

# **Balancing Work Life of Employees**

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## **Introduction**

Work, Life and Balance has become an important part of one's life today. People today are so busy at work that they don't find time for themselves. Work Life Balance is an issue far greater than what it seems to be. In today's world it has become very important to maintain a Work Life Balance in order to be successful in all aspects of life.

## **Objectives**

To know what Work Life Balance is.

To determine whether men and women both experience the "Work Life Balance" conflict.

To find out whether the degree and intensity of Work Life Balance experienced by both is same.

To determine whether men and women know how to solve the conflict of "Work Life Balance".

Whether women working in the IT sector, face a major issue of their safety and security at workplace and during commuting, which has a deep impact on their Work Life Balance.

To find few feasible solutions for the women employees as regards the Work Life Balance.

What exactly is Work Life Balance? To understand it better, we must know what the three terms – Work Life and Balance mean. Work usually means anything that a person would like to do to keep oneself engaged. Here, work would mean a person doing some work, or engaged in doing some work so as to return home satisfied and content, earning for a livelihood. Work has been defined differently by different authors, but without going into the jargon's meaning, I would like to state that "Work, for an employee means anything which one does to accrue the highest of satisfaction, enjoyment and happiness, furthermore, work bestows upon the employee the returns through which one can fulfill one's basic so much so the sophisticated needs of life."

A workplace is the location at which an employer provides work for an employee. The workplace is located in a variety of settings including offices, manufacturing facilities or factories, stores, farms, out-of-doors, and in any location where work is performed.

Life again has various connotations, and is seen differently by individuals. Life is inspirational for some, mysterious for some, a puzzle for some, while others term it as inundated, happy and enthusiastic affair. Life has been a motivation for many authors and poets such that they portrayed the journey of life and touched the hearts of many through their creativity. Life here would mean the way a person poses oneself in and among people around him whether at office or at home. A person's behavior has a great impact on his and his acquaintances' life. A person's behaviour projects whether the person is acceptable to all or not. A person who is acceptable to all always holds a higher chance of success as compared to the one who is disliked by others.

Work Place is a place where the employees/workers are provided work by the employers, for a living. It can be any place, where employees can be accommodated and employed for any manufacturing, polishing, cutting, reproducing, assembling, etc by the employer. Today, employers are not required or expected to provide a workplace with a physical location for employees to work, as the propagation of electronic communication has provided a lot of ease to work at any place, apart from workplace. Today we find employees do "work from home", telecommuting work arrangements, maintaining worldwide relationships from a single point, controlling work from any corner of the world, and hence today the peripherals of workplace are not limited as used to be in earlier times. The advances in technology have resulted in the shift in the workplace. Bowswell and Olson-Buchanan have rightly stated "The increasingly sophisticated and affordable technologies have made it more feasible for employees to keep contact with work". Employees today have many methods like emails, computers, phones, etc. which are helpful in accomplishing their work even further than the physical boundaries of their office. While not on the job, still the employees can respond to emails or voice mails hours even if on weekend or on a holiday. This has widened the horizons of the workplace, but at the same time it has made people workaholics, and this is the real threat. Employees have started attaching more importance to work than to family, under peer pressures and are making use of the communication technologies to work while not in their work domain. Employees have forgotten to distinguish between how much time to be given to their work while with family and also what importance to be given to family while at work. Because the horizon of the workplace has enlarged, employees want to be at home and take care of the family, they go for "work for

home” but there are times when they are not doing justice to any of the two, neither the family nor the work.

Work Life means “Managing appropriately, without any annoyance to anyone, at work as well as outside work.” The Association for Work/Life Progress (AWLP) defines Work Life in the following way: “The term ‘Work Life,’ in the broader sense, defines ‘policies, programs, services, and attitudes within a company that are specific to fostering the well-being of its employees through the effective management of work, family, and personal life.”

