Research Paper

Volume : 3 | Issue : 4 | Special Apr Issue 2014 • ISSN No 2277 - 8179

Work Life Balance: An Emotional Intelligence Strategy for A Peaceful and Satisfying Atmosphere At Home and Workplace

HRM

KEYWORDS : Work life Balance, emotional intelligence, high productivity, burn out, stress, fear of survival, flexi-work, performance.

Dr. U. SYED AKTHARSHA	Associate Professor, Jamal Institute of Management, Jamal Mohamed College, Trichy
PRIYA V	Research Scholar, Bharathidasan University & Personal Assistant to Director (IIM-T)

ABSTRACT

In this fast running phase of life, people really find it difficult to manage a balance between the pressures of work place and the duties of a home-maker, be it a male or female. Their life hops at either end of a see-saw and often ends up in a juggling life. This contemporary managerial issue has become a challenging factor of not only the young corporates who has just started their family life but also the young and middle-aged parents who needs to provide constant attention to their children who are fast-growing students/young adults. Adapting to a strategy where an emotional intelligence becomes the lead factor would help achieve equilibrium of Work-Life Management.This paper strives to find a right balance between work and life pressures and seek solution to lead a balance between these two key factors which lead to a satisfying work career and a peaceful and happy family.

INTRODUCTION

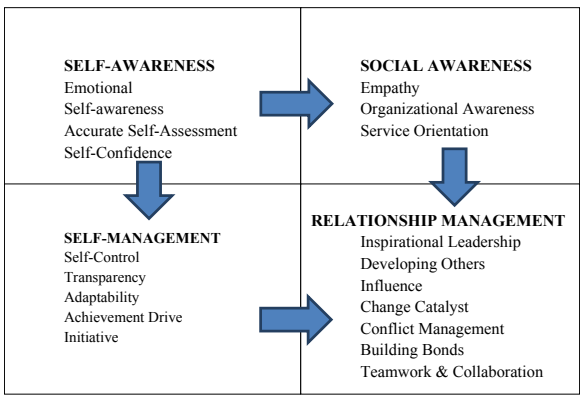
Work life balance is a concept where an individual manages to balance his time both at work and home. It helps people to divide their energy between work, family and other important aspects of their lives. It is a day-to-day activity where he/she needs to spend time with family, friends, relatives, need to develop one's own interests like spirituality, exercising, hobbies, self-care, social interactions, etc. There should be resilience between the work and personal life. One should be able to manage his office pressures and complete his work efficiently without compromising on the personal front. This could be done effectively if the power of emotional intelligence is identified and applied by every individual.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The emotional intelligence has been defined as, "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions".

- **Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer**

Emotional intelligence is the capability of a person to understand, analyse and decide on issues based on self-control, self-awareness, self-management and empathy.



Source: Figure 1. Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model (2002)

There are three principles to be followed in an organization to find a work life balance[1]. These three principles are:

1. clarity of priorities – employees are encouraged to understand the priorities of business and personal life;
2. Recognition of employees as 'whole people' and acknowledge that they have their own life outside the office; and
3. the organization requires to continuously experiment with the way of working that achieves business goals without spoiling employees' personal lives.

WHY WORK LIFE BALANCE IS IMPORTANT?

When one just concentrates on one aspect alone, that is, if a person becomes a workaholic and concentrates only on work, he tends to miss out many aspects at personal life. This will lead to many issues like misunderstanding with life partner, negligence of relatives, unable to bond with children, missing out time lines for making payments like various bills and disbursements, etc. which will ultimately lead to guilty feeling, unhappiness and stress. This stress, at a later stage will develop into hatred of work which in chain leads to inefficiency as they would not have peace of mind to concentrate on their work and they tend to lose their interest in work. Instead, when a balance is struck between work and life, the individual would not miss anything around. He prioritizes his work, completes the same and pushes off to home to spend time with family. Here, he gets enough time for his own personal space, his family is happy and a congenial atmosphere is filled around. He is left with peace and in turn, is able to concentrate on work, improve efficiency and becomes a winner.

