



Study on Work-life balance: Challenges and Solutions

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1. ABSTRACT

Work life balance in the corporate world refers to the amalgamation of professional life and family life. As a result of technological advancement, we now could triumph over traditional obstacles forced on the employees and their families like geographical differences, barrier of time and infrastructure, networks etc. Work life balancing is not clearly defined and separated. It is critical that employers discover ways to join and participate the two. Modern HR management techniques help in balancing work life which gives flexibility and freedom, when managed appropriately. Work-life balance is a growing issue in the increasing Indian economy. Achieving a good balance between work and family commitments is a growing concern for a challenge for contemporary employees and organizations. Work-life balance problem is increasingly catching the eyes of one and all with a direct impact on employee retention in any organization. This study focuses on studying the preferences of employees on work-life balance objective of this study is to find out some new HR management techniques such as time clock software to track hours, engaged with employees, and give some meaningful benefits. The corporate and employees alike are empowered with newfound liberty that also brings in a lack of restrictions and flexibility to work and collaborate. The purpose of this study is to find out the innovative HR strategies in all aspects of the workplace environment and working lifestyle of the employees in organizations. This study establishes a qualitative but symbiotic relationship between the various HR strategies that are factored by the organization and results in a win-win situation for both employee and employer.

Keywords: HR management techniques, Challenges, Work-Life Balance, India, Corporate Employee, Employer, Employee Family, Qualitative Analysis, Traditional Work Barriers, Solutions.

2. INTRODUCTION

Work and family life have always been interdependent, but the increased employment of women, rising working hours, globalizing economy, the trend toward long work hours and inadequate family income have reduced this mutuality both more visible and more challenging. The increased number of hours family members both individually and in total are contributing to the paid workforce means that both work and personal lives are not only under pressure but have altered in ways not anticipated by the expectations, policies and organizations that have previously shaped knowledges in both work and family life.

New era advancements are also reshaping all aspects of the working lifestyle and environment. With the help of technological advances, we now can overcome traditional barriers imposed by geography, time, and IT access. It is increasingly enabling popular work approaches and management techniques such as telecommuting, geographically distributed teams, online work and even entirely virtual companies, flexible timing, and some benefits which help businesses and employees are empowered with newfound freedom and flexibility to work but additionally few challenges for the work-life balance such as 24*7 accessibility, more control on the process and updated versions of the new system and methods of control and complicated reporting systems, etc.

3. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

From an employee's perspective, today's busy schedule drastically affects the lifestyle in which way we combine work and personal time. With the help of digital tools, which have become a huge part of our daily personal lives, employees can be more efficient and flexible, fitting work around their personal lifestyle and routine.

Consequently, the line between work life and home life is increasingly blurred. Replying to individual calls at work and sending official e-mails from home after office hours is the standard – a socially recognized practice. This level of flexibility and the tight-knit relationship between work and home is almost unavoidable, especially in international business. Employees are expected to be highly organized - seamlessly managing work and home simultaneously. For many industries, the need for workers to be accessible at unusual, once unfriendly, individual hours is an unspoken hope. It is no longer adequate to just switch off the server in the evening or use one's 'right to be unavailable'.

Enterprises that embrace the modern technology working environment take advantage of cross-border communication with people often working different schedules in multiple time zones. Presence at work is no more defined by an elected site, but by attention to a task.

Apart from simply providing access to the technology, there is a need for companies to adapt processes accordingly. For example, an effective mobile management strategy needs to be introduced and clear boundaries need to be defined to ensure employees' happiness, passion, and support.

Work-life balance in this modern era age is no longer clearly defined and separated. It is critical that companies find ways to attach and integrate the two. Some HR management techniques have an impact on balancing work and home should be one of flexibility and freedom, when managed appropriately.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work life balance has appeared as a major theme through the last two eras, which observed a considerable increase of work caused by economic indecision, administrative rearrangement, and increase in business rivalry. Recent study data proposes that the burden on employees to work longer hours under strict work schedules is ever increasing.

It is noteworthy that employee's perception of Quality of Work Life varies based on demographic and organizational variables. Understanding of insight would help the leaders of the businesses to work on refining the Quality of Work Life.

Dalton and Mesch (1990) associated the absence and turnover of employees in two divisions of one company: one with flexible scheduling and one without. Absence fell meaningfully among employees entitled for flexible forecast, but revenue was not affected.

Grover and Crooker (1995) studied multiple family-responsive policies together and found that employees with access to more of these benefits showed greater organizational commitment and lower intention to leave. This learning supported the idea that business provision of plans represents concern for employees, thus definitely influencing long-term attachment.

Scandura and Lankau (1997) also initiate that workforce with flexible work hours had advanced organizational promise.

Cully et al., 1999 This study presented that a considerably higher proportion of working men than working women in the United Kingdom work "long hours" (i.e., more than 48 hours per week); and empirical evidence suggests that men may experience lower work-life balance than their female counterparts.

Batt and Valcour (2000) examined information from 620 dual-career couples recognized through seven large companies in upstate New York. They found that work design characteristics were strong predictors of work-family conflicts, and the strongest predictors of employees' control or ability to integrate work and family demands. Coordination responsibilities, flexible technologies, and long work hours were associated with significantly higher work-family conflicts.

Ashforth (2000) claims that characteristically individuals perform physical and/or emotional actions (or 'role transitions', as he refers to them) between their different positions; and classifies macro (more radical and enduring in appeal) and micro (once, for example, instable from a work- to a family - connected role) role changes.