The Work & Family Connection has developed the definition - “Work-life is the practice of providing initiatives designed to create a more flexible, supportive work environment, enabling employees to focus on work tasks while at work. It includes making the culture more supportive, adding programs to meet life event needs, ensuring that policies give employees as much control as possible over their lives, and using flexible work practices as a strategy to meet the dual agenda – the needs of both business and employees.”

Work Life balance mainly involves how one can manage oneself. It is the best combination of self management, stress management, time management, technology management, leisure management, adaptability to change and one’s commitment towards work and life. It actually relates to a person working, and at the same time managing all his other jobs apart from one’s employment.

Work Life Balance is a concept including proper prioritizing between work i.e. career and ambition, and lifestyle i.e. health, pleasure, leisure, family, calmness and peace, etc. Work Life Balance concerns both men and women alike. Both face, to some extent discrimination, humiliation, and sometimes reluctance from the fellow colleagues, when they request for time off or adjustments in work hours for caring for their family. Work Life Balance is not gender-specific and both men and women face the work life conflict, as they are not able to cope with their office life and personal life. Workplace policies, regarding balance between family life and work life, help creating organizational norms in which employees must follow, so as this will help the organization to contribute in one or other way to structure organizational reality and thus organizational power. The social norms surrounding the gender role and how open are the organization’s view regarding its employees, drives each gender into handling the Work Life Balance differently. The organizations in order to retain their employees must recognize this balance and support their employees by providing programs and initiatives to help employees cope with Work Life Balance.

Work Life Balance includes self management, time management, leisure management, stress management, technology management and change management. Self management is of prime

importance. Unless and until a person is able to maintain oneself, by maintaining proper eating schedules, exercising, sleeping and staying afresh all day long, one shall not be in a position to perform well – whether in office or otherwise. Time management is an important aspect. Time is a major factor and involves optimum use of one's day and resources available. It necessitates when, how and what things you do the best. Effectively managing the time such that one's work is done, and accomplished perfectly within the given time span is the crux. If one can do so, then maybe stress and self can be managed to some extent automatically. The workplace today is becoming more and more complicated, inviting much noise, distractions and many more people. One has to maintain serenity while working under pressure-filled circumstances. One is also expected to multi-task, and the ferocious outcome of this situation is increase in the stress levels through focusing on one thing/task at a time. This leads to a person having to manage stress. Stress management is more of a necessity today, and if one is not able to compose oneself during stress, he may end up with various consequences including loss of health. Also in this rapidly moving world, where there is a constant change in all facets of workplace, one is required to continuously adapt and readapt to new methods and people and policies. One must be in a position to digest this. Managing the change efficiently through periodic and rigorous efforts and ensuring that the volume and rate of change at work does not defeat oneself. Managing the change is the greatest challenges to anyone and it has to be done meticulously and with proper consideration. Also at high speed is the technology changing. One must know how and to what extent to use technology such that the technology helps one in his work rather than a person becoming the slave of technology. Technology is useful and one cannot work without technology in this fast changing and pacing world. It is excessively imperative to manage technology in the way it gives the immense benefits to the organization and employees, but not become handicapped and addicted to technology. An undisputable factor as regards Work Life Balance is managing the leisure time. It is an warning to all that only working is not going to get you the best results. One must take rest and relax for a short time, and that a “time please” is a vital component of the human life. Rest and relaxation should be exercised with proper caution as too much of leisure might lead to monotonous unhealthy behaviours on the part of the employees. Managing one's schedule such that ample time is received for relaxation and yet the person is ready with equal zeal to work at workplace and otherwise.

