



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY



Work-Life Balance as a Talent Retention Strategy

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At the end of today's session, you will be able to ...

- Define “Work-Life Balance” as it relates to your organization
- Identify the demographic characteristics of workers desiring Work-Life Balance
- Describe the impact of Work-Life Balance on employee retention, and risks of neglecting Work-Life Balance efforts
- Identify strategies to promote Work-Life Balance within organizational policies and culture
- Measure the effectiveness of Work-Life Balance initiatives on employee retention



“The Ideal Worker”: Historical Perspective

- “The Ideal Worker”
 - One who is wholly devoted to their job and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, every year of their career (early 20th C ideology, cemented by the 1950s)
 - Assumed a full-time caregiver in the background
 - Punitive to working mothers who also typically put in more hours of caregiving work at home than their spouses (in traditional families)
- Today
 - Over 2/3 of American families headed by single parents or two working parents
 - Although the workforce has transformed since the 1950s, an ideology that naturalizes work/home separation persists



Let's warm up!

At your tables, come up with a definition of “Work-Life Balance.” What does it look like?

Discuss for 10 minutes, track on flip chart



Definition

“Work-life balance” refers to the equilibrium between personal life (including family, leisure and personal development) and professional life (work and career) where individuals can effectively manage both without significant conflict or stress.

What did we add in our discussions?



Alternate Terminology: Work-Life Integration



Who's looking for Work-Life Balance?

Who's NOT looking for it??

But many focus on the preferences of:

- Millennials (born '81-'96) and Gen Z (born after '96)
- Well-educated with a focus on continuous learning
- Tech-Savvy, often preferring flexible work facilitated by digital tools
- Embracers of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Caveat:

What constitutes Work-Life Balance is relative

- We may adopt or reject what our parents modeled (so generational view is not necessarily straightforward)
- Dual-career couples may have more flexibility to reduce work involvement and integrate parenting/caregiving/other family responsibilities
- Major life events can cause us to re-prioritize/change our reasons for needing flexibility
- Organizational cultural norms may cause teams members to suppress talk about family, free time, etc.



From “Your Feelings About Work-Life Balance Are Shaped by What You Saw Your Parents Do,” HBR, October 30, 2017; “How Companies Make It Harder for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Employees to Achieve Work-Life Balance,” HBR, September 14, 2018.

Business Case for Work-Life Balance

Employee Well-Being

Promotes physical, mental, and emotional health by reducing stress and burnout.

Increased Productivity

Helps maintain focus and energy levels, leading to improved job performance.

Retention and Recruitment

Attracts talent and retains employees by offering a supportive environment.

Creativity and Innovation

Allows space for creativity and fresh ideas, benefiting organizational growth.

Better Relationships

Enhances relationships with colleagues and family, fostering a supportive network.

Overall Satisfaction

Contributes to higher job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction.



Costs of Neglecting Work-Life Balance

- Difficulty Attracting Talent – organization's brand suffers when they're known for imbalance
- Increased Turnover – team members will seek organizations that support balance
- Decreased Morale – motivation declines, impacting overall job satisfaction and retention
- Health Issues – long-term imbalance can lead to mental and physical health problems

Retention and Recruitment

Attracts talent and retains employees by offering a supportive environment.



Large Group Discussion

What have you experienced or what are you experiencing related to talent recruitment/retention + Work-Life Balance expectations?

What insights do you have for others?



What can drive Work-Life IMbalance?

- Over-collaborating (meetings, emails, chats)
- Lack of uninterrupted focus time
- Skipping time off



Strategies for Work-Life Balance: Categories

- Policies
- Resources
- Cultural Elements



Strategies for Work-Life Balance: Workplace Policies

Flexible Work Hours

*Allows them to balance
personal commitments +
work responsibilities.*

Remote Work Options

*To enhance flexibility +
reduce commuting stress.*

Vacation/ Well-Being Days

*Time away for various
reasons*



Strategies for Work-Life Balance: Workplace Resources

Wellness/ Education Programs

*To support physical +
mental well-being..*

Career Development

*Opportunities for career
growth + advancement
while maintaining a
balanced lifestyle.*

Employee Resource Groups

*Groups based on shared
characteristics or life
experiences.*



Strategies for Work-Life Balance: Cultural Elements

Purpose-Driven Work

Meaningful work that aligns with values + advances societal/environmental causes.

Support for Clear Boundaries

Between work + personal life to prevent burnout + maintain overall well-being.

Community Engagement

Volunteering, mentoring, consulting, serving.



Manager Strategies to Encourage Work-Life Balance

“Responsibility does not rest solely on individual’s shoulders”

- Be Up-front in the Hiring Process
- Help Teams Prioritize
- Re-evaluate Meetings
- Protect Time to Focus and Set Boundaries
- Encourage Time Away
- Make it Easy to Take Time Off
- Encourage Reflection and Change
- Consider your Leadership Style



Manager Strategies to Encourage Work-Life Balance

Be Up-Front in the Hiring Process

- Explain what constitutes flexibility in the job function
- Ask what flexibility they may require
- Ask how they might respond to a team member who requires flexibility



Manager Strategies to Encourage Work-Life Balance

Help Teams Prioritize

“Create stability even in the face of chaos.”

- Employees who don't receive prioritization support: 81% dissatisfied, 42% don't feel as productive as they were prior to the pandemic
- “Okay, we can do this...but it means we might not be able to do these other three things. What's most important here?”



Manager Strategies to Encourage Work-Life Balance

Re-evaluate Meetings

- Build in breaks (no back-to-backs)
- Avoid bookending the week (instead, block off Monday mornings for focus; no p.m. meetings on Fridays)
- Keep meetings short and small (to avoid multi-tasking/boredom)



Manager Strategies to Encourage Work-Life Balance

Protect Time to Focus and Set Boundaries

- Encourage blocks of focus time for deep dives into work
- Use tech features to respect quiet hours (delay sending emails, mute notifications, set norms re when responses are expected)



Manager Strategies to Encourage Work-Life Balance

Encourage Time Away “Well-being days”

- Vacation/Staycation
- Mental Health days
- Sick days
- Religious holidays



Manager Strategies to Encourage Work-Life Balance

Make It Easy to Take Time Off

- Proactively offer to help cover when they are gone
- “Buddy system” for overseeing work while team member is away
- “Consensus days” to reduce emails and accumulated work



What Managers can do to encourage Work-Life Balance

Encourage Reflection and Change (because Work-Life Balance is Cyclical)

- What currently causes me stress, unbalance, dissatisfaction?
- How do these circumstances affect how I perform?
- How are they impacting my personal life?
- What am I prioritizing?
- What am I sacrificing?
- What is getting lost?
- What changes could I make?



What Managers can do to encourage Work-Life Balance

***Consider your/others' Leadership Styles:
Does your style need tweaking?***

- Do you reward quality of work over quantity of work?
- Do you reward the faster response over the better response?
- Do you reward face-time in lieu of evaluating results (customer sat, core activities, project completion, etc.)?



From “From “What Will Work-Life Balance Look Like After the Pandemic?” HBR, April 16, 2020;

“Work-Life Balance is Easier When Your Manager Knows How to Evaluate Performance, HBR, April 6, 2016. 26

Measurement/Evaluation

How do we know if what we're doing is working?

- Employee Retention Rates
- Employee Satisfaction Surveys
- Usage of Work-Life Balance benefits
- Performance Metrics



Table Discussions + Large Group Report-Out

What did you hear that you can take back and discuss, or even explore for implementation?



Closing

Learning Objectives Review

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