Parasuraman and Simmers, (2001), originate that it is not only domestic duties that establish an issue in work-life balance. Any types of actions (e.g., hobbies, time with friends) that the individual needs to follow outside one's work responsibilities pertain to work-life balance.

Hardy and Adnett, 2002; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Felstead et al., 2002, p. 57 told that there are still significant issues that must be addressed about work-life stability. Work-life stability has been rather barely considered and measured; as

it has been mainly viewed to pertain to persons, particularly women, who are in business engagement and have family responsibilities.

Felstead et al., 2002: - work-life balance is an issue that pertains to all individuals who are in paid work, regardless of whether they have family responsibilities or not.

Perrons, 2003, pp. 68-72; Simpson, 2000; White et al., 2003: - To reply to the new circumstances, establishments demand higher performance and promise from their workers, which is interpreted into prospects for working longer and for arranging work over personal life.

Wise and Bond, 2003: - This study told that because of narrowness in the consideration of work-life balance, pertinent organizational actions are mostly oriented towards the implementation of “family-friendly” policies.

Survey research by the Department of Trade and Industry, 2004: - Indicated that more than half of British employees considered that a better work-life balance was necessary to pursue their benefits in arts and to involve in sports actions. Hence, current meanings of work-life balance, in difference to previous ones, approach work-life stability as mentioning to the ability of persons, irrespective of age or gender, to find a measure that will allow them to syndicate their work with their non-work tasks, actions, and goals.

Baral (2009) deliberate the possibility and attention of work-life balance performs in some of the leading establishments in India. Based on a review of literature, empirical study, and analyses of reports of newspaper articles, research suggests that Indian organizations must do a lot to treat work-life balance practices as a strategic aspect of organizational performance.

Koch et al. (2012) identify that work-life limitations are frequently blurred in our era of high connectivity. They argue that the use of specific digitalization that permeates the boundaries between personal and work-related activities creates positive emotions that in turn lead to a sense of well-being and increase organizational commitment.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses data from a small survey done on the employees and HR employees of different industries to know about HR management techniques adopted by their organization at various levels. The focus of the survey was to determine the amount, type and influence of management techniques on a randomly representative sample of white-collar employees to know the impact of management techniques on work life balance. All persons questioned for this review (n = 100) self-identified as permanent workforce. Work-life balance was defined as a tool for employee retention and employee job satisfaction. Our analytic sample includes all respondents who agreed to tell the impact of HR management techniques on work-life balance and excludes cases with missing data from the analysis, resulting in an analytic sample of 71 respondents.

We used Google docs to do the review and SPSS to provide our estimations.

Measures Dependent Variables:

The perceived impact of HR management techniques was measured through a single question that asks respondents, “How much, if at all, do HR management techniques have an impact on their decision to remain in the same company?” The replies to variety from 1 (a lot) to 4 (not at all). This variable is recorded as a dichotomous variable where 1 indicates the impact of HR management techniques (“some,” or “a lot”) and 0 indicates little to no increase in productivity.

Perceived employee work-life balance was measured through a single item that asks, “How much if at all, are HR management techniques helpful for work-life balance?”

The responses range from 1 (a lot) to 4 (not at all). This variable is recorded as a dichotomous variable where 1 indicates improvement in work-life balance (“some,” or “a lot”) and 0 indicates little to no improvement in work-life balance.

To quantify Job Fulfilment, defendants were asked, “How pleased are you with your job?” The replies extended from 1 (entirely satisfied) to 4 (fully dissatisfied). This was recorded as a binary variable to reflect those that are generally satisfied (1) and those that are generally dissatisfied (0).

Job Independence is measured by a single article that asks, “I have a lot to say about what occurs in my job.” Replies range from 1 (powerfully disagree) to 5 (powerfully agree).

Job Progression is also measured using a single item. Respondents were asked, “I have opportunities for advancement in my job.” Responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Response scales for both Job Autonomy and Job Advancement were reversed so higher numbers correspond to higher levels of agreement.

Job Difficulty is measured with replies to four items: 1) “My job needs a high level of skill” 2) “My job needs creativity” 3) “My job needs that I do the same thing over and over” and 4) “My job requires abstract knowledge about the ideas behind my work” The responses for these questions range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The variables were recoded so

that higher numbers correspond to higher levels of agreement (except for the question that asks, “My job requires me to do the same thing over and over”). The concluding measure is an index that sums across these four items (4 considered low job complexity to 20 considered high job complexity).

6. RESULTS

Demographically, just under half of the respondents are female (47%), and the average employee age is 40, 41% of respondents have a college degree or better. The average number of hours worked per week is 41 and the largest income grouping is those that make less than 10,000,00 per year (35%), followed closely by those who make 10,00,000 to under 15,000 (27%). Most of the respondents are employed by someone else (88%) versus 12% who report being self-employed. The sample largely works in the private sector (74%) compared to 26% that work in other sectors.

Job satisfaction, job autonomy, and job complexity measures were all high for this sample. For example, 90% of respondents reported they were “completely” or “mostly” satisfied with their job. The mean for job autonomy is 3.7 (on a five-point scale) and the mean for job advancement opportunities is 3.4 (on a 5-point scale). The average Job complexity is 14, which suggests many respondents are in jobs that require greater levels of creativity and skill.

