

Paper #3 Work-Life Balance

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Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance takes on many different definitions, but it follows the same premise. According to Maura Thomas, editor of "What Does Work-Life Balance Even Mean?", the definition of work-life balance is "equal time or priority is given to personal and professional activities." Because individuals must decide what work-life balance means to them, definitions vary from place to place. Employers and managers cannot determine what work-life balance means for their employees, as it may not align with their values or time constraints. However, employers and managers can encourage their employees to practice it. Work-life balance is an integral part of many people's lives, and without it, employees can become burned out and stressed.

History of Work-Life Balance

In the late 1800s, the first step toward work-life balance was taken (Raja, 2014). Manufacturing laws were created to restrict how much time women and children could spend at work (Raja, 2014). Before this, the average American worked seventy hours or more per week (Whaples, 2001). For instance, there are 168 hours in a week, with 70 of those dedicated to working. This leaves 98 hours, but sleep also needs to be factored in. An average person sleeps about eight hours per day, totaling 56 hours per week, which is subtracted from 98 (Hirshkowitz, 2015). This leaves 42 hours that can be divided by six for the days of the week. Employees were typically given Sundays off, leaving the average American with seven hours of free time per day. In 1938, a tipping point was reached and the Fair Labor Standards Act was established (Raja, 2014). This act created a 44-hour workweek that was more forgiving for employees with other responsibilities. After 3 years this was decreased to 40 hours and remained there ever since (Fair

Labor Standards Act, n.d.). The Women's Liberation Movement of 1980 took this a step further and popularized flexible working schedules and maternity leave (Raja, 2014).

Values

Joanne Ciulla, a scholar formerly at the University of Richmond and currently at Rutgers, writes, "The way we think about work, leisure, and the way we live depends on how we see the big picture." What Joanne is saying is that how we perceive all three things depends on how someone views the overall success of a company. Jamie Birt is a career coach who works for the job search platform Indeed and distinguishes thinking into two categories: detail-oriented and big-picture thinking. A detail-oriented thinker would center on particular parts of the job (Birt, 2023), while a big-picture thinker would focus on the entire job and how it relates to the company's goals (Birt, 2023). When an individual wants to achieve success in the workplace, they need to focus on big-picture thinking (Birt, 2023). This comes with benefits such as time management, creating achievable goals, and managing stress levels (Birt, 2023).

Factors

Just as in complex scientific research, many factors or variables play a large role in determining work-life balance. One of the largest factors is economic status because if an employee is struggling to make ends meet, they may be working many more hours than someone who has been saving for years. The second largest factor is being a parent, which can heavily influence how an individual thinks about work-life balance. If a parent would like to maintain a strong connection with their children, they would likely prioritize spending time with them often, which can conflict with work-related projects or issues. The third largest factor in work-life balance is an individual's mental health. This is because an unmotivated or stressed employee

may set aside more time before and after work to focus on themselves. Many more factors can influence how people think about free time, work, and how they view issues.

Employers

Employers should support workers' efforts to balance work, family, community life, and leisure. The overall well-being of an individual can boost work success and motivation (Promote healthy work-life balance in your business, n.d.). This is because employees will feel valued and that their outside-of-work life is important (Promote Healthy, n.d.). The benefits of work-life balance are not exclusive to employees but also to employers, such as boosting staff morale and making them more committed to work-related endeavors (Promote Healthy, n.d.).

There are a few things that an employer can do to foster a sustainable work-life balance, such as offering flexible scheduling and remote work if employees have many outside-of-work activities (Fuhl, 2023). Allowing them to work from home or have flexible schedules can ensure that employees have enough time to balance life and work accordingly. Another thing employers can do is increase support for parents (Fuhl, 2023). Parenting takes up a lot of time and money, so employers can provide benefits to subsidize childcare costs (Fuhl, 2023). Workers can also support the idea of work-life balance by scheduling time for activities throughout the week in advance, which can better prepare employers to anticipate workers' activities.

Conceptual Idea and Galinsky's Piece

Everyone's idea of a balanced life varies drastically. After conducting research for this paper, I found that a balanced life should allow someone to do things other than work or related activities. It's not healthy for someone to constantly scramble for time just to squeeze in

moments for themselves or their family. Having the freedom to do as one wishes without the constraints of work looming over them could be considered a balanced life.

Galinsky's article "Ask the Children" researched how children think about their parents' parenting skills. This article ties in well with the topic of work-life balance because raising children can be a large factor in that equation. Galinsky determined that what parents do with their children in the time they spend together determines a child's outcome (Galinsky, 1999). Additionally, the experiences that children have when their parents are not around play a role too (Galinsky, 1999). With that being said, parents who work extensively could potentially have unhappy children.

Conclusion

Work-life balance is something that every individual will have to take on. Employers and professionals can only offer suggestions and advice that could potentially be beneficial. There are many factors and variables to take into account when trying to balance one's life with work, such as family and personal mindset. Work-life balance does not only affect an individual but also those around them. It is important to plan ahead and once achieved, it can drastically improve the well-being of an individual and the workplace.

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