Any organization which is also employee-centric along with business objectives will look into this aspect as a serious matter.

CORRELATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND WORK LIFE BALANCE

Emotional Intelligence helps a person to handle day-to-day activities diplomatically and with maturity. An employee can achieve better results at office and can also be a happy home-maker when he/she is emotionally intelligent and struck his/her chord right between work and life.

WHAT MAKES WORK LIFE BALANCE A MAJOR CHALLENGE?

A myth of 'overtime working is good and shows the dedication of the employee' that surrounds the working environment needs to be smashed.

The fear of an impact on their career – fear of thoughts like 'what if my boss think that I am interested in leaving home rather than working; what if I leave when my boss is still in office; what if my competitor stays back at work and earns goodwill; what if my position would take a back seat in my career; what if I could not get promotion, incentives, awards,etc.

The employees might have severe work pressures that really couldn't help close the shop. This might be due to the fact that the employee is overburdened and due to inequality in distribution of work among employees.

Reluctance shown by employers and employees in bring in work life balance management; employers might be unwilling to implement the work life balance culture thinking that employees might take advantage of the situation and will slide more on personal lives rather than giving attention to the professional

lives. In the same way, 'fear of survival' factor might make the employees feel apprehensive towards this culture.

Bringing in consensus to establish flexible work schedules plays a vital role in an organization. Every individual might face different situations at different places and their requirements might be different. For example, a young mother would prefer to take small breaks in between work to take care of her child but would like to attend office in early hours while an employee who has school-going children would like to come late in the morning and extend his office hours in the evening. Such fluctuations should be considered based on individual needs.

"What you do in the office is our business. What you do outside is your own"[2]types of attitudes from the managers and lack of support from various heads/departments of the organization in this initiative might become a great hurdle in successful implementation of work life balance culture.

Application of emotional intelligence by an employer could help reduce the stress of employees and help manage work life balance. The organization might not be able to bring this strategy dramatically over night but they can bring-in the system over a period of time with appropriate systems in place. They could do that by adapting to the following strategies:

- Proper work life balance culture should be brought-in with policies and procedures set;
- to instill confidence in the minds of employees regarding the work life balance management and educate them about the benefits;
- Flexi-work nature could be adopted as sophisticated and advanced technologies have made it more feasible for employees to keep contact with work even when the employee is away from the workplace;
- consistent interaction with employees to understand the problems of subordinates and lending hands to resolve peace at work;
- fun at work focusing on team-building activities, socializing, celebrations on achievement of individuals, recognition of personal milestones like wedding, birthdays, etc;
- creating congenial work culture with flexible HR policies that enables employees to have freedom of taking decisions about flexi-time working, work at home culture, if necessary, leave policies, rewards and recognitions, etc;
- avoid placing undue pressures at work for employees;
- providing personal attention in the welfare of employees' families;
- To have sufficient number of employees (and stand-by employees)for uninterrupted work so as to provide peaceful and happy leave / personal vacation for employees;
- Undisturbed environment at home or after-office hours;
- A friendly atmosphere for young mothers with either a crèche around or flexible working hours;
- To build a proper rest room to refresh or take a break when an employee is stressed out;
- To have a kid's play corner so that parental worries do not disturb work on school holidays;
- Fitness facilities for employees to relax after office hours or during holidays and weekends;
- Walk a talk with employees to build cordial relationships between boss and subordinates.