7. TAKEAWAY

7.1 CHALLENGES:

7.1.1 Emotional Issues

Employees lose control of emotions and cannot handle the situation and workload which turn into conflict or turnover.

7.1.2 STRESS AND BURNOUT

The work-life imbalance creates more stress and burnout situation which is difficult to manage.

7.1.3 MORE ACCESS TO EMPLOYEES DUE TO DIGITALIZATION

Digitalization has helped companies to make it easy to work by having quick and easy access to employees which remove distance and time barriers but have negatively affected the life of employee badly. They don't get time for the family and personal life.

7.1.4 SUPPORT TO CLIENTS 24 X 7

Most of the companies support customers more than regular time and even IT and BPO support clients 24*7.

7.1.5 NOT ENOUGH SUPPORTING HR STRATEGIES AND BOSS

Sometimes HR strategies are not supporting work-life balance. It is very difficult to manage if the boss is not supportive.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.2.1 HIRE THE BEST & FORGET THE REST

Employee retention is taken care of from the beginning like the job interview process. We need to make a good impression of a firm and be transparent with all policies and perks so that no ambiguity takes place. We can make a good first impression to influence the decision of talented people. Off course, no matter how much you want to keep an employee on and no matter how much you do to influence their decision to stay, ultimately to stay or go is the personal decision of the employee. It's somewhat of a balancing act and the only time you can directly affect the employee's side of the equation is when you hire them. After that, it's too late.

7.2.2 Give Your Employees the Metrics They Need

People have a deep desire to feel they're flourishing and that their talents and capabilities are being used in a way that makes a difference to the business. When people recognize their actions are accomplishing this desire, they begin to improve a sense of belonging and a feeling that your company is their company."

It's not enough for you to give ambiguous feedback or just words for the sake of satisfaction. Employees are willing to see the results of their work.

7.2.3 RECOGNIZE A HEALTHY WORK/LIFE BALANCE

We can't expect your employees to function like robots. To keep them functioning at their most effective level and keep them loaded with work without considering their issues, can be against the boss or the company, we must help them realize a healthy work/life balance. This can be harsher than it sounds. Of course, using time chasing software or equipment to track hours, but sometimes we must help employees realize they're overworking themselves. You need to ensure that your workers get enough time to rejuvenate their batteries. It could be a week off twice a year or a long weekend every now and then having that balance point will keep your employees happy, and productive, and help them strengthen their personal bond with your company.

7.2.4 BE THE BEST

Employers want their business to be at the top of its game all the time—especially when compared to the competition. And so do our employees. People want to work for the winner. Not only does this ensure employment longevity, but it also inspires a sense of pride. The first step is understanding our company's competitive advantage.

7.2.5 GIVE YOUR EMPLOYEES OPTIONS

On-the-job training opportunities are great, but we should help our employees to grow and expand, not simply get better at what they already do. If our training centres completely on increasing performance in a current role, then we are not doing all we can for your employees. We should consider cross-training and mentorship programs and create a leadership ladder that can help individuals earn the skills they need to move up. Good employees (the ones who are dedicated to our company—the ones we really want to keep) want the opportunity to advance, not just sustain momentum.

7.2.6 DON'T HIDE BEHIND THE OPEN DOOR

The employer should be fully engaged with employees. It's not enough to simply invite criticism and feedback because sometimes employees feel hesitant to express their views. Managers and employers should actively build a rapport with employees. It does not mean becoming best friends but taking the time to be friendly and engaged with employees will be beneficial.

7.2.7 KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON MANAGEMENT

Employees don't quit jobs instead they quit managers. Managers can be helpful to keep a work-life balance by providing them with rotational responsibilities. Managers should not only be trained in technical aspects of their positions, but also in soft skills to handle subordinates.

7.2.8 KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEES

It is very important to know your employees and what they want. We cannot follow blindly the best practices of other companies. We should get feedback by enhancing employee feedback processes. The information you gather will assist in understanding employees and we can concentrate on maintaining. These efforts can be effective for employee retention.

There are several ways to gather upward feedback. One is to hold small, open forums, conducted by the employer to discuss and ask for employee input on being an effective employer and with the motivators *to stay in the same company? Which are the benefits, most meaningful to employees?*

An exit interview can be arranged to find out the reason for leaving. Quite often, an existing employee is more willing to provide open and truthful input than current employees. Asking about their *suggestions for improvement*.

A third method is to conduct employee surveys to know their views and suggestion. It makes them feel good being heard and then do something about highlighted issues. Don't ask too many questions because if the survey is too long and provides too much feedback, then it's difficult to get time to identify the need. In case of not resolving issues can create frustration and make employees feel like the employer is not serious.

Employers can examine the employee demographics and can provide the facilities for single mothers like flexitime, job shares, or subsidized day-care. The employer should not forget the employees' families when planning events, celebrating their children's accomplishments, and considering contributing to their children's education.

7.2.9 Create an Employee-Centred Environment

It is very important to have a good and effective induction program to build a culture and strong bond between employees and employers. Sending a clear message to employees is very important from starting and can be done by creating an open and flexible workplace that contributes to work-life balance. Nowadays employees want time to enjoy life beyond work so employers who can offer flexible work schedules will be positively considered. Innovative benefits that support employee health and wellness will also be accepted by more employees.

