PRIORITIZING WORK-LIFE BALANCE UNDER TURBULENT BUSINESS SCENARIO

Neelam Sharma,
Assistant Professor,
Greater Noida Institute of Management & Technology,
G.Noida (U.P.),India

ABSTRACT

Work–life balance is the proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle balance" and "life balance". Work–life balance is a broad concept which is closely related and derived from the research of job satisfaction. Within the research of Job Satisfaction, it has been found that there are both intrinsic and extrinsic factors which affected perceptions of job satisfaction within individuals. Intrinsic factors referred to job characteristics specifically. However, the extrinsic factors referred to the social and cultural norms the individual holding the job operated by. Hence, Work–life balance was considered one of the inputs of this extrinsic factor. One can say that This is fine, as long as it is clear that there is a large individual component in that. Meaning, each individual's needs, experiences, and goals, define the balance and there is not a one size fits all solution. Also, what work-life balance does not mean is an equal balance in units of time between work and life

The turbulent situations prevalent in the business environment have posed certain involuntary demands and requisitions from the ends of the employer in front of the employee. Seeing the current state of competition, these requirements cannot be considered as wrong. But, they pose a stress on the employee and put him in utter mess while balancing his work life with family responsibilities. This study deals with techniques from the end of employee as well as employer that can help to combat this stress.

Keywords: Work life balancing, flexible working hours, job satisfaction, family satisfaction,. Turbulent business conditions

INTRODUCTION:

Over the last six decades, work life balancing has emerged as an important human resource management aspect for the employer. Work-life balance is all about creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environment which will enable employees to have balance between work and personal responsibilities and thus strengthen employee loyalty and productivity.

"Work life balance is a self defined, self determined state of well being that a person can reach or can set as a goal , that allows them to manage effectively multiple responsibilities at work, at home, and in their community ; it supports physical, social, family and community health, ands does so without grief, stress or negative impact"

Work–life balance is a broad concept which is closely related and derived from the research of Job satisfaction. As human beings all employees have numerous responsibilities such as work, children, household, individuals, families and communities where they reside. Workplace conflicts have negative implications on family life and it is quiet necessary to balance work and personal life related demands. So, individuals and organizations try their best to minimize this conflict.

Work life balance is not about trying to schedule an equal number of hours for each of your various work and personal activities, but it is all about enjoying your life. Work life balance is a person's control over the conditions in their workplace and home that mutually benefits the individual, business and society.
"Careful planning and personal effort is the secret of balancing work with life"

In past recessions, employers instituted shorter work hours to cut costs and save jobs, a historian says, suggesting this economic crisis could leave people with more time for life outside of work - albeit with a smaller paycheque. But, in these challenging times, it is helpful to take a long-term view of balance. Living a balanced life is rarely possible on any given day and probably not even achievable in the course of a week. However, it may be more attainable when viewed over a month, or a quarter. The reality is as companies struggle and workforces are reduced, there is more work to be done by fewer people. Many workers feel their families are suffering because of the number of hours and amount of energy they are putting in on the job. They find their position being tenuous because of what they perceive as the ever-impending possibility of being laid off, bought out, downsized or fired.
Recent economic downturn has witnessed a sudden interruption in the spread and growth of work life balance facilities at organizational level. This work deals with the key recessionary reasons that have negatively influenced employee work life balance. It includes the important recession specific benefits which organizations can avail. The research basically includes the suggestions for adapting work life balance facilities under current economic downturn as well as in any such situation in the future.

IMPORTANCE OF WORK LIFE BALANCING:

Under the economic slowdown, employees may suffer more by not raising the demand for work life balance policies. Anticipated future uncertainty keeps them away from asking the employer for work life balance policies.

In the current environment, work-life balance still is one of the most important issues, second only to compensation. During good economic times, attention to the issue of work-life balance became popular with many promising practices. Now during the economic downturn, the danger of employers putting its importance on the backburner may be at both the cost of productivity and family stability. The consequences of an imbalance go beyond the workplace.

This study focuses on finding out ways and means that can balance the employee work life during turbulent economic conditions. The dynamism of economy has hard pressed both employee and employer for short, medium and long term survival. The focus of choosing this topic for detailed study is to bring in a farsighted approach in front of the employer so that they can promote work life balance initiatives. Companies have begun to realize how important the work-life balance is to the productivity and creativity of their employees.