There is a lot more in the organizations. Apart from work, there are organizational hazards, organizational violence, the policies within the organization, the hierarchy in the organization, the various lines of control, and so on. The root cause for Work Life imbalance sometimes can be a result of organizational norms and principles. These organizational principles are mostly dominant, as organizations need to

maintain power to some extent. Mostly, the individuals in the organizations are males and they cannot even think, rather they are totally unaware of the Work Life imbalance which they are facing. Usually though males are attached with family and do care for their families, still they do not believe, or they cannot draw or identify the thin line between work life and family life, and at the same time they are naïve regarding the direct or indirect effects of work and family life conflicts. They are typically oblivious about the general family responsibilities which one requires to entail. They are not in a position to understand the position of other co-workers, mostly female co-workers and hence while framing rules they do not consider the aspect of Work Life Balance meticulously and brush it away as redundant.

Workplace violence is the violence or the threat of violence against workers, occurring either within or outside the workplace. Workplace violence can be of a wide range inclusive of verbal abuses, physical assaults, homicides or even job-related deaths. The workplace violence has become a growing cause of concern for all the employees nationally and internationally. Workplace violence manifests itself slowly and unknowingly and it surfaces only when the large damage has been caused in the organization. This workplace violence is also one of the root causes for which it is necessary for employees to maintain Work Life Balance, or else the workplace violence would just shatter the personal life.

In fact, all employees have multiple roles to play. They may be daughters, sons, parents, friends, etc. In the organizations they want to make an identity with the organization. The organizational values, principles and interests incorporated in the organization become a part of the employees. They imbibe these organizational principles, but they do have a separate identification outside their organizational roles. And at times it becomes difficult for them to keep the two things separate, resulting into a clash amongst their internal self and external self. They want to be as they are at the workplace while not at work, and want to follow their identity outside the work place while at work. And the inability to keep the two identities separate many times results in the disruption of the Work Life Balance. The employees try to accomplish the organizational principles in not only the organization, but also other facets of their life. These identities sometimes do not align and this mismatch of the identity creates a conflict in Work Life Balance. Such identity conflict affects the health of Work Life Balance and can make the life of the employees hell if they are not able to align their identities or they are not channelized suitably as regards alignment of their identity in the area in which they are performing to avoid conflict and stress in work life and family life. The employees interact within the organization through other employees, management, customers, or others and this interaction either counters or reinforces the employee identification with the organization. The employees must learn or at least take that much of the efforts to

manage their own self - the real self and the organizational self, i.e. the identity which the employees enjoy at work place. The more the employees are able to manage their different selves, i.e. the various identities they pose at different occasions the lesser the intensity of imbalance in work life.

Usually the women are more prone to Work Life imbalance, as they have to manage, rather they are expected to pose differently in front of others even if they have multiple problems at home or in office. A women, if faces some problems in her family life due to any – any reasons, then also is expected to wear a false face – a happy, content and most reasonable person in the world. Similarly, if a women faces any problem at workplace and even mentions about the same at home, the members of the family, would usually turn a deaf ear and ask the women to manage on her own. Women are expected to do office work and family work without even mentioning about any problems they might face, and are bluntly and blindly advised that working in office was their choice and so facing the problems and challenges, is also something they should mind on their own. Women are straight away asked and bullied by telling them that they should have thought of such things before joining the job, and that just because they have decided to take up a job they must face all consequences. Here it is conveniently forgotten that though the women have stepped out for work, it is mostly the need of the family that makes them take a decision of doing a job, and usually they always do a job in order to support their families.

Most of the time, the employees whether men or women, are aware of the friction they face so as to balance the family life and Work Life. Many times there are the solutions too, but they are unaware either of the solution, or of the fact that the solution can be reached in a particular manner. Mostly the employees do not find out time for themselves, to think and ponder as to what shall be a proper and perfect solution to the problem, and allow the problems to multiply before any steps are taken. In fact if they take proper action at the very first moment, on which they felt they are facing a conflict between work life and family life, the problems can be reduced considerably.

The management must be flexible and tolerable to work arrangements to accommodate Work Life Balance in the organization. The management if is not flexible then the employees shall not be in a position to balance their work life perfectly, resulting into various consequences. Usually work arrangements are more demanded by female workers. The employees with working partners, or with children or elder or physically/mentally disabled persons in the family, employees who have incurred organizational injuries and are coming back later, etc. all such employees will have some or other genuine reasons to ask for flexible work arrangements.