7.2.10 REWARD & RECOGNIZE TOP PERFORMERS

Employers must find ways to recognize and reward your top performers even after having a fair compensation package. It can be a very simple way like saying "thank you" or providing acknowledgment of work well done and making it personal. Let the employee know why it was of value to the team and the company and recognize the achievement at a staff meeting.

7.2.11 PROVIDE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP & SUPERVISION

Employers should show employees, what they have for them to get the job done. The employer should share their leadership vision and tell employees how they fit in. Leadership can be good care and connection rather than command and control. People leave jobs due to poor supervisors and leadership, so employers are accountable for employee turnover and retention. Managerial skills are required to hold employees as per the expectations.

7.2.12 PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Employee development is not just providing training. It is very necessary to provide opportunities to employees for development which can be mentoring and guiding, external education or courses and conferences, linking associations, job shadowing, cross-training, increasing the employee's responsibility and/or complexity in their current role, job rotation, and temporary assignments in other departments or positions.

Striking a healthy work-life balance is a difficult challenge even in the best of times. Adding to the pressure, today's portable electronic devices have obliterated the line between work and home. Gone are the days when leaving the office or shop meant leaving our work behind. Today employees are available to their supervisors, coworkers, and customers around the clock.

The coupling of increased workloads with technology that keeps us constantly connected to our jobs finds an increasing number of workers feeling overwhelmed, discouraged, and depleted.

In 2006, 53% of employees felt they had a good work-life balance, according to a Corporate Executive Board (CEB) report. That number fell to 30% in the first quarter of 2009, the CEB reported. Many employees today are so busy making a living that they have no time to make a life.

In contrast, numerous studies have shown the most productive employees are well-rounded professionals with full and well-balanced lives -- both in and out of the workplace. Likewise, the most successful companies are those that foster employee health and well-being while enhancing organizational performance and productivity.

Today work-life balance ranks as one of the most important workplace attributes; second only to compensation, and workers who feel they have a better work-life balance tend to work 21% harder than employees who feel overworked.

Entrepreneur recently reported on a Watson Wyatt survey that uncovered a scary statistic: more than 50% of employers polled said they had no formal strategy for employee retention. According to a 2008 Yukon Bureau of Statistics Business Survey, "workplaces that demonstrate the value they place in their employees and that put into place policies and practices that reflect effective retention practices will benefit, in turn, from worker commitment and productivity."

The same survey found that 85.2% of employers opt for wage increases to keep employees on while 58.4% opted for a benefits package. However, these knee-jerk reactions can be costly for a small business to shoulder. Thankfully they're not the only option. In fact, the Labour Market Framework report goes on to state that "creative strategies that go beyond pay and benefits can be employed to attract and retain employees" just as effectively as the costly raises and benefits.

“Recognition, flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, employee engagement, health and safety, communication, workplace diversity, formal wellness programs, inclusion and employee development are some examples of approaches that can become a part of the mix when developing retention strategies.”

To keep your employees working for you, consider following these seven recommendations:

7.3 HIRE THE BEST & FORGET THE REST

Employee retention begins during the job interview process. We’re not talking about making a good first impression (though that’s part of it). No. No matter how much you want to keep an employee on and no matter how much you do to influence their decision to stay, ultimately the employee is the one who decides to stay or go. It’s a bit of balancing act and the only time you can directly influence the employee’s side of the equation is when you hire them. After that, it’s too late. So, do as Kyle Lagunas of [TLNT](#) says and hire retainable employees

7.4 GIVE YOUR EMPLOYEES THE METRICS THEY NEED

As [Entrepreneur](#) says “study after study confirms that people have a deep desire to feel they’re succeeding and that their talents and capabilities are being used in a way that makes a difference to the business. When people sense their actions are fulfilling this desire, they begin to develop a sense of belonging and a feeling that your company is their company.”

It’s not enough for you to give vague (if well-intentioned) feedback. Your employees want to see the results of their work. They want to have that concrete object that they can rest their pride on. They need to see the results with their own two eyes.

7.5 RECOGNIZE A HEALTHY WORK/LIFE BALANCE

You can’t expect your employees to function like robots. To keep them operating at their most efficient level and keep them from harbouring ill will against you or the company, you must help them realize a healthy work/life balance. This can be harder than it sounds. Of course, using [time clock software](#) is a key component to keeping track of hours, but sometimes you must help employees realize they’re overworking themselves. Some people are simply “hardwired” to work. As the boss, it’s your responsibility to ensure that your workers get enough time to recharge their batteries. It could be a week off every six months, or it could be a long weekend every now and then but finding that balance point will keep your employees happy, and productive, and help them strengthen their personal bond with your company.

7.6 BE THE BEST

Of course, you want your business to be at the top of its game all the time—especially when compared to your competition. And so do your employees. People want to work for the winner. Not only does this ensure employment longevity, but it also instills a sense of pride. The first step is understanding your company’s competitive advantage—the thing that sets you above (not just apart) from the rest. Take the time to define it. Whether it’s customer service, a top-tier product, the use of [scheduling software](#) and other employee productivity tools, or the fact that you’re locally owned and operated, make sure your customers and employees know about it.

7.7 GIVE YOUR EMPLOYEES OPTIONS

On-the-job training opportunities are great, but you should be helping your employees to grow and expand, not simply get better at what they already do. If you’re training centers completely on increasing performance in a current role, you’re not doing all you can for your employees. Consider cross-training and mentorship programs. Create a leadership ladder that can help individuals earn the skills they need to move up. Good employees (the ones who are dedicated to your company—the ones you really want to keep) want the opportunity to advance, not just maintain momentum.

