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WORK LIFE BALANCE AMONG HUMAN RESOURCES, EMERGING TRENDS IN SELECT CORPORATE BUSINESSES IN INDIA AND ABROAD - A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Work–life balance (WLB) is a not a new concept. Our ancestors have successfully managed and balanced their work - life and achieved spiritual development.WLB is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between "work" -career and ambition on one hand and "life" -Health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development on the other. Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle balance" and "life balance". Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society. Logically, "work-life balance" will remain a mere concept (useful for debates and workshops) unless there is a collective change in Corporate India. There has to be serious management buy-in and it has to be a wave that should ripple across all levels, and all domains. Managers should be made accountable every time they request an employee to stay back. Clients should be embarrassed to consistently demand service at crazy hours. Employees should be less passive and question the need to work extra hours except in a crisis. Employers should create a culture across the company that puts all this in place and then shout from their rooftops if they have achieved this. Striking a healthy work-life balance isn't a one-shot deal. Creating work-life balance is a continuous process as your family, interests and work life change. Periodically examine your priorities - and make changes, if necessary - to make sure you're keeping on track.

KEYWORDS

Work–life balance, Corporate India, work life change, lifestyle balance.

INTRODUCTION

Work–life balance is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (Health, pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle balance" and "life balance".

Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society. Striking a balance between the needs of the individual employee, customer and organisation demands the following:

For employees: Different individuals will have different expectations and needs at different times in their life

For customers: Organisations need to respond to the demands of their customers if they are to continue to be successful

For organisations: Organisations need to be able to manage costs, maintain profitability and ensure that teams work effectively together.

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this paper are

- to review the literature on WLB
- to examine WLB practices of selected corporate businesess of national and international repute
- to draw meaningful conclusions viz.,
- whether WLB is possible for all employees,
- Why some employees feel it difficult to balance the work-life,
- What measures the business organizations have to adopt,and
- how employees cope up with it.and
- is it worth spending huge amonts on WLB measures by corporate businesess

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The expression was first used in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life.[1] In the United States, this phrase was first used in 1986.

Over the past twenty-five years, there has been a substantial increase in work which is felt to be due, in part, by information technology and by an intense, competitive work environment. Long-term loyalty and a "sense of corporate community" have been eroded by a performance culture that expects more and more from their employees yet offers little security in return.

Many experts predicted that technology would eliminate most household chores and provide people with much more time to enjoy leisure activities; but many ignore this option, encouraged by prevailing consumerist culture and a political agenda that has "elevated the work ethic to unprecedented heights and thereby reinforced the low value and worth attached to parenting".

Many Americans are experiencing burnout due to overwork and increased stress. This condition is seen in nearly all occupations from blue collar workers to upper management. Over the past decade, a rise in workplace violence, an increase in levels of absenteeism as well as rising workers' compensation claims are all evidence of an unhealthy work life balance.

Employee assistance professionals say there are many causes for this situation ranging from personal ambition and the pressure of family obligations to the accelerating pace of technology.[1]. According to a recent study for the Center for Work-Life Policy, 1.7 million people consider their jobs and their work hours excessive because of globalization.

These difficult and exhausting conditions are having adverse effects. According to the study, fifty percent of top corporate executives are leaving their current positions. Although sixty-four percent of workers feel that their work pressures are "self-inflicted", they state that it is taking a toll on them. The study shows that seventy percent of US respondents and eighty-one percent of global respondents say their jobs are affecting their health.

Between forty-six and fifty-nine percent of workers feel that stress is affecting their interpersonal and sexual relationships. Additionally, men feel that there is a certain stigma associated with saying "I can't do this".

According to a survey conducted by the National Life Insurance Company, four out of ten employees state that their jobs are "very" or "extremely" stressful.[2] Those in high-stress jobs are three times more likely than others to suffer from stress-related medical conditions and are twice as likely to quit. The study states that women, in particular, report stress related to the conflict between work and family.

It is clear that problems caused by stress have become a major concern to both employers and employees. Symptoms of stress are manifested both physiologically and psychologically. Persistent stress can result in cardiovascular disease, sexual health problems, a weaker immune system and frequent

headaches, stiff muscles, or backache. It can also result in poor coping skills, irritability, jumpiness, insecurity, exhaustion, and difficulty concentrating. Stress may also perpetuate or lead to binge eating, smoking, and alcohol consumption.

Work-life balance concerns of men and women alike. Similar discrimination is experienced by men who take time off or reduce working hours for taking care of the family.

For many employees today—both male and female—their lives are becoming more consumed with a host of family and other personal responsibilities and interests. Therefore, in an effort to retain employees, it is increasingly important for organizations to recognize this balance. [13]

Men know that work alone may not provide their lives with meaning. Young men can lose their meaning of life; they want a balance between paid work and personal attachments without being victimized at work. [3] [4]

BENEFITS OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

Finding a 'perfect' balance between work and life is rare. The nature of that balance is different for every person, and changes over time for each person. So we shouldn't strive for perfection, but to constantly be aware of making choices that will benefit all aspects of our lives.

Achieving work/life balance is an investment – it does take time and effort to implement the changes necessary. But it's worth the effort! Work/life balance offers some major rewards. Here are some of the potential benefits:

AT WORK

- Feeling more rested and energized
- Working more productively and getting more accomplished, leading to greater career success
- More fulfillment from work

IN LIFE

- Improving relationships with family and friends
- Better physical and mental health
- Making choices about your priorities, rather than sacrifices among them
- More leisure time to spend with loved ones, or time for yourself

CONSEQUENCES OF AN IMBALANCE

Mental health is a balancing act that may be affected by four factors: the influence of unfavourable genes, by wounding trauma, by private pressures and most recently by the stress of working. [6] Many people expose themselves unsolicited to the so-called job stress, because the "hard worker" enjoys a very high social recognition. These aspects can be the cause of an imbalance in the areas of life. But there are also other reasons which can lead to such an imbalance.