Today, we find that the number of women employed in various sectors is increasing. There is a tremendous increase in the population of working women. The women who once were required only to cater to households and upbringing of children, are today out to work. The population of working women has risen due to a number of factors such as their ambitions to do something, ambitions to make a career, they being forced to become an entrepreneur due to some mishaps or ill fate taking place in their families, they being forced to work as a result of unending demands of the family members and meager income of the breadwinner of the family, and so on. The status of women, as far as India is concerned is just disgraceful. The women earlier were only restricted to household work, and so were not getting proper education nor given their individual rights. Today though the women workers are increasing, there still remains a great deal to be done as far as their safety and security is concerned. As per the survey on gender inclusivity conducted by HR consulting firm Mercer and IT association NASSCOM, in 2008 the number of women in IT-BPO sector grew 60% in the previous two years. And this number has risen ever since. Women are taking up the IT jobs because they know that this is the only sector which provides with flexible timings and adjustments at workplace. Work Life Balance is well coordinated in the IT companies. The employees of the IT companies are well versed with technology and advances therein. This is the root cause why these companies are preferred over other companies, as these companies provide ample flexibility in work timings and also work can be done from home through telecommuting. Also these companies also provide for various other facilities such as allowing the employees to work for more hours on few days and taking a day or two off in consultation with the management. Also these companies allow employees to work from home with only physical attendance in office either once or twice a week. This flexibility attracts more and more women towards the IT companies. But all this still is not adopted by all other companies and so for women working in other companies it is a greater and even harder job to balance the work life.

Women in the IT sector are better off as compared to others as the management is flexible and allows flexible timings, work from home, give handsome salary, provides for commuting to and from, etc. But all these also do not always help in having a balanced work life. Though men and women in IT sector both face the same dilemma of managing work and family life, yet there is more pressure on the women. The pressures faced are varied and many as compared to men. They have to do household errands, feed the children, look after and cater to the needs of all the family members, and then do the office work. This results in women having to indulge much more into tensions and adjustments about work and family life. They are, in addition, more vulnerable to organizational violence. If we look to the statistics today, and to the various incidents taking place all over the country, or the world we find that around 80% and above

women feel unsecure and unsafe at workplace and are under constant pressure. They are under constant fear about violence taking place against them. Organizational violence can be anything, right from physical and verbal abuse, to display of pornography, or also the issue of commuting to and fro, whether by the transport facility provided by the employer or otherwise. And all this is adding to the imbalance and conflicts in the work life. The women have to face a lot of things in practically settling with the office and family life, the official work, the household worries, the office woes, the harassment from the peers and colleagues, the mental and physical abuses, the very thought of going to office sometimes is so nauseating, that they feel like they should skip the job and walk off. The women have to endeavor a lot to maintain the balance between the work life and the family life. They are overburdened with the household and office work. On top they are required to fulfill all their duties and responsibilities on time. They have to manage the relations whether in office or at home. They have to transmit performance, and keep themselves fully updated and acquainted with the latest happenings in and around the world. They must be aware of what the others whether the peers and colleagues, other companies in the same field, companies in different fields are doing, and also keep updates regarding the customers' likings and demands of the consumers, so as to stay in the job. It is not an easy task for them as just as they are required to keep themselves posted in office so are they required to keep information about the family, friends and relatives. This peer pressure results in them not being able to maintain proper Work Life Balance and facing various hardships in their personal lives. They have to keep themselves calm and composed so that they are able to maintain a Work Life Balance. They must find time to keep themselves physically fit, mentally stable, happy, peaceful, and energetic and work in and out of workplace.