7.8 DON’T HIDE BEHIND THE OPEN DOOR

As Elizabeth Skronski of Canada One says, “an open-door policy is one thing. Being fully engaged with your employees is another.” It’s not enough to simply invite criticism and feedback. Often time people feel they can’t really express themselves for fear of embarrassment or reprisal—even with open door policies in place. Instead, managers and employers need to actively create an open rapport with employees. You don’t have to become best friends but taking the time to be friendly and engaged with your employees will pay off in spades.

7.9 KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON MANAGEMENT

“Employees don’t quit jobs,” says Steve Miranda, Managing Director of the Center for Advanced Human Resource studies at Cornell University. “They quit managers.” Miranda bases this idiom on bundles of research that shows a direct correlation between the impression a manager gives and an employee’s job satisfaction. Miranda estimates up to 80% of employee turnover is caused directly by ineffective or overtly hostile management. So, while you’re taking the time to train your manager to deal with the technical aspects of their positions, it’s in your best interest to include some “soft skills” as well.

7.10 KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEES

Your starting point is to know what your people are looking for — don’t blindly follow other companies’ best practices. Gather feedback by enhancing your employee feedback processes. The information you gather will assist in understanding what your people want and need. Then you can concentrate on maintaining what you do well and improving what you don’t do so well. This targets your efforts to areas with the highest potential return on retention.

There are several ways to gather upward feedback. One is to hold small, open forums, conducted by the owner or senior manager, where you ask for employee input on being an effective employer. Ask, *what motivates you to stay with our company? What would lure you away? Which of our benefits are most meaningful to you? What could we do differently?*

Another method is to conduct exit interviews to find out why people are leaving. Quite often, an existing employee is more willing to provide open and truthful input than current employees. Ask, *what could we have done to keep you with our company? What suggestions do you have to improve how we deal with our people?* Look for trends and suggestions that you could implement and match it to what you have heard from other employees.

A third method is to conduct employee surveys, then DO SOMETHING about the results. Don’t try to ask too many questions. If your survey is too long and provides you with too much feedback, you’ll have a hard time fulfilling all the needs identified. This will disillusion employees and make them feel like you weren’t serious.

Get to know your individual employees by walking around, asking questions, and going for lunch or coffee. Don’t have time you say? What does this say to your employees? *My manager doesn’t care about me as a person – I’m just a worker.* Take care you aren’t sending the wrong message – be available and personable.

Examine your employee demographics. Do single mothers work for you? Offer flex-time, job shares, or subsidized day care. What about working around school schedules? Younger employees may prefer technical freebies like iPods. If you have family-oriented staff don’t forget the employees’ families when planning events, celebrate their children’s accomplishments, and consider contributing to their children’s education.

When you find something that isn’t important to your employees STOP spending money on it. Instead spend these dollars on something that is important.

7.11 CREATE AN EMPLOYEE CENTRED ENVIRONMENT

Send a clear message that your employees are important. Do this by creating an open and flexible workplace that contributes to work-life balance. Today’s employees want time to enjoy life beyond work so employers who can offer flexible work arrangements will be positively viewed. Innovative benefits that support employee health and wellness will also be welcomed. But again, don’t just blindly apply these practices – find out which are more important to your employees. Whatever you choose to offer must fit within your operational needs but don’t be too rigid – it could cost you the loss of good employees.

Consider a flexible hour policy-y that establishes core hours but otherwise the employee’s hours are flexible within an eight-hour day. For example, each employee must work from 10 am to 3 pm, but can choose to start anytime between 7 am and 10 am. They can also choose to end earlier or later dependent upon their personal situations.

Another option is to offer flexible work schedules that allow more time off. For example, the employee works four ten-hour days per week instead of 5 eight-hour days; the employee works longer days to get every second Friday off. A job share is where two employees share a job thus working a shorter work week on days of their choosing.

Benefits can be expensive for small employers. Therefore, consider letting the employee choose what they need from a variety of benefits. In addition to the standard health and pension benefits, a hygiene factor for all businesses, add childcare or eldercare support; allow employees to use their personal sick days for family care needs; allow employees to purchase additional vacation days; allow one “sanity day” per quarter; subsidize public transport or moving expenses; offer rent subsidies; subsidize or provide gym or fitness memberships.

7.12 REWARD & RECOGNIZE TOP PERFORMERS

While each employee should receive a fair, competitive compensation and benefits package, you must find ways to recognize and reward your top performers. Fortunately, this recognition can be something other than pay.

As simple as it sounds, say “thank you”. Provide immediate, specific acknowledgement of work well done and make it personal. Let the employee know why it was of value to the team and the company. Also recognize the achievement at a staff meeting. Show your top performers you value their opinions by asking for input on decisions, work processes, and business direction. Involve them in company projects. This makes employees feel respected and valued.

Establish recognition expectations for supervisors and managers. Don't leave it to chance or it may never get done. Encourage staff to recognize one another by creating a peer recognition program with small tokens such as movie passes, lunch gift certificates, or lottery tickets. You could even create an annual Employee Recognition Program where you nominate staff for special achievements and celebrate in a splashy manner.

