

Work Life Balance Tips



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Introduction

The concept of work-life balance is not a new one, but in the past few years, it has become an increasingly important topic of discussion. There are a number of reasons for the growing need to distinguish our work lives from our home lives, and it has presented a seemingly insurmountable challenge to many individuals from all walks of life.

For example, technology has evolved to the point where we can be connected to our jobs twenty-four hours a day. Taking a few minutes "after hours" to check your email, to respond to a text message, or to answer your cell phone can add up to a major increase in your actual work load.

And so, our jobs have begun to bleed into our home lives. This is especially obvious in the case of those who work from home. The work-from-home trend has grown significantly in the last decade.

In some cases, people are starting their own businesses in an effort to be their own bosses. In others cases, a company may be going to a "virtual" office configuration to save money. Both situations can lead to a blurred line between work and home.

The idea of work-life balance has been introduced to combat some of these issues. Whether an employee needs to "unplug" from the office to recharge for a while, or a business owner needs to take a step back to spend time with her family, there are some truly important reasons for focusing on work-life balance.

Why Are You Working So Hard?

One of the first things to consider is whether your work and your life are in balance with one another. Keep in mind that balance doesn't mean "symmetry," and that what constitutes balance for one person may not work for the lifestyle and goals of another.

For most people, life is a series of peaks and valleys rather than a flat, unmoving line. At some times in your life, it will make sense for you to focus more of your time and energy on your job; say, when you are working on a big project or are moving toward a promotion you've had your eye on for years. At other times, you may feel it is more appropriate for your home life to demand the bulk of your attention; perhaps when you have an ill family member or you're moving into a new phase of a relationship.

As you reflect upon your experiences as of late, do you notice that you are spending far too much time on one aspect of your life while neglecting another? In most discussions of work-life balance, the individual is concerned about the scales tilting too heavily into the work realm, at the cost of not having a satisfying non-work life.

In order to determine if this is the case, it is important to uncover just what it is that motivates you to work so hard. Are you looking for a sense of accomplishment? Is it about reaching your financial goals? Or are you trying to provide a certain lifestyle for yourself or your family? Chances are, your answer is a combination of all three.

This is not the time to stop asking questions, however. Instead, it's necessary to go a level deeper and ask yourself "why?" Why do you need that sense of accomplishment? Why did you set that particular goal? Why do you have to live a certain lifestyle?

In many cases, someone asking these questions discovers that he or she is working much harder than is necessary in order to fulfill some sort of preconceived idea of how things "should" be. In a culture where we are constantly being bombarded with information and images, it is easy to get caught up in this idea.

Did you know?

There is an often-repeated story that illustrates this point very clearly:

A wealthy American was on vacation in a beautiful fishing village far from his home country. While there he met a friendly fisherman who took his boat out early in the morning, only to return a few hours later with the day's catch. The fisherman would keep what he needed for his family and would sell the rest to the market. By mid-morning, he was done working for the day.

The American was surprised by this and asked the fisherman how he spent his days. "I play with my children, I take a little nap in the afternoons, and I go to the town square to dance with my wife in the evenings," the fisherman responded.

Again, the American was surprised. He tried to explain to the fisherman that if he just spent more time fishing, he could make more money selling his fish at market. In fact, he could make so much money that he could buy more boats and have others working for him. Before long he could skip the local market altogether and build his own fish canning factory and sell his product all over the world.

After twenty or thirty years, the American told him, he could retire. And what would he do then? Well, he could play with his children, take a little nap in the afternoons, and go to the town square to dance with his wife in the evenings.

The question to ask is whether you're working so hard to have things that you could already be enjoying if you weren't working so hard!

Stress and How It Affects Us

Believe it or not, stress can actually be considered a good thing. When seen in light of human history, stress was used as a tool to facilitate the survival of individuals and families. The “fight or flight” response is a good example. When we are faced with an immediate threat, humans—like other animals—make a split-second decision of whether to stand their ground or run away. Survival is often determined by the choice made.

In today’s society, we have less of a need for the fight or flight response. Sure, stress is helpful in situations that call for immediate action, such as when you get that boost of adrenaline that causes you to hit the brakes and avoid a car accident; but in general, we don’t need to decide whether to fight a wild animal or run away—at least not on a regular basis. The problem is that our bodies still react in very dramatic ways to things that are not life threatening.