The most horrifying thing which women find today is lack of proper safety and security devices and that is one of the main cause why their tends to be an imbalance in their work life and family life. These women face lot many inconveniences, humiliations, abuses, assaults, by their peers, especially males, and they experience tremendous tension while working in such a workplace. Not only by the peers working at the workplace, but also clients, especially males, visiting the workplace make these women uncomfortable and unsecure, by construing their dirty intensions and making those quiet clear through unwanted touches, stares, or gestures. These things women employees fear to talk of, due to fear of expulsion from the job, non hearing and opposition from the management, revengeful intensions – in case a complaint is made, the management trying to make the women quiet by threatening of dire consequences in case of complaints, and above all fear of losing reputation - not only as an individual but also family reputation. The women have always been kept under constraints, and even when they have not erred, the society and the social foundations hold them responsible. The males in any case can escape even after committing a

crime, however grave it is, but the women have to face it all. These things add to the conflict in work life for women. The women need to tackle all situations calmly and thoughtfully. Also the employers require to be more supportive towards issues relating to women working in the organization. Though the governments all across the world are trying to tackle and handle the issue and counter the problems by making stringent laws, yet the crimes are being committed and the safety and security of women is at stake.

The women employees thus find it a hard task to maintain Work Life Balance and are prone to various diseases arising out of the mental, physical and other pressures which they have to undergo while on work. The Work Life Balance of employees can be well maintained and employees can be trained or at least helped to overcome the Work Life Imbalance if the organizations take proper steps in that direction. The issue of safety and security does have a great impact in them being able to maintain a healthy Work Life Balance. In a study conducted, under the title “Women, Work and Workplace”, it was found that even after the women proving themselves at various levels of the society, still they have to suffer and struggle a lot with office and household work.

### **Suggestions**

Certain steps which the organizations can take in this regard are allowing work from home, on pre-decided terms and conditions, allowing time off in lieu of work i.e. if an employee works for three extra hours on a particular day or during particular days in a week, then that employee be allowed adjustment of that much time on some other day, with prior decided terms. Also organizations can help the employees by providing better leave incentives i.e. if a person has as a rule to avail 12 leaves per annum and has availed only 4 of them, then the remaining leaves be better compensated in terms of money, so that the employees are motivated to adjust work and take lesser leaves, rather than giving reasons for not reporting to work. The employers can take a lot of efforts to see to it that the employees in their organizations are having a healthy Work life Balance, because if it is not healthy, then it shall hamper the organization and the organizational health too. Women can be given proper training to take steps against any unwelcome behavior of their peers, they should be made aware of the various safety and security measures available in the organization and also they should be educated as to who to contact for help in such circumstances and how to file a complaint against the offender in the organization. Women should be made aware and trained and educated that they need not be afraid of such incidents and that unless they are fearless, and unless they report such incidents the safety measures are futile as the organization shall not be able to take any action against the committers of various crimes. Also organizations should provide for meditation and

counseling in the organizations so that the women can train themselves into having a proper Work Life Balance.

As far as the women are concerned, only making them aware shall not be of much help. The awareness should be in the society, and everyone must be taught to respect an individual, whether a male or a female. If people start respecting the individuals, there shall be lesser rates of crimes or such incidences and women shall feel secure at the organization. This shall definitely provide a positive impact on their Work Life Balance, and more and more women shall be in a position to have a healthy Work Life Balance. Also this shall have a tremendously positive effect on the entire attire of the organization.

## **Conclusion**

Work Life Balance is about effectively and efficiently managing the various acts between office/work life and family life, inclusive of time given to self and family. Only by improving and coordinating a better balance between our work life and family life can the employees reap real benefits for the employers and employees and the nation as a whole. It shall result into building productive and committed businesses which shall be a boon to all the nations across the world. Work life balance is the knack through which to experience a control over work life and family life and stay productive and competitive at work, and yet maintain a happy, healthy and prosperous family life with abundant care and leisure, through attaining a focus at work life in spite of endless competitive tasks and activities at work, proper time and attention shall be dedicated to family life. The Work Life Balance is an affair which can be achieved only with the proper organization and coordination between the management and the employees.

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