance the pressures of work with the demands of home. Through work-life balance programs, employees have greater access to the workplace and are more productive because their personal issues can be easily addressed.

Objectives of the Study

1. To plan and implement a work life balance plan.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of work life balance initiatives.
3. To review work-life balance needs and strategic approach.
4. To undertake work-life balance assessment and needs analysis.
5. To develop a strategic approach to work-life balance.

Framework of the Study

Research Design and Methodology

It would be an Endeavour of the researcher to make an empirical study by analyzing and critically examining the relevant statistics collected from secondary sources. Secondary sources include published and unpublished sources, journal, books, periodicals, research paper and magazines.

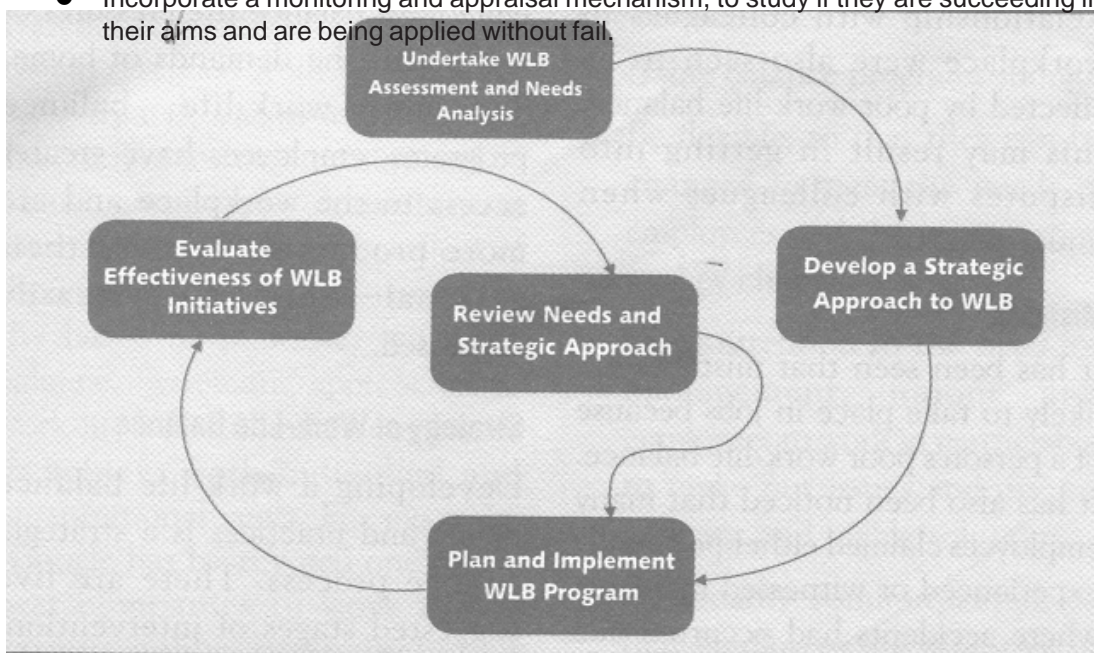
Factors Influencing the Balance

There can be many factors that affect the balance of work and life. The first such factor is the attitude of an employee. Attitude defines one's likes and dislikes. Attitude is a way of thinking or feeling about something. Balance is substantially affected by various psychological factors. How one reacts to a particular situation, how he manages work and peer pressures are some aspects of psychological behavior. Emotions management also plays an important role in achieving and maintaining such balance. Another factor is the environment in which the individual stays. Working environment should be comfortable or it can negatively affect efficiency. Similarly, the environment at home should also be calm and congenial. The type of job can also influence balance. A job, which is monotonous and not challenging, can make a worker lethargic. The job profile should match the employee's pro- file, in order to enhance his work efficiency and give him job satisfaction. Since the balance is related to both the professional and personal life, factors, like family background, financial and social status of the family, life-stage of the employee, financial standing, family structure, daily routine, friends circle and social life, would also affect his work life. An employee, who is struggling financially or who has a large family to support or other family problems may spend more time in taking care) of those issues. To focus on his work, it is necessary that an employee's mind is free from domestic encumbrances. It is equally important to create a healthy working environment at the work place. The comfort and ease of working enhances efficiency, as well as effectiveness of performance. Achieving the balance integrates development and establishment of effectual procedures while performing day to day functions.

Implementation Programs of Work- Life Balance

Work-life balance programs should :

- Be flexible, so that they can be changed to meet the needs of employees and the organization as they change.
- Draw attention to the need for management, unions and employees to work in partnership to make out issues and discuss relevant and viable solutions.
- Be broadly communicated, so that employees are attentive of what is available.
- Be easy to get into, i.e., employees know what is available and feel they can use the requirements without being penalized.
- Integrate with human resource and people management policies and practices.
- Carefully plan and be practical, so that they can work.
- Set aside for tailoring to meet individual employee needs wherever possible.
- Incorporate a monitoring and appraisal mechanism, to study if they are succeeding in their aims and are being applied without fail.



Work-Life Balance Program in Infosys: A Case Study

Infosys, one of the top companies to work with. Infosys has a physical infrastructure benchmarked to a global workplace that supports fun and relaxation. The campus provides Infosys employees with facilities that help them stay fit as well as have fun. It has health clubs, which include gymnasiums, yoga classes, aerobic classes, basketball courts, swimming pools, etc. Some other initiatives taken by the company exclusively for Infosys employees and their family members are:

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1. Unmeelan: Art and culture night.
 2. Samavesh: A talent night for Infoscions from various development centers to compete.
 3. Petit Infoscion Day: A talent day for children of all infoscions.
 4. HALE: "Health Assessment and Lifestyle Enrichment", a program to improve the physical and psychological well-being of the employees.

Guideline for Developing a Work-Life Balance -Work Plan

In the present scenario, to work out a better work-life balance one should have a proper plan to attain a task by incorporating the necessary guidelines in a desired project.

The elements of work-life balance- flextime, compressed work week, job-sharing, annualized hours and so on-are important, but need to be agreed upon both by the employees and the organizations. Work-life balance programs can provide substantial benefits to the employees as well as organizations.

Conclusions

An effective work-life balance is essential for ensuring high productivity in the corporate world: Companies need to focus on well- organized programs so as to bring a balance in the work and individual life. To cope with the coming changes, an organization should adopt a strategic approach. Proper planning is to be made to identify the tasks and the risk involved in achieving the desired goals. Further, programs are to be implemented as per the plans adopted. One should have the knowledge of basic elements which leads to better work-life balance. An organization should follow systematic process keeping in view the vision and mission for smooth flow of work life balance. On the whole, work-life balance is a tool that companies need to use for increasing productivity and bringing out a balance in the work and individual life.

In spite of higher salaries and other monetary and non-monetary benefits, a comfortable working environment, less workload and organizations taking care of employees, it is observed that sometimes employees fail to deliver expected results. Though, there can be numerous factors that affect the performance of an employee, achieving balance in work and familial life is considered important in order to perform par excellence. Balance between professional and personal life improves performance at work and also helps in gaining job satisfaction. It gives a feeling of contentment and motivates the individual to shoulder responsibilities with greater accountability. It helps in creating a congenial environment at the work place and also strengthens family bonds of the employee. When the employee is free from his domestic and personal worries, he is expected to perform better. Balancing between professional and personal life is bound to enhance efficiency of the individual and increase his contentment and commitment levels. It would go a long way in achieving success on both fronts professional and personal.

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