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.

What's good for employees is usually good for the company. When an employee burns out work and morale suffer and that can have a negative effect on the bottom line. But in reality, it can be risky to advocate for your own needs while your company is struggling.

These initiatives could be used by any employer. Farsighted organizations can adopt these practices and should not consider them as an unavoidable expenditure but as a medium and long term investment.

If employees take care of work life balance needs of employees during the difficult times of recession, then they will be the end gainers as they will benefit from the higher workplace productivity of employees.

DISCUSSION:

Recession has adversely affected the work life balance initiatives. It has led to reduction of salaries, incentives and bonus, job insecurity, non voluntary career change, moon – lighting, work intensification , high workload , etc. People fortunate enough to still have jobs are working harder than ever in the current recession, and many believe that their family relations are suffering as a result, Best practice organizations recognize that the most appreciated service they can provide their employees is the "gift of time."

It has a directly black shadowed the work life balance, employee engagement, workplace productivity and finally the organizational profitability.

The following features have been observed while studying work life balancing:

    i.   Work life balancing is really important for employees:

The strong correlation between work-life programs and greater productivity, as well as the importance to quality of life, has been documented in a number of studies, including global surveys done by IBM.

ii. Gen X is equally concerned with work-life balance as Gen Y :

Gender differences have no impact on work life balancing. Work life balancing is equally important for men and women. Gender inequalities have not peeped into this area. Working men as well as working women have to bear the immense pressure at the workplace and it becomes difficult to balance family responsibilities.

iii. The Work life balancing techniques that can be used successfully in organizations:

During a recession, workers' behavior often changes. Out of fear of losing their jobs, they are more likely to work longer hours, reduce maternity leave, and skip vacations. None of these things will increase productivity or worker satisfaction in the long term. Finding a healthy work-life balance can be difficult, even when economic times are good. Thus, it becomes quiet necessary to find out strategies that can help to balance work life under the current situations.

A)   EMPLOYEES' TECHNIQUES TO BALANCE WORK LIFE:

Here are nine strategies that, taken together, can help to change course without abandoning the destination and help you restore your work life balance:

1. Don't panic.

2. Return to Source.

3. Take a body inventory.

4. Tell the truth.

5. Keep good company.

6. Tune Up Your Thinking.

7. Set Healthy, Flexible Boundaries.

8. Create or Refine Systems.

9. Keep the Goal, Drop the Plan.

B) EMPLOYERS' TECHNIQUES TO BALANCE WORK LIFE:

Some strategies like telecommuting, flexible working hours, reduced working hours, recreation aids provided from employers end can help to balance work life and personal life initiatives. Work life balance can help the employers from doing away with the adverse results which might get reflected in the balance sheets of the organizations globally.

Some techniques that can be used by employers to balance work life could be as follows**:**

1) Equal opportunities policy:

Employees with caring responsibilities should have the same opportunities to get a job or stay in work as everyone else, regardless of their responsibilities outside of work. Employers should therefore include careers in equal opportunities and diversity policies, alongside other factors such as race, gender etc, and communicate this to employees.

2) Careers policy:

Some organizations find it useful to have a specific policy for employees with caring responsibilities. This can support managers when recruiting careers as well as provide detail about supporting employees in the process of balancing work and care.

This policy should include:
☐Reference to the organization's definition of a career and what this
☐ Means the support provisions available to careers
☐ Support options available to their line managers.

Many of the support options will be dependent on the employee's needs, and employers should consult employees when they develop these policies about what provision will be most beneficial to them.

3) Flexible Working:

Understanding the benefits that flexible working can bring to both the employer and the employees with caring responsibilities, is an important part of developing policies and practices. It has certainly been proven to benefit the employer in particular through cost savings and increased employee retention. Flexible working is the key to ensuring employees with caring responsibilities can work and continue to be effective in the workplace. It can provide mechanisms for all employees to balance work and life, but it can be specifically beneficial for those employees who are careers. Adjustments can include:

• **Flexible starting and finishing Times** :
Adjusting the working day to begin and end earlier or later, or even to have a break in the day, to enable an employee to work their full hours more flexibly
• **Compressed working hours**:
Completing contracted hours in a shorter period than normal, for example, working a nine day fortnight
• **Annualized working hours**:
Completing contracted hours, but making adjustments to allow for shorter or longer days or weeks across the period of a year.
• **Job sharing**:
Two or more people fulfilling the requirements of a single post
• **Job rotation**:
Moving from one job to another for a specific period to reduce work commitments during a period of care.