EMPLOYEE'S ROLE THROUGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN BRINGING WORK LIFE PEACE

- Every individual must be able to identify, prioritize and perform work efficiently in time so that he could also have time to lead his personal life happily and successfully;
- do not compromise on personal front because there would be least reluctances and objections in family for negativity and because they could be convinced easily;
- plan personal vacations and outings and spend as much time possible with family which would give a happy family and in turn, leads to a happy working environment;
- attend to children's needs as this gives utmost satisfaction and calmness in mind which will, in turn, help to concentrate more on work front;
- attend events, programmes and meetings at children's school and be a committed parent;
- give fullest attention to the elderly parents and do not shy away from the duties and responsibilities of a son/daughter;
- attend to official work with utmost concentration and show high productivity;

The employees must have a balance of firm and compassionate qualities. While they must have firm qualities like aggressiveness, ambitious, competitive, self-reliant, single-minded and risk taking, they should also possess compassionate qualities like supportive, nurturing, intuitive, sensitive, communicative and empathetic.

Work life balance management policy of an organization should concentrate on the following:

- Flexi-natured policy of work life balance management to be incorporated;
- It should be tailor-made and not ready-made – one policy may not fit all as each individual are different and everyone wiill have different kinds of issues on day-to-day life;
- The quality of work should be analyzed always as a performance indicator and the hours of work at desk should not be taken into account;
- The employees should be properly educated about the work life management policy of the organization;
- Cultivate a culture under the assumption that work and personal life are not competing priorities but complementary ones.
- Organizational pressures could not be dispensed with one employee. Because of one's competencies and ability to perform his work efficiently, the same employee should not be squeezed and made 'burn out'. This will make the employee feel over-burdened when his peer have a comparatively sophisticated life.
- Rotation of jobs or inter-change of departments will help employees breathe fresh air, replenish their energies and helps come out of the monotonous routine. This will not only give the employees an opportunity to learn about other roles and functions, but will also enhance their capability and knowledge of work in their chosen field.

RESULTS OF SUCCESSFUL WORK LIFE BALANCE MANAGEMENT

When perfect work life balance is able to attain, there would be better environment around the employees. They will have a peaceful family which is rightly concentrated and socio-economic needs fulfilled on time, they would be able to concentrate on work with whole-heartedness, satisfaction and happiness, with loyalty towards organization, feeling oneness among employees. This will lead to improved quality of life – both at work and family, which in turn, results in increased productivity and improved efficiency.

The employers would also reap the benefits of high level of performance and productivity, high-employee retention, lesser conflicts to handle, etc. This would also take them to the position of one among the best employers around.

When the employee has the self-awareness, he would be able to analyse and approach issues more scientifically with which he could manage things independently; he would also be able to handle relationships at various ends without conflicts. This type of emotional intelligence will make him successful at office and obviously, he would be able to lead tension-free family life. Emotional Intelligence of a person makes him think independently without bias, and since, he knows his own personal strengths and weaknesses, he would be able to handle things with self-control and confidence, thus clearly making him a leader.

Work life balance, if followed appropriately will touch the finishing line with a win-win situation of the business race. Giving freedom to employees to decide on the priorities as situation demands will enhance the morale of employees; it will scale-up

the commitment level of the employees towards the organization. In this strategy, the management can give choices to employees where they can choose upon priorities in terms of time, work place, etc., without losing focus on work front.

It should be understood that more time at work doesn't mean that more work (high productivity) is done. When working times are extended, the employees tend to lose focus on the work. The management should not underestimate the personal commitments of an employee. When the employee leads a contended personal life, his attention towards work becomes more yielding. A sincere interest and personal touch with the employees will help the management to understand them more and will be helpful to lend support at times of need. This will increase the employee's loyalty and faithfulness towards organization.

An organization should work with long term objectives. By lending support to a needy employee by way of lenient timings or sanctioning paid leave more than the entitlement, etc might look null for short time, but these efforts which are made to support the personal lives of the employees will make a long term impact on them and their focus and commitment towards their job would shoot up.

Periodical review of work life balance management policies should be attempted as the socio-economic and cultural changes are inevitable. Today's trend and way of life might become outdated soon and hence, the organization must plan to revise the policies at appropriate intervals.

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