Celebrate key company or department achievements. This could be meeting sales targets, meeting a company milestone, or just working through a busy, difficult week. Let employees know you've noticed their accomplishment. Don't let it go by without recognition. It doesn't have to be big – just personal. Examples include bringing pizza or Chinese food in, closing one hour early on a long weekend, giving a pass for one hour or one day off the employee's choosing. Make your recognition consistent with what employees' value.

You may also wish to consider offering cash bonuses to your top performers or critical positions. Provide a share of the company profit to the employee in relation to their contribution or provide on-the-spot bonuses.

7.13 PROVIDE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP & SUPERVISION

Show employees you have what it takes to get the job done. Everyone likes to work for a winner! Share your leadership vision and tell employees how they fit in. Make them feel part of something bigger than themselves and their individual jobs.

Banish command and control. Today's supervisors must demonstrate effective people skills and can no longer practice Theory X management techniques. You can't afford to have uni-dimensional managers that are good technically but lack the skills to motivate and develop direct reports. People leave jobs due to poor supervisors so you must hold your supervisors accountable for employee turnover and retention. Set your expectations and provide up-to-date training. However, when training is provided explain that there will be consequences of not changing their behaviour to more positive supervisory models. Then follow through when supervisors continue to exhibit negative behaviours.

7.14 PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Global Market Insite, Inc. (GMI), a provider of global market intelligence solutions, surveyed over 5,000 full and part time workers in international markets. When asked what a boss could do more of, Canadian workers top priority (39%) was “use my skills and abilities” and a quarter (26%) asking for bosses to ‘encourage my development’. So, what can an employer do?

Firstly, examine your onboarding process. Make the employee's orientation a day to remember – don't make the employee sorry they joined your organization. Set up effective training processes for new employees – don't just expect them to be successful without proper support.

Don't think of employee development as just training. It's more than that. Employee development includes mentoring and buddy systems, external education and conferences, joining associations, job shadowing, cross training, increasing the employee's responsibility and/or complexity in their current role, job rotation, and temporary assignments in other departments or positions. Ensure employees have the time to take advantage of these development opportunities by making the development of employees a priority for your supervisors.

Create opportunities for self-development by budgeting educational/training funds, allowing paid/unpaid development days, offering paid/unpaid sabbaticals, offering tuition support, and providing in-house training. Companies should also consider providing non-job-related continuing education support to some or all workers.

As a result, a sound retention strategy should focus on and tactically address four key elements--performance, communication, loyalty and competitive advantage.

➤ Performance.

The benefit of having measurable objectives for employees is obvious to most business owners and managers, but this perception usually stops short of relating performance metrics to employee retention. Study after study confirms that people have a deep desire to feel they're succeeding and that their talents and capabilities are being used in a way that makes a difference to the business. When people sense their actions are fulfilling this desire, they begin to develop a sense of belonging and a feeling that your company is their company.

Human beings are often the happiest when they're in the process of achieving a goal. Clear, achievable objectives that gauge personal, team and company performance provide the feedback employees need to confirm they're making valuable contributions and accomplishing desirable goals.

➤ **Communication.**

The second essential element in a retention strategy is communication, specifically a communications process that's structured to inform, emphasize and reaffirm to employees that their workplace contributions are having an impact. Since we're dealing very directly with how employees feel about their performance, the company and their work environment, the question becomes, "How do you know how they feel about these matters?"

Properly done, communication with your staff will provide you with the insights you need to know how your employees feel about working for your business. Do you communicate on a frequent basis with your employees? Do you have regular meetings with your people? Is it two-way communication, and do you have a nonthreatening channel for them to offer comments and suggestions? Do you conduct employee surveys to gather opinions on company issues and activities? Are your managers and supervisors' good listeners? An effective and sensitive communications plan can provide you with insight on exactly what's driving employee morale and how your staff members feel about your company.

➤ **Loyalty.**

The third element in a successful employee retention strategy is employee loyalty. True loyalty is not an enforced requirement but an earned response to the trust, respect and commitment shown to the individuals in your company. When you demonstrate loyalty to your employees, they'll reciprocate with commitment and loyalty to your business. Remember that people don't begin their employment with you as loyal employees, but will develop loyalty over time as they're trusted, respected and appreciated by you.

So how are you going to demonstrate your commitment to them? How loyal are you to your employees? Are you more concerned about their success or their contributions to your company's success? These two considerations are not mutually exclusive but are both essential and should work together.

➤ **Competitive advantage.**

The fourth and final element in your strategy to retain employees has to do with your competitive advantage. While that may seem odd at first, think about it: People want to work for a winner. What sets your company apart from your competition? How are you--and as a result, your employees--making a difference in your industry, in your community, and for your customers? Take the time to identify and inform your clients and your employees about your unique competitive advantage. If your product is like others in the marketplace, your service can be what distinguishes you (and probably should in any case). People want to be with a winner...and that includes employees.

Together, these four elements can provide you with a retention strategy capable of producing amazing results. You may even have some of them already in place, such as performance metrics and a communications process. The key is to make sure you've integrated all four elements into a strategy for retaining employees that's grounded in a genuine commitment to serving your customers and employees well over the long haul.

According to strategic planning consultant Leigh Branham, SPHR, 88% of employees leave their jobs for reasons other than pay: However, 70% of managers think employees leave mainly for pay-related reasons. Branham says there are seven main reasons why employees leave a company:

1. Employees feel the job or workplace is not what they expected.
2. There is a mismatch between the job and person.
3. There is too little coaching and feedback.
4. There are too few growth and advancement opportunities.
5. Employees feel devalued and unrecognized.
6. Employees feel stress from overwork and have a work/life imbalance.
7. There is a loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders.