For example, when you are facing a deadline, you will likely feel some stress about it. This can be a good thing, as it will help motivate you and keep you on track to meet your timeline. On the other hand, the deadline is generally not a life-or-death situation, despite the signals you may be receiving that tell you otherwise. Unfortunately, our bodies react more to these signals than to the reality of the situation. The body dumps tons of hormones and other chemicals into your system, and the very things that would have helped keep you alive in primitive times can now work to slowly poison you.

Did You Know?

Stress has been found to cause or worsen all of the following:

- Irritability
- Cardiovascular disease
- Weakened immune system
- Depression
- Exhaustion
- Lack of concentration
- Sexual dysfunction
- Headaches
- Back/Muscle pain
- Aggression
- Poor work performance
- Substance abuse

This is where the line between work and life can become even more blurred, since stress resulting from working too hard can be compounded by your home life, as well. A difficult relationship with your spouse can add to your stress level, for example, and make only semi-important things at work take on whole new levels. In addition, many people—especially women—feel an added burden when it comes to dividing their time between work and family. Children complicate the situation, and many adults end up feeling as if they are “living to work” rather than “working to live,” and that their relationships with their children suffer as a result.

Work-Life Balance is Everyone's Concern

One of the biggest debates concerning work-life balance is the one over whose responsibility it is to ensure that boundaries are set and maintained. Is it up to management to be concerned over an employee's time management skills or emotional investment?

Many believe that it is a company's responsibility not to expect an unreasonable amount from employees. In fact, lawsuits have been brought against businesses that have taken advantage of and overworked their people.

On the other hand, it can be argued that it is the employee's job to balance work time and home time. Perhaps he needs to lessen his activities outside of the work day in order to decrease the stress caused by running from one place to another. Or maybe he needs to be more efficient during work hours so that he doesn't have to take the job home with him.

In reality, both parties need to take some ownership in the work-life balance equation. Individuals must realize that their physical, mental, and emotional health relies on setting boundaries in their lives. Companies, on the other hand, must also do their part to contribute to employees' well being.

Many major corporations have done just this, and although the initial results are promising, it will probably be a long time before all employers start offering fewer hours to their employees.

That's why, in the long run, using the skills discussed here will help both sides of the debate to be stronger, healthier, and more productive.

Taking Control of Your Own Work-Life Balance

Taking control of one's own work-life balance is pretty intimidating. After all, since the moment you wrote your resume and picked out what to wear to the job interview, you've probably been hoping to impress your boss. Sometimes this translates into working a few extra hours here and there, taking on a big project, or keeping your mouth shut about small intrusions into your home life.

There's nothing wrong with giving your job your best effort, or even with giving a little extra at times. These are the kinds of things that can get you noticed for raises and promotions, ultimately raising your level of job satisfaction and even your paycheck.

On the other hand, some jobs just demand too much. They take too much time, too much energy, or too much of your personal integrity. Someone in that type of situation really needs to examine why he or she is there and determine if it's truly worthwhile. This is especially true if you realize that your home life is suffering because of your unreasonable work life.

Work-Life Balance Helps You Avoid Burnout.

The term burnout refers to a point in time when a person is just overwhelmed with the idea of continuing to do the same thing, day in and day out. You may find yourself both physically and emotionally exhausted and have little to no motivation or drive left to do anything productive at either work or home.

Did You Know?

Some of the most common causes of burnout include:

- Working harder to avoid layoffs
- Lack of gratitude from employers
- Being paid less than you're worth
- Pursuing the wrong career
- Going against your morals or beliefs
- Extensive travel or commuting
- Inability to separate self from job
- Boredom

Someone who has reached a burnout point may recognize a number of symptoms. For example, fatigue, anxiety, and irritability are all possible indicators that your job has become overwhelming. Some people experience insomnia or nightmares or find that they have a hard time concentrating or remembering things. Likewise, frequent crying or an extreme change in appetite can signal that something is wrong. More overt signs include an increase in use of drugs or alcohol.

It is not difficult to see how these results of burnout can adversely affect both our physical health and our interpersonal relationships. If your job is haunting you even when you aren't at work, then you aren't going to be giving your all to your friends and family. In this way, burnout doesn't just affect the employee. It takes a toll on those who love him or her, too.

