



Work/Life Balance

every connection matters™



Work/Life Balance is defined as a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal. Fundamentally, it concerns establishing an effective balance between working commitments and personal commitments that suits you. This is all very well in theory, but how often have you ever found yourself with a schedule opposite to that kind of balance? In the past three years, an increasing number of employees indicated they have struggled with work/life balance.

In recent years, personal and family lives have become critical values that people are less willing to ignore. Consequently, people are looking for options that allow for both a personal and family life, and many seek ways to have it all.

Stress for Employer and Employee

We live in stressful times, and each of us deals with stress every day. Scientists agree that in moderate amounts, stress can be benign, even beneficial, and most people are equipped to deal with it; however, increasing levels of stress can rapidly lead to low employee morale, poor productivity, and decreasing job satisfaction.

Work/life programs represent a largely untapped workplace solution that have the potential to significantly address stressful work environments.

Is Your Organisation Ready for Work/Life Initiatives?

Before establishing work/life initiatives, it is important to know if the organisation's culture is open and ready to support work/life programs.

One of the challenges of work/life initiatives – from both the employer and the employee viewpoint – is equitability.

Organisations must first consider the purpose of the programs and who they are serving. For example, do they serve all employees, or are they just aimed at employees with children? Organisations must also consider their employees' view of perceived support from the organisation.

Communication is Key

Communication about work/life programs is essential. Although an organisation may offer a rich menu of work/life benefits, the desired employees will not gain anything if they do not know about the programs or understand them. Human resource professionals should consider four critical questions:

1. Does the company culture truly support work/life benefits?
2. Does the management philosophy, starting with senior management, sincerely endorse work/life benefits?
3. Do managers and supervisors understand the impact work/life balance has on their workforce?
4. Are employees aware of and do they understand the company's work/life programs?

Can Work/Life Initiatives be Measured?

Work/life initiatives create positive employer branding, promote being an employer of choice, foster organisational citizenship, and support diversity initiatives. Building a strategic business case for work/life initiatives requires hard data documenting positive results. The best place to start is to consider five key areas:

1. Employee time saved
2. Employee retention
3. Increased motivation and productivity
4. Absenteeism
5. Decreased stress-related illnesses.

CALL 1300 364 273 SMS 0401 33 77 11

www.acaciaconnection.com

info@acaciaconnection.com



acaciaEAP
employee assistance program

Work/Life Balance Trends

The challenge of work/life balance in our society is unlikely to disappear.

Employees are often preoccupied with work when not working, and when in the company of family and loved ones, experience an inability to be meaningfully engaged in non-work spheres. Modern work has become knowledge based, fluid, and intellectual; overworked people think about work all of the time. For many people, work has become cognitively intrusive.

To understand work/life balance, in simple terms, this means that work/life balance is not just about finding "physical time" to do all that needs to be done. Instead, and more importantly, it is about the "cognitive space" necessary to process, organise, and respond to the thinking demands of life within a complex society. The cognitive intrusion of work results in:

- Lower job satisfaction
- Less happiness
- A greater incidence of work/life conflict
- More frequent burnout.

Some current work/life balance trends are identified and discussed below.

Eldercare

One of the most significant trends in work/life balance is the increasing focus on eldercare. A growing number of companies offer work/life programs addressing eldercare. Eldercare programs include eldercare referral service, emergency eldercare, subsidy of eldercare cost, and paid eldercare.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) can play an important role in an organisation's eldercare program. Some of the lesser-known benefits of an EAP are referrals to community programs and contacts regarding eldercare issues.

Human resource professionals could significantly increase EAP usage by learning more about EAP eldercare support and communicating this to employees. Through these actions, HR professionals can emphasise the importance of EAPs to management and at the same time leverage EAP benefits to employees.

Total Life Planning

Total life planning is a new and innovative approach to work/life benefits, and helps employees examine important aspects of their professional and personal lives and understand how they relate. Their goal is "to encourage employees to look at their lives as a whole and assess relationships, emotional and physical well-being, careers, spirituality, and their personal financial situation. Employees assess their available choices to improve balance in their lives and develop an individualised life plan... the most successful programs set a goal-oriented environment with a meaningful and transformational component for each individual."

The concept of total life planning represents a paradigm shift in our society. One of the major benefits is renewed employee energy, enthusiasm for work, and increased productivity. Total life planning programs may be offered in conjunction with benefits such as health, life, and disability insurance.

Conclusion

Work/life programs have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organisational knowledge, particularly during difficult economic times. In today's global marketplace, as companies aim to reduce costs, it falls to the human resource professionals to understand the critical issues of work/life balance and champion work/life programs.