• **Part-time working:**
• **Home-working and Tele-Commuting**:
Working in the home environment or other than in the normal workplace, often through the use of technology
• **Term-time working**:
working contracted hours but within school term times
• **Flexible holidays**:
To fit in with alternative care arrangements

4) Flexible leave arrangements:

Careers often use their annual leave to manage crises or periods of intensive care. This means that they do not have a break themselves, and can be tired or stressed as a result. Some leave arrangements which can help are:

• **Emergency leave** – a short period to be used to manage a care crisis.
• **Careers leave** – a period given to be dedicated to caring, often when a short intensive period of care is needed.
• **Compassionate leave** – used mostly following bereavement.
• **Career break** – used when a career has to take a longer period out of the workplace, but wishes to return to their former job
• **Salary sacrifice** to build up a bank of leave to be used for caring
• **Matched leave** – an additional period of leave offered by an employer to 'match' annual leave an employee has to take to provide care – often used to cover a period following hospital discharge
Some of these will be statutory entitlements or at the discretion of the employer, depending on the systems of different countries. Small and medium size employers may offer flexible working or leave arrangements without embedding them in formal arrangements, but still responding to the needs of the individual.

5) Culture change:

Building an open culture, with equality of opportunity for all, is an essential part of ensuring employees with caring responsibilities can balance work and care. Employers can have many good workplace policies and practices to attract and retain careers; however these will not be successful if the culture is not supportive and inclusive for all. The culture and working environment need to welcome and accommodate employees with caring responsibilities. Although there is not one solution that fits all, as different organizations will have different work cultures, the policies and practices should be demonstrated and 'be alive' in the working environment. They should be understood and accepted at every level of the organization, and publicized and promoted regularly and using different media. Many employers have found it useful to have a senior level careers champion, to be an ambassador and promote the policies available. As part of the culture, there should always be opportunities for employees with caring responsibilities to feel able to discuss these in an open way, with managers and with colleagues. One way to do this is to create a careers' network supported by the employer. This is an important aspect in ensuring that policies are effective.

6) External support:

There are many support options that can be provided for the employees with caring responsibilities, which can be sourced from outside the organization. Where there is not sufficient resource or expertise within the organization to support careers effectively and ensure that the appropriate workplace practices are implemented, it may be useful for you to engage with external experts in this area. Examples are:

Employee assistance programmers, which provide information and advice on a whole range of issues, including how to find services.
Training for line managers and/or working careers to support implementation of career-friendly working policies and practice.
'**Brokers**' to support careers to access services and support.
Information services provided by careers' organizations.

7) Practical support:

In addition to having good workplace policies and practices and an open culture, it is important you understand your employees' needs and are flexible, if you are going to recruit and retain the best talent for your organization. There are many practical solutions that can be discussed with employees,
Some of which are included below:
• Flexible benefits, for example healthcare
• Access to a telephone
• Reserved or nearby car parking spaces
• Reasonable notice if shift patterns are changing or overtime is required
• Flexibility with regards to requiring employees to work or undertake

CONCLUSION:

Recession has adversely affected the work life balance initiatives. It has led to reduction of salaries, incentives and bonus, job insecurity, non voluntary career change, moon – lighting, work intensification , high workload , etc. People fortunate enough to still have jobs are working harder than ever in the current recession, and many believe that their family relations are suffering as a result, Best practice organizations recognize that the most appreciated service they can provide their employees is the "gift of time."
It has a directly black shadowed the work life balance, employee engagement, workplace productivity and finally the organizational profitability.
Some strategies like telecommuting, flexible working hours, reduced working hours, recreation aids provided from employers end can help to balance work life and personal life initiatives. Work life balance can help the employers from doing away with the adverse results which might get reflected in the balance sheets of the organizations globally.