Remarkable is for example the increase in non-occupational activities with obligation character, which include mainly house and garden work, maintenance and support of family members or volunteer activities. All this can contribute to the perception of a chronic lack of time. [5] This time pressure is, amongst others, influenced by the own age, the age and number of children in the household, marital status, the profession and level of employment as well as the income level. [6] The psychological strain, which in turn affects the healthiness, increases due to the strong pressure of time, but also by the complexity of work, growing responsibilities, concern for long-term existential protection and more. [7] The mentioned stresses and straints could lead in the long term to irreversible, physical signs of wear as well as to negative effects on the human cardiovascular and immune systems. [8]

Psychoanalysts diagnose uncertainty as the dominant attitude to life in the postmodern society. [9] This uncertainty can be caused by the pressure which is executed from the society to the humans. It is the uncertainty to fail, but also the fear of the own limits, not to achieve something what the society expects, and especially the desire for recognition in all areas of life. [10] In today's society we are in a permanent competition. Appearance, occupation, education of the children - everything is compared to a media staged ideal. Everything should be perfect, because this deep-rooted aversion to all average, the pathological pursue to excellence - these are old traditions. [11] Who ever wants more - on the job, from the partner, from the children, from themselves - will one day be burned out and empty inside. He is then faced with the realization that perfection do not exist. [12] Who is nowadays empty inside and burned out, has in the common language a Burnout. But due to the definitional problems Burnout is till this date no recognized illness. [13] An attempt to define this concept more closely, can be: a condition that get only the passionate, that is certainly not a mental illness but only a grave exhaustion (but, lo and behold, can lead to numerous sick days). [14] It can benefited to the term that it is a disease model which is socially acceptable and also, to some extent, the individual self-esteem stabilizing. This finding in turn facilitates many undetected depressed people, the way to a qualified treatment. [15] According to experts in the field are, in addition to the ultra hard-working and the idealists mainly the perfectionist, the loner, the grim and the thin-skinned, especially endangered of a burnout. All together they usu-ally have a lack of a healthy distance to work. [16]

Another factor is also, that for example decision-makers in government offices and upper echelons are not allowed to show weaknesses or signs of disease etc., because this would immediately lead to doubts of the ability for further responsibility. It should be noted that only 20% of managers (e.g. in Germany) do sports regu-larly and also only 2% keep regularly preventive medical check-up. [17] In such a position other priorities seem to be set and the time lacks for regular sports. Frightening is that the job has such a high priority, that people waive screening as a sign of weakness. In contrast to that, the burnout syndrome seems to be gaining popularity. There seems nothing to be ashamed to show weaknesses, but quite the opposite: The burnout is part of a successful career like a home for the role model family. [18] Besides that the statement which describes the burnout as a "socially recognized precious version of the depression and despair that lets also at the moment of failure the self-image intact" fits and therefore concludes "Only losers become depressed, burnout against it is a diagnosis for winners, more precisely, for former winners.". [19]

However, it is fact that four out of five Germans complain about too much stress. One in six under 60 swallows at least once a week, a pill for the soul, whether it is against insomnia, depression or just for a bit more drive in the stressful everyday life. [20] The phases of burnout can be described, among other things, first by great ambition, then follows the suppression of failure, isolation and finally, the cynical attitude towards the employer or supervisor. Concerned persons have very often also anxiety disorders and depressions, which are serious mental diseases. Depressions are the predominant causes of the nearly 10,000 suicides that occur alone each year in Germany. [21] The implications of such imbalances can be further measured in figures: In 1993, early retirement due to mental illness still made 15.4 percent of all cases. In 2008, there were already 35.6 percent. Even in the days of illness, the proportion of failures due to mental disorders increased. Statisticians calculated that 41 million absent days in 2008 went to the account of these crises, which led to 3.9 billion euros in lost production costs. [22] For companies it is time to act and support their employees with a healthy work-life-balance.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE EMPLOYER

0Companies have begun to realize how important the work-life balance is to the productivity and creativity of their employees. Research by Kenexa Research Institute in 2007 shows that those employees who were more favorable toward their organization's efforts to support work-life balance also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in their organization, a willingness to recommend it as a place to work and higher overall job satisfaction.

Employers can offer a range of different programs and initiatives, such as flexible working arrangements in the form of part time, casual and telecommuting work. More proactive employers can provide compulsory leave, strict maximum hours and foster an environment that encourages employees not to continue working after hours.

It is generally only highly skilled workers that can enjoy such benefits as written in their contracts, although many professional fields would not go so far as to discourage workaholic behaviour. Unskilled workers will almost always have to rely on bare minimum legal requirements. The legal requirements are low in many countries, in particular, the United States. In contrast, the European Union has gone quite far in assuring a legal work-life balance framework, for example pertaining to parental leave and the non-discrimination of part-time workers.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE ACROSS THE GLOBE

According to a new study by Harvard and McGill University researchers, the United States lags far behind nearly all wealthy countries when it comes to family-oriented workplace policies such as maternity leave, paid sick days and support for breast feeding. Jody Heyman, founder of the Harvard-based Project on Global Working Families and director of McGill's Institute for Health and Social Policy, states that, "More countries are providing the workplace protections that millions of Americans can only dream of. The U.S. has been a proud leader in adopting laws that provide for equal opportunity in the workplace, but our work/family protections are among the worst." [23]

American workers average approximately ten paid holidays per year while British workers average twenty-five holidays and German employees thirty. Americans work twelve weeks more a year in total hours than Europeans.