There are two approaches to combating burnout. The best method is to avoid it altogether. In order to do so, you need to put some thought into how you honestly want your life to look. Do you really want to spend 70 hours a week at a job and come home too exhausted to be a good parent or spouse? On the other hand, do you want to work at a job that holds no personal challenge to you simply so you can bring home a paycheck?

If you take the time to determine what you do and don't want in advance, you can save yourself a lot of heartache in the end. Of course, we don't always feel like we have the freedom to make these choices. In the end, it boils down to being willing and able to decide what is important.

Even if you can't choose the "perfect" job, you can certainly find a field of work that is more conducive to your needs and desires—even if it is only while your children are young or you return to school during the evenings. Although it may not seem like it at the time, most decisions that you make related to your work-life balance are temporary. For example, it is just fine to accept a less intensive job until your kids are ready to start attending school. You can always make new decisions when you experience another shift in the work-life balance.


For those who already have a job and are experiencing an undue amount of stress, the most important need is to look for the signs of burnout. If you are feeling powerless or hopeless in your current place of employment, that is a very good indicator that you are on your way to burning out. Feelings of despair, failure, apathy, and cynicism are not those that should be caused by your job.

So, if you recognize that you are suffering from burnout, what can you do about it? One option is obviously to change jobs. Finding something that aligns better with your personal ideals or that affords you more time to be with your family may be just the thing you need to get yourself back on track.

Sometimes, creating work-life balance is a matter of redefining your situation and being assertive in reclaiming the time or energy you have lost.

Part of this is having the self-belief and confidence to do this and start to make changes in your life. Different people have different levels of confidence. But no matter what you feel about your own self-belief there are things that can be done to help anyone have the confidence to start to turn their lives around and take control of it.

See below for something which might be a help in this respect.

 <p>ATTAIN THE ULTIMATE SENSE OF CONFIDENCE</p> <p>PEAK CONFIDENCE</p>	<p>Revealed:</p> <p>The Best-Kept Secrets To Turning Your Life Around, Accomplishing More Out Of Life, And Having That Ultimate Confidence To Virtually Achieve Anything...100% Guaranteed"</p> <p>CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO</p>
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Managing Your Stress

There are many reasons why you may not wish to leave a job, even though you feel that your lack of work-life balance is driving you closer and closer to burnout. After all, not everyone can simply drop their income and lifestyle at once and start at a new career without financial and emotional repercussions. In this case, it is time to do some evaluating and assessment of your life.

It may also mean that you have to make some difficult choices. In the long run, though, establishing the work-life balance you seek will be more than its own reward.

The first step in managing your stress is to determine where it originates. It's one thing to say "my job is stressing me out." While that may be a true statement, the only surefire way to resolve the problem would be to quit your job—which may be even more likely to increase your stress levels than anything else. Since you've already established that isn't the route you want to take, it's time to dig a little deeper. After all, you can't solve a problem without defining it first.

Try to find a little quiet time to sit down and really determine what it is about your job that is causing you so much stress. Are you doing more work than one person could reasonably be expected to do? Are you facing unrealistic deadlines? Another possibility is that your deadlines are reasonable, but you've been procrastinating and that is causing you the stress.

Take your questions to the next level and ask why you are procrastinating. Are you intimidated by a project? Bored with it? Maybe you've just been feeling a general lack of motivation lately. By examining your different work situations this way, you will be able to better pinpoint exactly what it is that is leading to burnout.

Did You Know?

Some of the major causes of workplace stress include:

- Interaction among coworkers
- Insufficient time to finish tasks
- Long hours and overtime
- Low pay
- Physically unhealthy environments
- Micromanagement

Of course, the next step in managing your stress is to determine how to solve the problems you've identified. In some cases you may discover that simply uncovering the cause of the problem is enough to help you through it.

In others, you will need to confront the source of the problem, whether it is an internal lack of motivation or a conflict with a coworker.

While it can be extremely uncomfortable to confront an issue that is causing you stress at work, keep in mind that it is affecting your health, your social life, and how you interact with your family. In the long run, each of these is more important than avoiding an awkward situation that will actually lead to solving the problem.

There are several methods that can be used to prevent work-place stress, and many of them can be adapted to help with stress in your non-work life, too.

1. Learn to say “no.”

We all want to impress our bosses and to please our families, but oftentimes we end up doing so at our own expense. If you are asked to take on an extra project and you really don't have the time to do it properly, then you need to consider saying “no.” This is a very difficult skill for many people to master, and it seems to be especially hard for women. Practice by saying “no” to small requests, and work your way up from there.