REFERENCES:

Bond, S., Hyman, J., Summers, J. and Wise, S. (2002), Family-friendly Working? Putting Policy into Practice, York Publishing Services, York.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2003),Labour Turnover 2003, CIPD, London

Department of Trade and Industry (1998), Fairness at Work, Stationery Office, London.

Department of Trade and Industry (2000), "It's not just working parents who want work-life balance: Hodge", available at: http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/press_005_c.html

Department of Trade and Industry (2002a), "Bosses urged to go for the work-life balance goal", available: http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/press15_01_02.html

Department of Trade and Industry (2002b), "UK industry losing millions without work-life balance", available: http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/press27_03_02a.html

Department of Trade and Industry (2002c), "UK workers struggle to balance work and quality of life as long as hours and stress take hold", available at: http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/press300802.html

Department of Trade and Industry (2004), "Britain's workers crave more time with friends in 2004", available at: http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/press_2704a.html

Dex, S. and Scheibl, F. (2001), "Flexible and family-friendly working arrangements in UK-based SMEs': business cases", British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 39, pp. 411-31.

Dex, S. and Smith, C. (2002), The Nature and Pattern of Family-Friendly Employment Policies in Britain, The Policy Press, Bristol.

Frone, M., Russell, M. and Cooper, L.M. (1997), "Relation of work-family conflict to health outcomes: a four-year longitudinal study of employed parents", Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 70, pp. 325-35.

Fu, C.K. and Shaffer, M.A. (2001), "The tug of work and family", Personnel Review, Vol. 30, pp. 502-22.

Green, F. (2001), "It's been a hard day's night: the concentration and intensification of work in late twentieth-century Britain", British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 39, pp. 53-80.

Hardy, S. and Adnett, N. (2002), "The parental leave directive: towards a 'family-friendly' social Europe?", European Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 8, pp. 157-72.

Hyman, J. and Summers, J. (2004), "Lacking balance? Work-life employment practices in the modern economy", Personnel Review, Vol. 33, pp. 418-29.

Hyman, J., Baldry, C., Scholarios, D. and Bunzel, D. (2003), "Work-life imbalance in the new service sector economy", British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 41, pp. 215-39.
Martens, M.F.J., Nijhuis, F.J.N., Van Boxtel, M.P.J. and Knottnerus, J.A. (1999), "Flexible work schedules and mental and physical health: a study of a working population with non-traditional working hours", Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 20, pp. 35-46.

Meyer, J.P., Stanley, D.J., Herscovitch, L. and Topolnytsky, L. (2002), "Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: a meta-analysis of antecedents, correlates, and consequences", Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 61, pp. 20-52.

Mourad, Mansour and Razali Mat-Zin, (2008), Relationship between Work and Family Satisfaction on Performance: A Case Study", International Review of Business Research Papers,Vol 4 Pp.251-278

Naithani, Pranav. (2010) ,"Recession and work life balance Initiatives", The Romanian Economic Journal, Year XIII,no.37, pp. 55 – 68

Parasuraman, S. and Simmers, C.A. (2001), "Type of employment, work-family conflict and well-being: a comparative study", Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 22, pp. 551-68.

Perrons, D. (2003), "The new economy and the work-life balance: conceptual explorations and a case study of new media", Gender, Work and Organization, Vol. 10, pp. 65-93.

Rotondo, D.M., Carlson, D.S. and Kincaid, J.F. (2003), "Coping with multiple dimensions of work-family conflict", Personnel Review, Vol. 32, pp. 275-96.

Simpson, R. (2000), "Presenteeism and the impact of long hours on managers", in Winstanley, D. and Woodall, J. (Eds), Ethical Issues in Contemporary Human Resource Management, Macmillan, London, pp. 156-71.

Thomas, L.T. and Ganster, D.C. (1995), "Impact of family-supportive work variables on work-family conflict and strain: a control perspective", Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 80, pp. 6-15.

White, M., Hill, S., McGovern, P., Mills, C. and Smeaton, D. (2003), "High-performance' management practices, working hours and work-life balance", British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 41, pp. 175-95.

Wise, S. and Bond, S. (2003), "Work-life policy: does it do exactly what it says on the tin?", Women in Management Review, Vol. 18, pp. 20-31.