In Europe, the Working Time Regulation has implemented a maximum of forty-eight hours of work per week.[24] Many countries have opted for fewer hours. France attempted to introduce a thirty-five hour workweek, and Finland experimented with a thirty-hour week in 1996. In a 2007, the European Quality of Life Survey found that countries in south-eastern Europe had the most common problems with work-life balance. In Croatia and Greece, a little over 70% of working citizens say that they are too tired to do household jobs at least several times a month because of work.[25]

WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN SELECT COMPANIES

1. IBM

Maintaining the essential work life balance has become a business imperative, and is mostly not very easy to achieve. That's where IBM's employee-friendly policies come into picture.

Be it flexible work arrangements or child care services, we recognize that these have a positive impact on employee productivity & retention, and therefore are looked upon as a business imperative. Complementing these policies are Well-being services, which spans several areas ranging from Influenza Vaccination to Emotional Well-being programs.

Not surprisingly IBM is well known in the industry for its work life balance, and for the nineteenth year in succession, has featured in the 'best companies' list of various magazines, including Working Mother.

2. TATA CO.

Today it is very fashionable to ask, "Do you have a work-life balance?" But this is a choice people have to make. A company cannot dictate or regulate it by switching off lights at 5 pm or ask employees to go on a picnic.

What companies can do is to foster a productive work environment within the working day. If employees need to work outside, then this should be facilitated through the internet and mobile phones.

I feel we should give more opportunities for people to work from home if they want to and make work more flexible. So it may not be necessary that the entire workforce of TCS comes to office every morning at the same time. Such an approach will also cut down on commuting time and enable employees to spend more time with their families. Work-sharing is another way in which couples, or any two people, share the work. All this would not mean less productivity but result in happier employees.

At TCS we are creating opportunities for employees' families to understand what is happening in the company. This gives them a sense of pride in the work that the spouse or parent is doing and makes them feel less neglected.

The issue of work-life balance is going to become even bigger in the future. We have to start looking at the work environment very differently from the way we do today. We will need to consider some structural changes in policies and people practices.

3. MICROSOFT

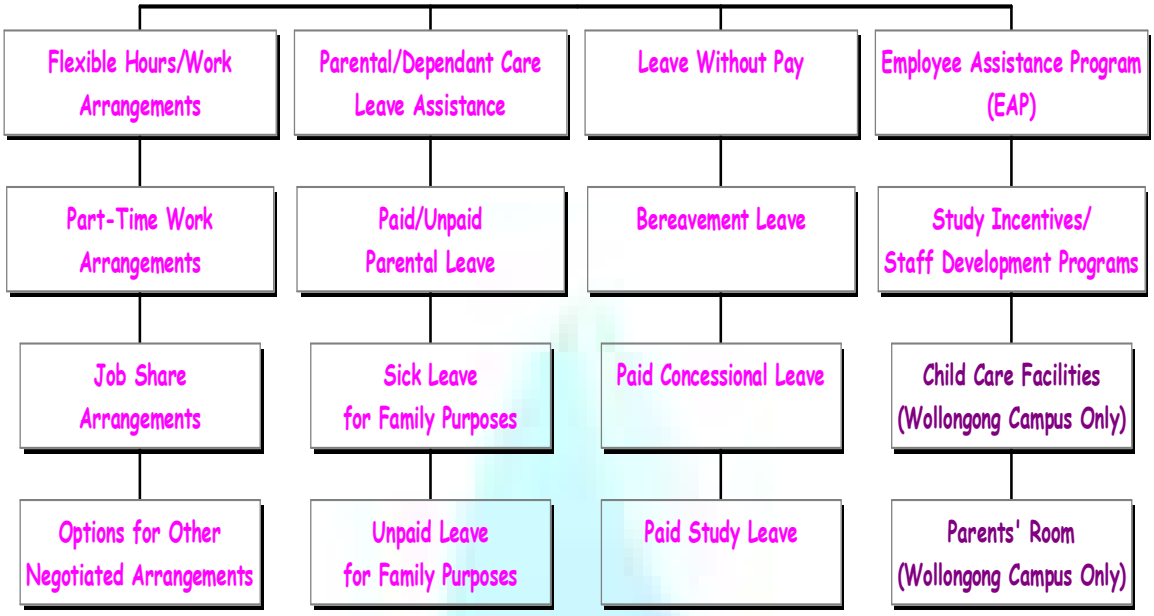
Because our employees are our most valued asset, Microsoft provides flexible programs, resources, and tools to help them create their own balance between their work and their personal lives. These resources range from an extensive resource and referral service to generous maternity and paternity leave policies and flexible work arrangements—all as a means to help employees attain this important balance. Microsoft realizes that happy, healthy employees make Microsoft a better place to work and a more productive company.

The Microsoft Work-Life programs include:

- Flexible work arrangements
- Grocery service
- Adoption assistance
- Backup child-care program
- Child-care assistance
- Commuting programs and public transportation assistance
- Dinners-to-go program
- Disease management programs
- Dry cleaning and laundry service
- Employee affinity groups
- Employee development courses
- Employer-sponsored discount program
- Ergonomics program
- Financial planning
- Fitness benefits
- Legal assistance
- Long-term care for extended family members
- Maternity and paternity leave program
- New mothers' rooms
- On-campus convenience shopping
- Parenting resources and seminars
- Resources and referrals for counseling and education
- Schools Out! programs
- Smoking cessation program
- Tuition assistance program
- Weight management program

In addition to providing these programs, Microsoft is committed to creating a healthy, flexible, and productive work environment that allows employees to engage in a challenging career and balance their WorkLife needs.