Here are some effective methods employers utilize to keep employees happy and part of their organization instead of looking for employment opportunities elsewhere.

➤ **Employee Orientation**

One of the best ways to have satisfied employees is to make sure they're pleased from the get-go. Offering a thorough orientation will ensure expectations are realistic and that new staffers don't come in with rose-colored glasses that will quickly fade. Proper onboarding encourages positive attitudes and can reduce turnover.

➤ **Positive Work Environment**

An upbeat workplace is a necessity. If the workspace isn't positive, you can't expect the workers to be. Encouraging one another, avoiding micromanagement, giving positive feedback and ensuring criticism is constructive are all ways to keep the environment a place where employees can do more than survive – they can thrive!

➤ **Provide Competitive Benefits**

Fair wages are important, but competitive benefits are also critical to keeping your workforce satisfied. If your benefits package is thin, employees may look for other opportunities with firms that are more generous. Beyond insurance, benefits such as flex time, paid holidays and personal days are important factors to employee satisfaction.

➤ **Workforce Engagement**

Employees that don't find their work interesting or don't feel they are contributing to the mission of the firm will not be engaged. For employees to be satisfied, they must feel like they are part of something bigger than just what their individual work tasks are. Include staffers in goal setting and how they fit in the corporation fabric to increase engagement and satisfaction.

➤ **Develop Skills**

Everyone needs something to working toward. Stagnation is unfulfilling. Employees have more potential than their current level of functionality. Encouraging employees to fulfill that potential will increase engagement and satisfaction. Whether it's training opportunities, mentoring, online courses or external training, encourage staff to always be improving their skills.

➤ **Recognition & Rewards**

Employees enjoy anatta-boy, and it need not be a public show to mean something to employees. Encourage supervisors and managers to acknowledge employees' deeds daily. Also implement a formal program company-wide to recognize top achievers in every job category. Healthy competition can boost morale, encourage hard work and increase satisfaction and retention.

➤ **Track Job Satisfaction**

Don't sit back and just hope that employees are satisfied – put some data behind it. Offer anonymous online surveys or mobile surveys to effectively track how employees feel about benefits, recognition, supervisor feedback and other aspects that contribute to employee satisfaction. This allows you to improve, tweak and monitor satisfaction levels to reduce turnover and save the company money.

➤ **Training.**

Training employees reinforces their sense of value (Wingfield, 2009). Through training, employers help employees achieve goals and ensure they have a solid understanding of their job requirements (Maul, 2008).

➤ **Mentoring**

A mentoring program integrated with a goal-oriented feedback system provides a structured mechanism for developing strong relationships within an organization and is a solid foundation for employee retention and growth (Wingfield). With a mentoring program, an organization pairs someone more experienced in a discipline with someone less experienced in a similar area, with the goal to develop specific competencies, provide performance feedback, and design an individualized career development plan (Goldenson, 2007).

➤ **Instil a positive culture.**

A company should establish a series of values as the basis for culture such as honesty, excellence, attitude, respect, and teamwork (IOMA, 2008). A company that creates the right culture will have an advantage when it comes to attracting and keeping good employees (Main).

➤ **Use communication to build credibility.**

No matter what the size of the organization, communication is central to building and maintaining credibility. Many employers get communication to "flow up" through a staff advisory council (or similar group) which solicits and/or receives employees' opinions and suggestions and passes them on to upper management (IOMA). It's also important for employees to know that the employer is really listening and responds to (or otherwise acknowledges) employee input.

➤ **Show appreciation via compensation and benefits.**

Offering things like competitive salaries, profit sharing, bonus programs, pension and health plans, paid time off, and tuition reimbursement sends a powerful message to employees about their importance at the organization. The rewards given to employees must be meaningful to impact their perception of the organization and therefore have a marked influence on its retention efforts. Moreover, if an organization promises a reward, it should keep that promise (Gberevbie, 2008).

➤ **Encourage referrals and recruit from within.**

Having current employees offer referrals could help minimize confusion of job expectations. Current employees can realistically describe a position and the environment to the individual he/she is referring. Another way an employer can lessen the impact of turnover is to hire from within, since current employees have already discovered that they are a good fit in the organization (Branham, 2005).

➤ **Coaching/feedback.**

It's important for companies to give feedback and coaching to employees so that their efforts stay aligned with the goals of the company and meet expectations. During an employee's first few weeks on the job, an employer should provide intensive feedback. Employers should also provide formal and informal feedback to employees throughout the year (Branham).

➤ **Provide growth opportunities.**

An organization should provide workshops, software, or other tools to help employees increase their understanding of themselves and what they want from their careers and enhance their goal-setting efforts (Branham). It's important to provide employees with adequate job challenges that will expand their knowledge in their field (Levoy, 2007). According to Right Management, employees are more likely to stay engaged in their jobs and committed to an organization that makes investments in them and their career development.

➤ **Make employees feel valued.**

Employees will go the extra mile if they feel responsible for the results of their work, have a sense of worth in their jobs, believe their jobs make good use of their skills, and receive recognition for their contributions (Levoy).