If saying “no” is difficult for you, you need to adjust the way you view yourself and your time. Imagine that your day is an apple pie. Every time you say “yes” to a person or a project, a piece of that pie is being removed to be consumed by someone or something else. You cannot get it back once it's been eaten, regardless of whether you want it for yourself or to give to someone you love.

Say “yes” too many times, and you will eventually either have nothing left to give, or the pieces will get so small that they are virtually useless, only serving to whet the appetite of those around you. You must consider it your job to feed the priorities in your life first—whether that means your spouse, your kids, or your current project—and then worry about dividing up the rest.

In the end, refusing to take on an added responsibility does not have to reflect poorly on you, especially if you do so in a gracious manner. Rather than just saying “no” when a coworker asks you to join a peer review board, for example, tell him that while you appreciate him thinking of you for the position, you really have to focus your attention on a particular project/task/situation and just wouldn't be able to give the board the attention it deserves right now.

2. Prioritize.

It is hard not to be overwhelmed by tasks when they come to you in a jumbled mass stamped “Urgent!” and “ASAP!” The fact of the matter is that all tasks are not created equal. One of the best ways to manage your stress is to remove some of the chaos from your life. Start by making a physical list of the things you “need” to do. This can include work-related items, as well as home life.

Once you have everything listed, go through and mark them according to priority. Perhaps three-star items need to be done today, two-star items need to be done this week, and one-star items need to be done this month.

Once you realize that not everything on your to-do list has to be done right away, some of the stress you're feeling may dissipate. On the other hand, creating such a list may also show you that you are just completely overextended.

In this case, it may be time to make some decisions about how much you can realistically get done. Constantly taking on too much is going to lead to an inability to do a good job, whether it is at work or at home.

3. Create a schedule.

Once you've made a list of your priorities, you may discover that you could avoid a lot of stress by simply making a schedule. Certain activities, like grocery shopping or filing reports, are ongoing; so why not set aside a certain time each week to take care of them? By starting with the recurring activities, you'll be able to see where you have pockets of time that will accommodate your other tasks.

Having a schedule will also help you as you endeavor to say “no.” If someone asks you to do something and your schedule clearly shows that you don't have time, you are

much less likely to put yourself in a bad position. You can simply glance at your schedule and say, "I'm sorry, but I just don't have time to do that for you."

When you make your schedule, don't forget to add in time for things that you enjoy. Running yourself from morning to night is going to create terrible stress that can lead to burnout. Make personal time one of those recurring activities that other things get scheduled around.

Whether you're taking time to work out, to read a book, or to take a long, hot shower, it's important to get some time to yourself. Likewise, make sure that you have time designated to spend doing fun things with your friends or family. Work-life balance is all about making sure that both aspects of your life get the attention they deserve, but it's also about enjoying yourself.

Learning how to manage stress effectively is one of THE key strategies to organizing your work life balance. You can start to make a difference today and take proactive measures to control stress in your life by learning about possible stress triggers, the effects of stress, and effective stress management techniques.

For a more in-depth look at stress management you might like to check out The Complete Guide on Stress and Stress Management. It delves into the numerous stress triggers in our fast-paced world, analyzes chronic stress (the silent killer), post-traumatic stress disorder, teen stress, work stress, and provides EFFECTIVE stress-busting techniques. Hit the link below to be taken straight to the web site.

	<p>Don't let stress steal your joy of living stop stress before stress stops you!</p>	<p>Find out how to beat stress in this book</p>
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[PLEASE CLICK HERE FOR THE COMPLETE GUIDE ON STRESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT](http://worklifebalancetips.co.uk)

Managing Your Time

Creating a schedule is one method for managing your time. You can use it to determine how best to fit in various tasks throughout the week. At best, though, a schedule is simply one tool in the effort to create work-life balance. Use it as a means to an end, the end being a more balanced, lower-stress life.

There is a nearly unlimited supply of time-management books, courses, and ideas available to those interested in having more work-life balance. Of course, the paradox is that you must find the time necessary to study these materials to make changes in your life. In some ways, that is the first test in determining whether or not you are ready to make those kinds of changes. The fact that you are reading these sentences means that you have passed that first test.

One of the causes of our lack of time these days is a mindset that says we must always be busy. If one is not being productive at any given moment in time, it means that he or she is lazy or not fulfilling potential. This way of thinking has done an immeasurable amount of damage to the work-life balance of countless people.