4. ITTAWARA TECHNOLOY CORPORATION



5. SONY CORPORATION

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Seeking to maintain work environments that cater to different lifestyles and enable employees to fully express their abilities, Sony has introduced support systems and versatile working styles, among others, to emphasize the importance of achieving an optimal work-life balance.

FLEXIBLE WORKING STYLES

Sony not only follows the laws and customs of the countries and regions in which it operates, but also offers versatile working styles designed to help its employees achieve an effective work-life balance.

In Japan, Sony Corporation has introduced the "flex-time system" and the discretionary work system, enabling it to offer employees a variety of flexible options. Sony employees have used a high percentage of their allotment of annual paid holidays, which in fiscal year 2009 averaged 18 days.

CHILD CARE AND NURSING CARE

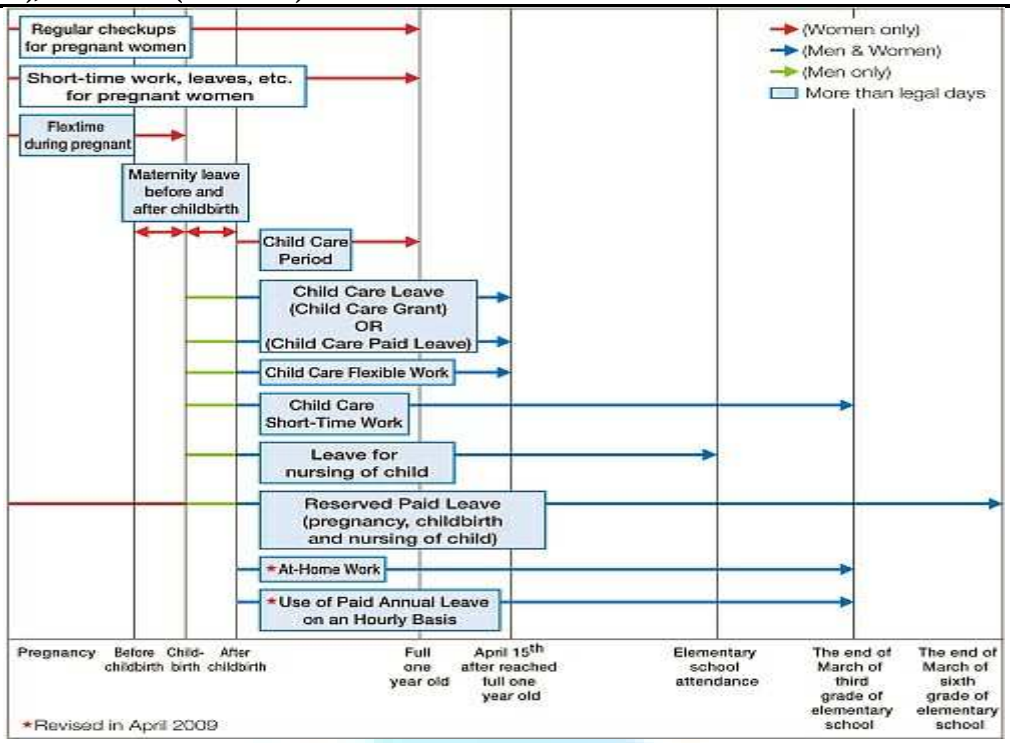
Sony offers a special accumulated leave system aimed at employees undertaking child care or nursing care and a child care paid leave system that can be used in combination with child care leave and provides up to 20 days' leave for employees who have given birth. A significant number of employees take advantage of these leave systems. In addition, Sony offers an "At-Home Work System" and the "use of annual paid holiday on an hourly basis" for child care or nursing care.

- Sony Corporation support system for balancing of work and family (childcare-related)

Principal supports for the balancing of work and family

- Child Care Leave (introduced in fiscal 1990)
  Until April 15th after reaching 1 year of age
  Combination use available with Child Care Paid Leave after 8 weeks of delivery
- Child Care Short-Time Work (introduced in fiscal 1995)
  End of March of third grade of elementary school
  Monthly flextime of short-time work available
- Child Care Grant (introduced in fiscal 2007)
  Payment of 50,000 yen for child care grant every month during child care leave
- Child Care Paid Leave (introduced in fiscal 2007)
  Provide 20 days paid leave
  Combination use available with Child Care Leave after 8 weeks of delivery
- At-Home Work System (introduced in fiscal 2008)
  At-home work for child-rearing and caring for family members
- Use of Paid Annual Leave on an Hourly Basis (introduced in fiscal 2008)
  Use of paid annual leave on an hourly basis for child-rearing and caring for family members

Current status (April 2010)



SONY CORP -MEASURES TO PROMOTE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In addition to establishing work-life balance systems, Sony promotes measures to assist employees combining child care and work with the advancement of their careers and to create a supportive workplace culture. More specifically, Sony holds forums and seminars for employees featuring messages of support for work-life balance initiatives from senior management. A notable example is the "Working Parent Forum", which includes a session during which female and male employees with experience in combining work and child rearing share their personal experiences and an event that provides participants with the opportunity to exchange information. Other such events include "Fathers' Forum", which provides an opportunity for male employees to consider how they can participate in child rearing and features a panel discussion by male employees who have experience in this area; and "Working Mothers' Meeting", in which female employees who have returned to work can attend a lecture from guest speakers, participate in panel discussions and exchange information with other participants. It also acknowledged the fact that Sony encourages its male employees to participate in child rearing.

- Company tour for employees' families at Sony Latin America
- Working Mothers' Meeting

ELECTRONICS (LATIN AMERICA)

In Latin America, Sony has held a number of events aimed at promoting work-life balance since fiscal year 2008, including family days, family picnics and company tours for employees' families.

