

Quality of Work Life

Maslach & Leiter in *The Truth about Burnout* argue that “... as a result of extensive study, we believe that burnout is not a problem of the people themselves but of the social environment in which people work...When the workplace does not recognise the human side of work, then the risk of burnout grows, carrying a high price with it.”

Issues like tighter budgetary constraints, greater work demands, job stress, and organisational politics contribute to imbalances that can lead to a diminished quality of work life for employees. Most organisations recognise that they are susceptible to these concerns, and many have the desire and determination to make changes to improve. Organisations can experience more success by creating a culture that promotes quality of work life initiatives for their employees; and it is possible to do this while at the same time continuing to ensure that the needs of service — users and stakeholders are met. The key is in understanding that this ideal/value is a target that isn't always hit. However, determined and open efforts to change systems and practices for the better will be met with happier employees, better services, and stronger organisations.

Quality in Practice

There are numerous approaches that organisations can take towards better quality of work life for their employees:

- Create a culture where employees feel valued and listened to. For example — during annual performance discussions, part of the conversation could centre on asking staff members what a quality work life means to them and finding out what they need to feel supported in this area.
- Offer programmes that encourage and promote a positive work experience. This includes: providing flexible work options like flex-time, job sharing, compressed work schedules (when a traditional work week of 35–40 hours is condensed into fewer than five days of work), having virtual and online meetings and trainings, and allowing for telecommuting options when appropriate.

- Provide health promotion and wellness programmes that are geared towards improving an employee's physical and emotional health and well being. For example — helping employees connect with smoking cessation programmes, wellness workshops, health fairs, and providing access to employee assistance resources.
- Have ample opportunities for staff recognition and appreciation. Such as offering leadership development activities, providing recognition for excellence in going above and beyond the call of duty, and giving awards for longevity of service.
- Create measures that assess the effectiveness of quality work life initiatives so that impact and results can be determined and enhanced.

“In order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: They must be fit for it. They must not do too much of it. And they must have sense of success in it.” — John Ruskin

Achieving a successful quality of work life will vary from person to person based on the values, priorities and circumstances of that particular individual. A one-size fits all remedy doesn't exist since each employee defines life priorities very differently.

Employees who have a high quality of work life enjoy the work they do and feel a sense of accomplishment in it; their personal lives are enhanced through their work environment and experiences.

Organisations that take an active role in enhancing quality of work life for their employees acknowledge the human-side of work and demonstrate beyond words that they value and respect their employees. The culture of the organisation continues to shift to become more employee-friendly and the organisation recognises that this movement forward will continue to be a true work in progress.