Somehow, we managed to equate spending time with our families or even taking the opportunity to relax as being lazy or counterproductive. In reality, these are some of the most important things we can do for both our emotional and our physical health.

Choosing to manage your time in order to create a better work-life balance is not always an easy thing to do. You may find that others don't understand or appreciate your way of thinking. This is because they have also been brainwashed into thinking that being "busy" is the same thing as being "valuable."

It is up to you to realize that your value has less to do with how busy you are and more to do with the worth of the time you spend doing various activities. By making this shift in your thinking, you will discover that you look at time management in a whole new way.

To get the fastest start on managing your time, begin by identifying the things you don't want to do. Each of us spends a fair amount of times involved in activities that we either know are a waste of time or that we just don't enjoy. For example, it's easy to come home from a long day at work and sit down in front of the television instead of interacting with our kids.

We do it out of habit, in many cases. If you start your time management program by determining that you don't want to waste three hours of your day in front of the TV, you may all of a sudden find a lot more time opening up in your day.

Next, determine what things you do want to do. These can be work-related activities, tasks you must accomplish to keep your home running, fun activities you'd like to try, and long-term goals you have set for yourself. Once you discover the things that are truly important to you, it is much easier to make the time for them to happen.

Finally, learn to differentiate "urgent" and "important." We often get so caught up in the idea that we need to get things done "now," and it impedes our ability to focus on the things that are truly important in life.

Urgency makes us feel like we need to accomplish something right away, whether we do or not. Do you need to return a phone call urgently? Maybe you do. But is that call important in the grand scheme of things? Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't.

What about managing “urgency” versus “importance” in regards to work-life balance? Is it urgent that you get to work in time for a meeting? Yes it is. Is it urgent that you work on your upcoming proposal? Yes, it is. In fact, these things may even be important at times.

However, giving your children the best parent you can is one of the most important matters in life. Unfortunately, it’s rarely ever “urgent.” Things that aren’t urgent, no matter how important they are, can easily be overlooked. It’s up to you to recognize the difference and prioritize appropriately.

If we spend all of our time jumping from one urgent task to the next, that doesn’t leave us any time to focus on the things that are truly important.

Learning to prioritize tasks is one way to get those urgent things out of the way in order to get to the important ones. If you’re always distracted by urgent matters, then perhaps you need to reevaluate your position.

Working with Your Employer to Improve Work-Life Balance

As we've already said, when we examine work-life balance, it is usually because the "work" part is receiving far more of our time and energy than the "life" part. In order to bring these two things into balance, you may need to make some changes in your job. In addition to saying "no," prioritizing, and creating a schedule, you may need to talk to your employer about how to improve your situation.

When you follow the steps outlined above, you might discover that you simply have too much on your plate. Maybe you just can't say "no" to enough requests; or you've made your list and discovered that everything is considered a priority and you'll need to schedule 36 hours into each day to even come close to getting it all done. If this is the case, then your job is expecting an unreasonable amount from you. This is actually more common than many people believe.

When you find yourself in this kind of circumstance, you have two options. First, you can continue on the same way you have all along. You will never quite do your best work because you'll always be scrambling to get to the next urgent task. You will likely grow fatigued and resentful of your job.

Your health will probably suffer, and your relationships definitely will. On the other hand, you can find ways to improve your situation. If you've already determined that you can't or won't leave your job, then you need to find ways to improve it.

Generally speaking, employers want their employees to be happy. It has been proven again and again that happy employees are far more productive than those who are not content with their jobs. In addition, stressed out employees take more sick leave, costing the company in man hours and insurance costs.

Did You Know?

Millions of dollars are spent every year on patients who seek medical treatment for stress-related conditions caused by an unhealthy work environment.

In addition, the modern work place has changed. Where employees used to stick with one company for decades until retiring, they now are likely to move from job to job. Each time an employee leaves, the company must invest in finding and training a new one—a process that can take several weeks and cost substantial money in the accounting, human resources, and legal departments. Employee retention is an important topic for those in management. If you are looking to create better work-life balance, then you may find that your boss is far more interested in helping you than you originally anticipated.

The best way to approach this type of conversation is to go into it in a manner that shows your concern both about your own well-being and about doing what is best for the company. While you are the main focus of the conversation, don't turn the situation into a list of grievances or a critique of the company. Make sure that you have really put some thought into what you want to say.