- Sony Brazil Ltda. has declared Wednesday a "no overtime" day, and turns off the lights at 5:30 p.m. to encourage employees to return home early.

ELECTRONICS (ASIA PACIFIC)

In Singapore, Sony has established a committee that is charged with considering the recreational needs of employees. Each year, the committee asks employees to vote on proposals for the following year. As of fiscal year 2009, employees are able to participate in the planning of related activities. In recognition of efforts such as these to plan activities that incorporate employees' wishes, Sony received the HRM Worklife Harmony Award from HR Media.

Source: (http://www.sony.net/SonyInfo/csr/employees/worklifebalance/index.html)

6. TVS MOTORS

WORK ENVIRONMENT

They offer an open environment, professional freedom and responsibilities to excel and grow with the organization, allowing individuals to have the perfect work-life balance. And that's the work culture we practice and emphasize on, **'Work Smart, Play Hard'**. Their environment is a mix of formal and friendly, which allows professional development with the highest regard for individual and collective contribution towards organization's growth. TVS is known for it's flexible work conditions, camaraderie across the organization, enthusiasm towards work and inclusive decision making. Attrition rates are well below the industry standards and stands at less than 10%. at TVS

Source: (http://www.tvsinfotech.com/Careers.aspx)

7. HOW CHANDA KOCHHAR JOINT MD, ICICI BANK, BALANCES HER WORK-LIFE

Age 46,

My favourite life-after-work activity: Watching Hindi movies and shopping.

The best way to deal with a glass ceiling: Concentrate on work and focus on performance.

The biggest turning point in my career was: The launch of retail banking at ICICI Bank.

Mantra for maintaining work-life balance: Maintain a daily time schedule and prioritise things depending on the situation. If you want to meet her on weekends, check out multiplexes in Mumbai running Hindi movies. Chanda Kochhar is a die-hard fan of Bollywood.

8. CAMPBELL

Their approach to work/life balance illustrates a key aspect of the Campbell Promise – "Campbell Valuing People."

They understand the pressures and challenges facing employees when trying to balance work with personal interests and responsibilities. We also understand that our employees are better able to meet the demands of the business when their own personal needs are being met.

When it comes to work/life balance, a "one-size-fits-all" approach simply won't do. Their programs are designed to recognize that not all employees are the same and that employees' needs may change over time.

Depending on an employee's role and location, here is a sampling of the types of work/life programs and benefits that may be available:

- Flexible work arrangements (e.g., telecommuting, flex-time, job-share, reduced or compressed workweek)
- Summer hours – employees work extra time Monday-Thursday and head out early on Fridays
- On-site full-time childcare plus backup care, school's out and summer programs
- On-site seminars, fairs and workshops on such topics as stress, nutrition and safety

- Company store and cafeteria
- Credit Union with ATM
- On-site dry cleaning services
- Fitness facilities including personal training and group exercise classes, plus discount memberships on a network of commercial fitness centers
- Access to free counseling services on a variety of personal and work/life issues
- Concierge Services to assist you when making arrangements for: restaurant reservations, theatre tickets, personal travel arrangements, automotive services, pet care and cleaning services
- Paid personal days, vacation days, holidays and sick days
- Tuition reimbursement
- Adoption assistance

9. GENERAL ELECTRIC

Naturally, the passion that our people bring to their work extends to their own private worlds, and GE is committed to enabling a healthy balance between the two. GE encourages our people to meet their work commitments while balancing their own life responsibilities.

To support this balance, flexible work arrangements are an integral part of the way we conduct business. The Company also offers many programs and resources to support employees including financial management, family counseling and more.

10. HINDUSTAN UNI LEVER CO.

We recognise that people are more likely to be motivated in their career if they are also fulfilled individuals.

YOUR PERSONAL LIFE

Juggling the demands of your life outside work and your career ambitions can be difficult. As a way of helping balance the two, we give employees the chance to work flexibly through schemes such as part-time hours, home working and job share, as well as career breaks and extended maternity leave.

Usually the people who want more flexibility are parents, but not always. Whatever your reason, we'll do everything we can to find a solution that suits you at the same time as meeting the requirements of the company.

THE WAY WE WORK

There is other, less obvious areas where we've changed the way we work to encourage a better quality of life.

Travelling to meetings costs money impacts the environment and takes people away from their homes. That's why we have introduced effective ways for teams to communicate and share information remotely. These include virtual meetings, videophones and online collaboration environments. We also have new-generation video-conferencing that's so real it's like meeting face to face.

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Our Personal Vitality campaign promotes programmes and activities which are designed to help everyone in the company take care of themselves.

On the one hand we concentrate on body fitness through encouraging better nutrition, hygiene and personal care. This includes initiatives ranging from health assessments to opportunities for physical activity.

On the other we focus on fitness of heart, mind and spirit by creating a vitalising work experience and environment for our people. This helps them feel energised and able to perform to the very best of their ability.

11.ACCENTURE -WORK/LIFE BALANCE AND TIME OFF

As an employee at Accenture, you'll have access to a number of programs that help you build a rewarding career while never sacrificing your most personal priorities.

Accenture offers a flexible approach—giving options for how, and where, you do your work. We offer programs and tools to help individuals and teams understand how encouraging flexibility and a balance between work and personal life enhances, rather than impedes, productivity

COMMITMENT TO WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

We know how important workplace flexibility is to enable you to strike a balance between your work and personal life. Accenture offers a flexible approach—giving options for how, and where, you do your work. We also provide innovative communication and collaboration tools to help increase your productivity, efficiency and flexibility.

