Work-life Effectiveness

Brief Summary

"Work-life balance" treats work and life as mutually exclusive elements of life that compete for our devotion while "work-life effectiveness" is built on a mutually beneficial partnership between businesses and employees to identify solutions to common challenges such as lack of business agility, team inefficiencies, and employee burnout from juggling the demands of work and home. This ability to integrate work and life evolved to the notion of synergistically interweaving work into your day when it makes the most sense for your flow and productivity and allowing you to operate at peak performance.

While globally only 20% of employees are engaged at work, an employee that experiences work-life effectiveness will have greater engagement, When companies offer flexible work schedules, family leave, and childcare support, the share of women and people of color in management rose significantly, a larger impact than even some racial-equity programs.

Challenge

Work-life balance reflects the notion of stereotypical families, with the assumption that women want balance and men talk about priorities. The reality is there are family and work obligations that both men and women juggle. However, women in opposite-gender dual career couples are 4 times more likely than men to shoulder tasks at home. 70% of men believe they share household duties equally, yet only 42% of women agree.

Many workers are exhausted by the demands of work and home; 42% of women & 35% of men feel burned out. For those with young children, it rises to 46% and 39%, respectively. Yet employees report feeling judged when requesting or taking advantage of flexible work arrangements.

Recommendation

The goal of work-life measures is to create suitable working conditions for an increasingly diverse workforce, and for parents of both genders. To prevent employee burnout and ensure workplace equity, helping employees find a sustainable way to integrate work and life priorities should be a corporate priority. Focus efforts on two areas:

- Train supervisors to be more supportive of the policies put into place because they have the power to encourage (or discourage) employees from using family-friendly policies through their attitudes and behaviors.
- Seek to have a more supportive company culture by letting go of outdated "ideal worker framework".

Proposed Actions

1. Adopt flexible working norms, eg. option to work from home, on a reduced / flexible schedule; ensuring no meetings occur during school drop-off and pick-up times; hosting virtual connectivity events for hybrid / remote workers

2. Offer autonomy in work arrangements by letting employees be the primary decision-maker of where and when they do their work, consistent with core hours.

3. Offer good benefits and encourage their use, eg health benefits, parental leave - regardless of employees' relationship type or parental role

4. Stretch your work-life policies to address all groups of employees, including same-gender couples, men in opposite-gender couples, single employees, and people with disabilities.

Valued Guidance

To Read

Workstars: 10 businesses that have mastered work/life balance

HBR: How Companies Make It Harder for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Employees to Achieve Work-Life Balance

Independent: New working day has obliterated work-life balance in US

To Watch / Listen

TED: 3 rules for better work-life balance

The Happiness Index: The Importance of Work-Life Balance

GreggU: Work-Life Effectiveness

To Learn / Study

HBR: Building Work-Life Boundaries in the WFH Era

Catalyst: How to Make Flex Work Part of the Company DNA

About the Author

Betsy Bagley is Pulsely's Co-Founder and DEI Director.