One method that can be helpful is to take your previous list of priorities and rewrite it with just your work priorities. Next to each item, write the amount of time it takes you daily, weekly, etc. to accomplish the task. If those numbers add up to more hours than you actually have in a work week, then it will be hard for your boss to argue that you should be getting everything done.

When you go to your boss, consider already having some suggestions in mind for how to deal with your situation. Some people find that working from home one or more days a

week helps to reduce the amount of stress they feel. Others may realize that some of their less-technical tasks could be done by an assistant. In fact, you may discover that some of the jobs you've been doing really don't even belong to you, but have slowly become your responsibility over time.

If you've discovered that your problem stems from not being challenged enough, then your boss will likely be very interested to hear you say that you'd like to take on more or bigger tasks. If you don't have the knowledge necessary, perhaps he or she would be willing to mentor you or to help you take classes to get up to speed.

By investing in you, your boss is really investing in the future of the company.

Balancing Your Work with Your Personal Life

Work-life balance is so important that aspects of it have actually been legislated. For example, there are legal parameters to what is considered a “work week,” and many companies are required to compensate for hours worked beyond the legal limit. Unfortunately, there are loopholes that allow many employers to demand more than 40 hours per week from salaried employees—a situation that occurs very frequently in both blue and white collar jobs.

Another example is the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows employees to take up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for family emergencies without fear of losing their job. There are criteria that must be fulfilled before an employee is considered to be eligible for the FMLA, however, and not all employees know enough to demand their rights regarding this legislation.

The United States generally trails other wealthy countries in the amount and types of family-oriented support it offers employees. This means that U.S. Americans who are concerned with work-life balance may have to take measures to ensure it for themselves. There are a number of steps one can take to improve the balance, and every situation is different. Consider the following, along with the other suggestions made throughout this report, in order to come up with a plan that will get you on the right path.

One way to help manage your time more effectively is to simplify. This word means several different things. In some cases, it may mean that you delegate some of your responsibilities to others, thus simplifying your own schedule. In other cases, it may mean physically removing material items from your possession.

When you do a thorough examination of your life, you might discover that some of the things that are causing you the most stress are very ones that you don’t need to keep. For example, we mentioned earlier that perhaps it might be time to consider getting an assistant at work. He or she can take on some of the more “urgent” tasks that are slowing you down and keeping you from getting to the “important” ones. The interesting thing about this kind of situation is that most people and businesses consider adding an assistant to the payroll as an additional cost, which should therefore be avoided if at all possible.

However, time and time again, evidence has shown that an assistant rarely affects the bottom line. At the end of the day, the increased productivity, higher rates of satisfaction, and ability to concentrate more fully on the task at hand actually end up contributing to an organization's profits.

This policy can follow you home from the office, as well. If you are currently doing all of the yard work, consider delegating some of the tasks to others in the family. In addition to letting go of the responsibility, however, you may also have to let go of the idea that things can only be done your way. If the lawn is mowed, does it really matter if it’s in a vertical or a horizontal pattern? This idea can even be extended to the point of hiring someone to come in and do a few of the tasks you least enjoy. If you can afford to hire someone to mop the floors, for example, then you are getting rid of one of your least favorite tasks while simultaneously adding time to your schedule that can be spent with your family.

The idea of simplifying could also be applied to technology. While the original intention for email, cell phones, and the like was to make things more convenient, in many cases, they’ve done just the opposite. We are always available when others want our attention, and this eats up an enormous amount of time that should have been devoted to other things.

Many people find that enforcing a strict “no technology” rule during certain hours of the day is a great way to spend more time doing the things that matter, interruption-free. Over time, it can even become habit, which means that what once was an inconvenient rule is actually just another part of the way you live your life.

Finally, you can simplify by getting rid of some of the clutter in your life. If your house is full of things you don’t need—or worse yet, things you don’t even like—then spending some time to clear those things out can make a big difference. Get your family involved, and explain that you’re all working together to create a better home life.

Not only will you feel better, but you will literally create time that can be spent in more enjoyable ways, as you won’t need to be picking up, dusting, or hiding things that you don’t really even want in your house to begin with.