Here are some of the various flexible work arrangements we offer at Accenture:

Flex time schedule: Allows employees to vary their start and finish times around predetermined core hours, or work their standard hours in fewer than five days by varying the length of each workday.

Part-time arrangement: Enables employees to work less than a standard full-time schedule per week, by working fewer hours per day or fewer days per week. Usually the role is designed around a reduced workload so that job responsibilities match the number of hours worked.

Job-sharing arrangement: Involves dividing the workload of a full-time position between two employees (usually each working a part-time schedule). It's a great way for our people to keep on the career track while allowing them more time outside of work.

Telecommuting/home working: Enables employees to work from a location other than an Accenture office or project site. This can reduce the time, costs and stress of commuting for employees while helping Accenture control and often reduce the cost of fixed office space.

Fly-backs: Help support work/life balance for employees with significant travel, often the case for consulting professionals. We offer them fly-backs to their home location, the option to fly someone to their project site, and the option to fly to an alternate location in place of a trip home.

Client-site flexible work arrangements: Help our consulting professionals, who spend much of their time working at client sites away from their home location, balance work and personal life. These flexible working options help meet their needs, while still meeting the needs of our clients:

- *Full weekend at home:* Arrive at the project midday on Monday and stop client work early Friday afternoon, thereby providing for a full weekend at home. Work the same number of hours as a full work week, but compress the completion into a shorter time frame.
- *Extended weekends in home location:* Work a five-day work week: four days at the project site and the fifth day in the home office or approved alternate location, with either three or four nights at the out-of-town location.
- *Extended client/home location:* Work an extended period of time at a client site followed by an extended number of days at the home office or approved alternate location, without altering the standard work week requirement and just changing time of hours worked.

TAKE CARE OF OTHERS

Taking care of the important people in your life can be challenging. Check out the resources and programs to help you manage the care of babies to college-ready kids to aging relatives.

LifeWorks Limited Concierge Service: Get help if you need help locating a personal trainer, finding a service to mow your lawn, identifying a tutor for your child, hiring a pet sitter, or purchasing a new vehicle.

LifeWorks Employee Assistance Program: Get confidential support for challenging issues such as parenting, end-of-life issues, caregiver and community support.

Backup Dependent Care: Locate care givers for your children, spouse or relative when regular arrangements won't work, with rates subsidized by Accenture.

Eldercare resource program: Meet with a trained professional who can assess conditions and provide guidance, support and coordination.

Nursing mother's program: New moms can get educational resources about nursing, as well as a $50 breast pump subsidy.

New Parents Toolkit: Expecting or adopting a child? We have a toolkit for information on applicable policies, guidelines and work/life resources.

Adoption Assistance: Adopting a child? Accenture employees receive up to $5,000 per child per family to help pay medical costs, agency and legal fees and other adoption-related expenses.

Your College Connection: Leverage resources to navigate the college preparation process, including saving for college, applying for financial aid and completing applications.

TAKE TIME FOR ME

Sometimes taking care of yourself falls to last on your list. Refresh yourself and learn about the resources and programs to help you take care of you.

Paid time off: We offer a competitive program to give you time away for your personal priorities. Paid time off encompasses traditional vacation time along with paid personal time off and sick leave, providing flexibility for how, when and for what purpose time off is taken. The number of paid-time off days is based on career level and workforce, but ranges from 14 to 27 days per year.

Holidays: Accenture also provides nine paid holidays, including eight standard holidays and a 'floating holiday' for employees to use at their discretion.

Hours That Help: We also offer a unique Hours That Help program that provides support to US employees who need to take time away from work to deal with family medical emergencies or related crisis situations. Accenture employees are able to donate paid-time off hours to help a colleague in a time of need.

Future Leave: Understanding that some of our employees may need to take time off to spend time on their personal priorities, we introduced Future Leave. Unlike PTO, the time off is unpaid, but it has advantages over a traditional leave of absence. Future Leave allows employees to take up to three months away from work with continued healthcare and insurance benefits and the assurance that they can return to work after their leave.

Flexible transitions: To help make the transition easier for employees who take leaves of absence, we offer flexible transitions, allowing employees the opportunity to stay connected to Accenture during the time they are away.

AURGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

Work life and personal life are the two sides of the same coin. According to various work /life balance surveys, more than 60% of the respondent professionals surveyed said that are not able to find a balance between their personal and professional lives. They have to make tough choices even when their work and personal life is nowhere close to equilibrium. Traditionally creating and managing a balance between the work-life was considered to be a woman's issue. But increasing work pressures, globalization and technological advancement have made it an issue with both the sexes, all professionals working across all levels and all industries throughout the world. Achieving "work-life balance" is not as simple as it sounds.

Work life and personal life are inter-connected and interdependent. Spending more time in office, dealing with clients and the pressures of job can interfere and affect the personal life, sometimes making it impossible to even complete the household chores. On the other hand, personal life can also be demanding if you have a kid or aging parents, financial problems or even problems in the life of a dear relative. It can lead to absenteeism from work, creating stress and lack of concentration at work.

Work-personal life conflict occurs when the burden, obligations and responsibilities of work and family roles become incompatible. Obligation of one can force an individual to neglect the other.

CHANGING & INCREASING WORK PRESSURES

A decade back, employees used to have fixed working hours or rather a 9 to 5 job from Monday to Friday. The boundary between the work and home has disappeared with time. But with globalization and people working across countries, the concept of fixed working hours is fading away. Instead of just 7 or 8 a day, people are spending as much as 12-16 hours every day in office.

ARGUEMENTS AGAINST WORK LIFE BALANCE

THE SUCCESS FORMULA

Let us begin with the most popular life goal, ie, success. One way to learn is by studying the lives and habits of successful people. Albert Einstein, for example, worked on the ideas that flashed in his mind at all times of day and night. So absorbed was he in his work that he sometimes asked his butler to serve him lunch, forgetting that he had finished it already.

Melody queen Lata Mangeshkar would practise for hours as a teenager, and she has continued to enjoy her mammoth practice sessions every single day of her life. Sachin Tendulkar, even as a school kid, loved batting practice, hitting balls against a wall well past midnight.

Think of Zakir Hussain, Bismillah Khan, Michael Jackson, or an Olympic winner of your choice. All these achievers have just one thing in common: they never had 'working hours'. And that's because they never 'worked'. They enjoyed their work so much and remained so absorbed in it that no other activity was as much 'fun'. They never knew or needed to practise 'work-life balance'.

Advocates of work-life balance recommend that after college or office hours, we go to some club or park with friends for some recreation, but these people — such as Tendulkar absorbed in cricket — derived more pleasure in their 'work'. In other words, they have had more 'fun hours' (read 'work hours') than most of us have work-plus-fun hours.

Why are we not so involved in our work? To understand this, imagine what could have happened if Tendulkar had gone for a career as a chartered accountant or Einstein as a lawyer. Or if Bismillah and Jackson had been forced to study engineering.

To sum up, the concept of work-life balance is seriously flawed. Selecting a career or profession that exploits or gratifies one's unique driving forces is a far better route to success, happiness, personal fulfilment and a distinct identity in society than trying to follow some flawed notion of work-life balance.

Having a passion gives life a purpose. Many research findings have now proved that those who live with a purpose live longer (and healthier) than those living without a clear purpose or passion. So identity your passion and pursue it to live long and be happy.

(Source: DAILY NEWS AND ANALYSIS-Work-life balance is humbug--HK Shivdasani | Sunday, August 15, 2010)

REASONS OF IMBALANCE

There are various reasons for this imbalance and conflicts in the life of an employee. From individual career ambitions to pressure to cope up with family or work, the reasons can be situation and individual specific. The speed of advancement of information technology, the increasing competition in the talent supply market has led to a "performance-driven" culture creating pressures and expectations to performance more and better every time. Also, many a times, many people find it difficult to say "NO" to others especially their superiors. They usually end up over burdening themselves with work. The increasing responsibilities on the personal front with age can also create stress on personal and professional fronts.

SOLUTIONS

Many experts have given different solutions to this problem.

- Time management is one of the best solutions which can help to reduce the imbalance between the personal and the work life of the employees. Prioritizing the tasks and planning the activities can help to take out some free time which can be utilized for other purposes.
- Taking some time out for hobbies and leisure activities, spending time with loved ones can help to beat the stress.
- Learn to say "no" if required.
- Sharing the responsibilities will help and don't commit for something which is practically impossible.
- Utilizing the flexible working hours option of the organisations to get some free time.

(Source: http://www.naukrihub.com/hr-today/work-life-balance.html)

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Work-Life Benefits Improve Productivity, Research Shows,
- Survey Finds Employees With Good Work-Life Benefits Work Harder,

- Effective work-life benefits encourage employees to work harder and discourage them from quitting their jobs, according to research by the Corporate Executive Board.
- Contrary to conventional wisdom, men and women hold similar views of work-life benefits, the board found in a survey of over 50,000 workers. Moreover, star employees assign almost as much importance to work-life balance as other employees and have similar work-life preferences.
- The report found that people who are happy with their work-life benefits- Work 21 percent harder ,are 33 percent more likely to plan to stay at that organization
- Existing Work-Life Benefits
- Current work-life benefits could be better, the report found. Only 16 percent of employees are satisfied with their organization's work-life practices. Nearly a third of workers are skimping on work to meet personal commitments.
- The majority of people don't even know what's available to them. Fewer than one-third of employees are aware of their employer's work-life offerings. Work-life benefits might include permission for telecommuting, flexible hours and on-site or subsidized child care.
- Of those who are aware, only 25 percent say those offerings match their preferences. And more than half of employees never use the available work-life benefits.

(Source: Stay Put, By Katherine Lewis, About.com Guide)

WHAT WORK-LIFE BENEFITS DO EMPLOYEES WANT?

Employees prefer work-life benefits that help them manage their workload. For instance, they like flexible work schedules, an appropriate amount of work and predictable working hours.

When asked about the five most desirable employer practices,

- 63 percent of employees included a flexible work schedule
- 62 percent cited an appropriate workload
- 13 percent was the average for all other work-life practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Companies should improve their work-life benefits and communicate them to employees, the report suggested.
- "Employees don't necessarily have to use work-life practices to generate positive returns for the organization," the researchers noted. "Awareness of the work-life proposition is, in fact, slightly more important than consumption of it."
- The most powerful factors that increase awareness and use of work-life benefits are:
- Peers visibly using work-life practices
- Clear implementation guidelines
- Employee control
- The report noted that there are significant geographical differences in work-life preferences.

(Source: The Corporate Executive Board)

There was a time when the boundaries between work and home were fairly clear. Today, however, work is likely to invade your personal life — and maintaining work-life balance is no simple task. Still, work-life balance isn't out of reach. Start by evaluating your relationship to work. Then apply specific strategies to help you strike a healthier balance.

CONCLUSION

The opportunity for individuals to balance their home and work lives is a central component of Good Work. Research suggests that people are experiencing a time squeeze, particularly women, and demographic trends suggest that this is not going to go away. There are a number of business benefits stemming from work-life balance. (Source:Get work-personal life balance right--- Dr Bhavna Barmi , INDIA TO DAY,ctober 30, 2009,)

The main cause of imbalance in our lives is the disparity between our work and personal life.