Another important method to use in managing your time is to stop procrastinating. Procrastination gets nearly everyone into trouble from time to time. It’s so easy to put off things that we dislike or are afraid to do. Unfortunately, when we procrastinate, we end up putting far more thought and worry into the outcome than was ever necessary. One way around this is to round up several activities you’ve been procrastinating, and devote a set period of time to get them done all at once (or even delegate them to someone else).

Oftentimes you will find that some of the things you’ve been putting off for weeks will really only take fifteen minutes once you’ve started. In two hours, you could knock eight items off of your to-do list! In addition to having them done, you’ll also be able to stop wasting mental energy worrying about them. This step should be taken both at home and at work, and the result will be a better sense of self worth, as well as additional time to devote to things that are more enjoyable.

Did You Know?

You can help balance your work life and your personal life by:

- Protecting your family and personal time fiercely
- Dropping activities you don’t enjoy or that are unnecessary
- Adding relaxing activities right into your daily or weekly schedule
- Letting others help you when it is appropriate
- Making “chores” fun by doing them together and making a game of it

The Employer's Side of Work-Life Balance

Most employers want their employees and staff to be happy. After all, a happy employee is more productive, has better attendance, is sick less often, and is more likely to stick around. If that isn't motivation enough, a workplace where the employees actually enjoy themselves is one where both the customers and upper management have the opportunity to enjoy themselves, too. It is truly a win-win situation.

Research shows that employers who encourage their employees to pursue a healthy work-life balance will reap the rewards. This is especially true in the area of employee loyalty. Businesses that offer various types of support have found that they have a much lower turnover rate than they did before enacting these types of policies. Workers report higher overall job satisfaction and more pride in their organization.

In addition to a more enjoyable place for employees and customers alike, this type of improved attitude actually saves the business a significant amount of money. Not only are employees better able to focus on the customer service experience and improve sales and customer loyalty, but there are also lower costs associated with filling positions and training new employees.

How to Encourage Work-Life Balance

While the responsibility for maintaining a healthy work-life balance usually falls to the employee, there are methods that employers can use to encourage this type of lifestyle. The best way to discern what incentives would motivate your employees would be to ask them, keeping a firm focus on the knowledge that it would be counter-productive to ask for this kind of feedback and then not make an effort to utilize some of the ideas.

If you do ask your employees what types of things might help them create better work-life balance, you will get a variety of answers. For example, many parents might be excited at the prospect of an on-site daycare. While this can be a little intensive to set up, the amount of money it saves in lost hours can more than make up for the cost in a short time. As the employer, you may not even be expected to pay for the services, although you may need to bring in a licensed childcare worker and provide a space. As mentioned above, this is one of those pieces that can really improve employee loyalty, as well.

When asked about the types of benefits they'd most like to see, many employees cite "flexible schedules." This can be intimidating to an employer at first, but once a flexible schedule program is instituted, it can significantly impact employee satisfaction and retention. Your program could range from the ability for employees to donate their sick days to one another, all the way to offering to allow them to telecommute. Both options allow employees to feel more control over their own work experiences, as well as to worry a little less about their non-work lives.

Another option that many employers have found to be beneficial is to allow employees the opportunity to devote a certain amount of their work time to a volunteer project. This can be done either on their own, or through the company. For example, you may want to organize a company-wide food drive and have everyone deliver the donations to the local food bank together. Some businesses find that a day of volunteerism for organizations like Habitat for Humanity helps them to give back to the community while also improving employee relations and morale.

The Benefits for Employers

Employers have really focused on work-life balance policies since about the mid-1990s. With the rise of the Internet startup phenomenon came the need for these brand-new

businesses to recruit talented employees. Unfortunately for them, they usually didn't have much of a budget, and stock options were often just a pipe dream. The ingenuity that got them far enough to start a business in the first place led them to start offering more creative perks to those who came to work for them.

Later, when these companies started selling for millions of dollars and IPOs were practically a foregone conclusion, work-life balance policies were used by potential employees to determine which job to take. In some cases, having a great work-life balance program in place could actually be more valuable to a potential employee than the overall salary. For example, some workers would choose a lower salary in order to have the opportunity to job share or to telecommute.

Once the Internet bubble "burst," these programs became important for other reasons. Today they are seen as a "recession perk," or a lure when financial compensation and company cars aren't readily available.

In addition to utilizing work-life balance policies as a recruitment tool, companies can definitely benefit from the fact that they seem to be a great means for retaining employees, too. Those who work in organizations with these types of programs tend to report higher job satisfaction than their counterparts in other organizations. The sense that the company cares goes a long way in providing a sense of security and contentment. These same employees tend to be much more loyal, as well. While there isn't much hard data, anecdotal experience tells us that this saves a significant amount of money when it comes to recruiting and retraining new employees.

Of course finances are a big consideration. So too, is the effectiveness of your business. Companies with these types of programs tend to run more smoothly, as there is less upheaval due to employee turnover. Morale is higher, and employees are actually healthier, leading to lower rates of absenteeism. Reports show that customer satisfaction tends to be higher, as well.

Finally, those who feel appreciated by their employers tend to have more "buy in" to the company overall. They will typically work harder and will find creative solutions to problems that might derail a team or project under different circumstances. Productivity increases, and the output of that work is often of a higher caliber.

Creating Work-Life Balance Policies in the Workplace

There is a question as to whether aiding employees in finding work-life balance is a matter of social responsibility or simply good business. The answer is that it is both.

Did you know?

Some of the most common benefits included in employer work-life programs include:

- Flex-Time
- Casual dress
- Childcare
- Gym subsidies
- Vacation time
- Employee assistance programs
- Telecommuting
- Family leave
- Job-Sharing
- Elder care
- In-house store

While it is not always easy to measure the actual monetary benefits of instituting work-life balance policies, they are usually noticed in the human resources realm. For example, recruitment can be significantly enhanced by enacting these types of policies. Likewise, retention is positively affected. Both employee loyalty and customer service ratings tend to be higher after companies enact these types of policies, too.

It is estimated that over the next 30-40 years, work-life balance will be the biggest workplace issue. Companies that get on board now will be well-prepared for this trend. One of the best ways to create a program that really works is to empower employees to make their own life changes.

In addition to offering a flexible schedule or a gym membership, for example, many businesses find it beneficial to offer employees actual work-life balance training. In some cases, this is achieved by bringing in life coaches to help employees develop both professionally and personally.

Implementing a work-life balance program can be a movement all its own, or it can fall under the label of "health and safety." One of the most important benefits of these types of programs is that they positively affect employees' overall health, as well as the safety of the workplace. Stress-induced illnesses decrease, as do on-the-job accidents. Such a program can also fall under a variety of departmental headings.

While it can be an extension of the work done by human resources, it can also simply be considered an overall collective agreement amongst all departments.

Of course, the type of policies implemented should complement your specific industry, as well as the culture of your organization. For example, a company that focuses on family matters, whether through their work or the overall atmosphere, would be an ideal place to consider childcare incentives for employees.

A business that focuses on athletics or outdoor activities would be a good candidate to start a gym membership program.

Simply offering a few incentives may not be enough. In order to make the program work, the company needs to involve employees in the process. In addition to asking employees for suggestions for the types of policies to implement, there should also be opportunities for feedback on the program.

In some cases, it may even be worthwhile to educate employees on the advantages of the program and to actively encourage them to take advantage of it.

When all is said and done, it is not the employer's job to establish work-life balance for an employee.

On the other hand, by creating opportunities for personal growth and development, a company will find that both parties are enriched.

Putting It All to Work for You

Research is clear when it comes to the benefits of work-life balance. It is good for the employee, and it is good for the employer. In the case of the self-employed, it may be of even greater importance. When you have no one to answer to but yourself, it can be easy to lose sight of how much your work and home lives are out of balance.

Whether you manage a company, work for a company, or are your own company, work-life balance should be a major goal. By keeping your home life and work life in balance, you are able to experience both in a more positive way. Your relationships will benefit, as will your overall productivity. The lower stress levels will not only help you reach a happier emotional state, but they will literally improve your physical health, as well.

Utilize the ideas outlined in this report to start making strides toward work-life balance, either for yourself or for your employees. Each suggestion here can be taken to higher levels to create exactly the type of program that will benefit your situation.

If one of the things you might be thinking of doing to make a change in your life or get some perspective back is to change jobs or perhaps brush up on interview techniques (for a promotion for example) then you may find the resources below of interest.



Attention Job Seekers: Use The New, "Secret Career Document" During Your Next Job Interview To "WOW" Employers Like Never Before.

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Now You Can Instantly Create Brilliantly Crafted and Customized Cover Letters With A Single Mouse Click So Powerful Your Phone Will Ring Off the Hook For Interviews and Soon You Will Have a Flood of Job Offers Pouring In...

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