There is a sense of inflated competition and everyone wants to beat the other and be the best. The ' best', however, is never achieved because someone else is always perceived as better. Lifestyle stress is also brought about by an attitude of risk- taking, especially where it concerns health. People tend to think their health is infallible and pay the price.

Lifestyle stress manifests at different levels. At a somatic level the body physiology changes, causing a disturbance in sleep patterns and appetite, unexplained aches and pains and fatigue. Stress impacts the mind and brain function, reducing the attention span, increased forgetfulness and causing a tendency to brood unnecessarily on matters which are sometimes trivial.

The behaviour of someone who is stressed tends to be erratic.

Increased tea or coffee intake, a constant desire to appear busy, which means longer than average hours spent at work or, conversely, detachment from work altogether, are some indications.

A stressed individual may also manifest the external symptoms of stress such as self isolation, unexplained bouts of anger or irritation at trivial matters and depression or negative thinking.

The lack of a proper sleep-wake schedule is one of the biggest causes of health problems of our times and an effort should be made to follow the dictum of ' early to bed, early to rise', as closely as possible.

The corporate world tends to compromise on this in the pursuit of a higher paycheck. The best time to wake in the morning is as near to sunrise as possible, and to sleep is four hours after sunset. The optimum sleep requirement is six hours of undisturbed sleep, give or take an hour.

The second most important priority in a person's life should be his meals. People are either too complacent about their health or tend to be overzealous.

Both attitudes are harmful.

Moderate exercise should be a part of our lives. Ideally, all of us should follow the 'rule of 4'; four times a week, four km in 40 minutes is the ideal amount of exercise.

Along with proper sleep, diet and exercise, every individual must incorporate ways of relaxing using methods that range from physical exercise, deep breathing and meditation, to indulging in hobbies, social service activities and spending quality time with family.

Unconditional involvement in social service is actually a great de- stressor because of the undiluted appreciation one receives in return.

Quality time alone, that offers room for introspection is also something one should keep aside 10 minutes to half an hour every day. If despite all these measures stress cannot be negated, professional help should be sought.

STRIKE A BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE

As long as you're working, juggling the demands of career and personal life will probably be an ongoing challenge. Use these ideas to help you find the work-life balance that's best for you:

- **Track your time.** Track everything you do for one week, including work-related and personal activities. Decide what's necessary and what satisfies you the most. Cut or delegate activities you don't enjoy or can't handle — or share your concerns and possible solutions with your employer or others.
- **Take advantage of your options.** Ask your employer about flex hours, a compressed workweek, job sharing, telecommuting or other scheduling flexibility. The more control you have over your hours, the less stressed you're likely to be.
- **Learn to say no.** Whether it's a co-worker asking you to spearhead an extra project or your child's teacher asking you to manage the class play, remember that it's OK to respectfully say no. When you quit doing the things you do only out of guilt or a false sense of obligation, you'll make more room in your life for the activities that are meaningful to you and bring you joy.

- **Leave work at work.** With the technology to connect to anyone at any time from virtually anywhere, there may be no boundary between work and home — unless you create it. Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time. When you're with your family, for instance, turn off your cell phone and put away your laptop computer.
- **Manage your time.** Organize household tasks efficiently, such as running errands in batches or doing a load of laundry every day, rather than saving it all for your day off. Put family events on a weekly family calendar and keep a daily to-do list. Do what needs to be done and let the rest go. Limit time-consuming misunderstandings by communicating clearly and listening carefully. Take notes if necessary.
- **Bolster your support system.** At work, join forces with co-workers who can cover for you — and vice versa — when family conflicts arise. At home, enlist trusted friends and loved ones to pitch in with child care or household responsibilities when you need to work overtime or travel.
- **Nurture yourself.** Eat healthy foods, include physical activity in your daily routine and get enough sleep. Set aside time each day for an activity that you enjoy, such as practicing yoga or reading. Better yet, discover activities you can do with your partner, family or friends — such as hiking, dancing or taking cooking classes.

KNOW WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Everyone needs help from time to time. If your life feels too chaotic to manage and you're spinning your wheels worrying about it, talk with a professional — such as a counselor or other mental health professional. If your employer offers an employee assistance program (EAP), take advantage of available services**.** (Source By Mayo Clinic staff- Work-life balance: Tips to reclaim control- Use these practical strategies to restore harmony.)

Logically, "work-life balance" will remain a mere concept (useful for debates and workshops) unless there is a collective change in Corporate India. There has to be serious management buy-in and it has to be a wave that should ripple across all levels, and all domains.

Managers should be made accountable every time they request an employee to stay back. Clients should be embarrassed to consistently demand service at crazy hours. Employees should be less passive and question the need to work extra hours except in a crisis. Employers should create a culture across the company that puts all this in place and then shout from their rooftops if they have achieved this.(Work-life balance (HINDU-Sunday, Jan 20, 2008), Hema Subramaniam)

Striking a healthy work-life balance isn't a one-shot deal. Creating work-life balance is a continuous process as your family, interests and work life change. Periodically examine your priorities — and make changes, if necessary — to make sure you're keeping on track.

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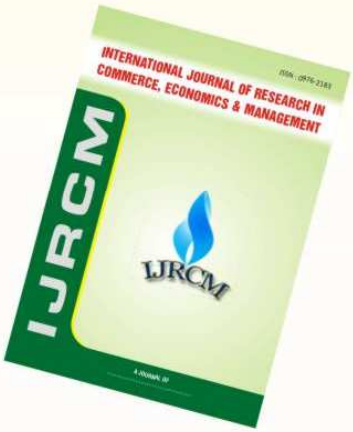
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