Employees should be rewarded at a high level to motivate even higher performance. The use of cash payouts could be used for on-the-spot recognition. These rewards have terrific motivational power, especially when given as soon as possible after the achievement. It's important for employers to say "thank you" to employees for their efforts and find different ways to recognize them. Even something as simple as a free lunch can go a long way towards making employees feel valued.

Listen to employees and ask for their input as to what rewards might work best at your organization. Conduct meetings and surveys to enable employees to share their input (Branham). Most team members will work harder to carry out a decision that they've helped to influence.

➤ **Lower stress from overworking and create work/life balance.**

It's important to match work/life benefits to the needs of employees. This could be in the form of offering nontraditional work schedules (such as a compressed work week, telecommuting, and flextime) or extra holidays. When work-life balance is structured properly, both the employee and employer come out ahead. For example, the employer will experience more productivity in the workplace because employees will be less stressed, healthier, and thus, more productive (Wingfield). Encouraging employees to set work/life goals, such as spending more time with their children, communicates that you really do want them to have a life outside of work and achieve a healthy work/life balance.

➤ **Foster trust and confidence in senior leaders.**

Develop strong relationships with employees from the start to build trust (Stolz, 2008). Employees must believe that upper management is competent, and that the organization will be successful. An employer must be able to inspire this confidence and make decisions that reinforce it. An employer cannot say one thing and do another. For example, an employer shouldn't talk about quality and then push employees to do more work in less time. In addition, employers need to engage and inspire employees by enacting policies that show they trust them, such as getting rid of authoritarian style of management (Branham).

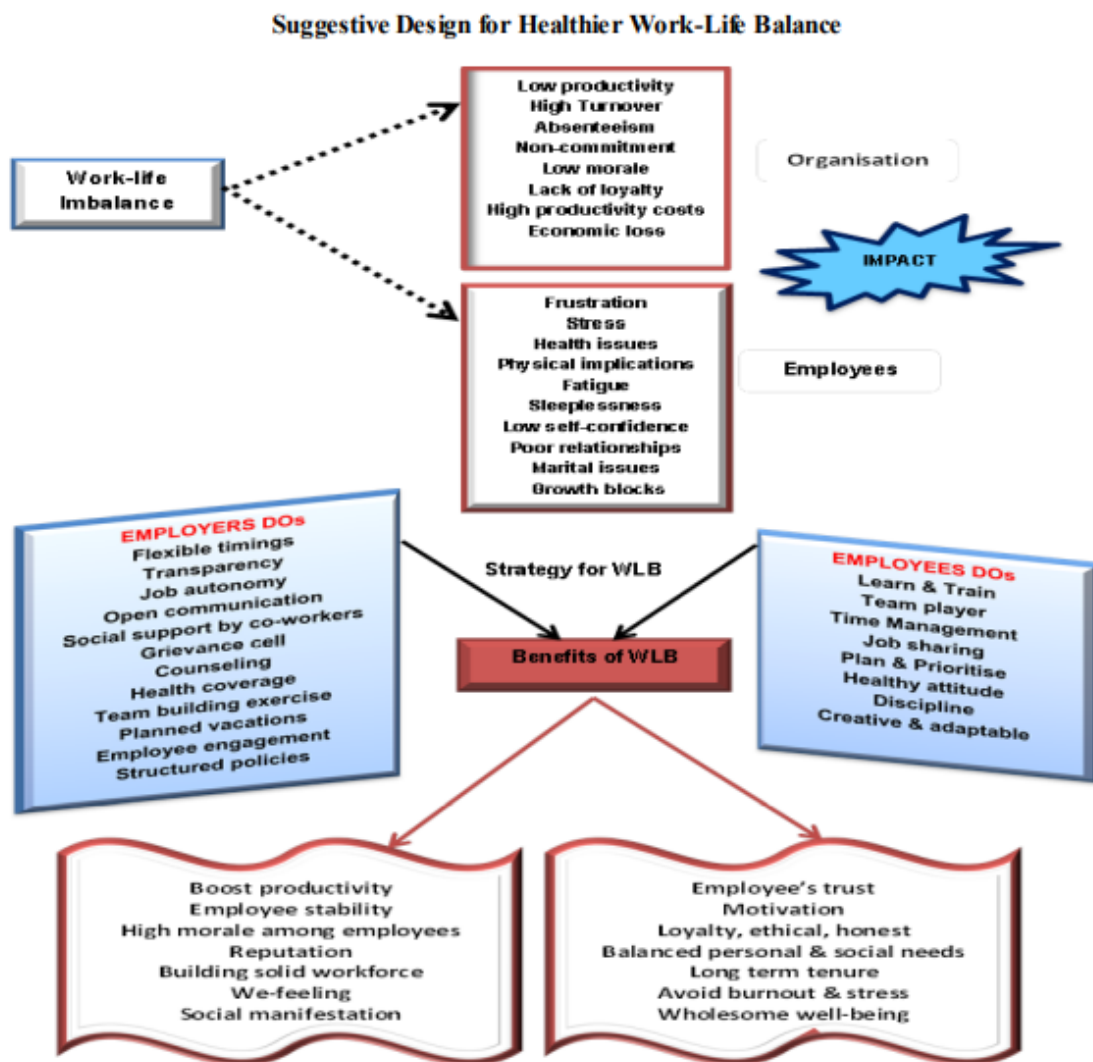
8. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The major contribution of this paper is to move beyond global measures of the frequency of general internet or computer use to better understand the context that underlies work-related digitalization in today's workplaces.

Conclusion

It's clear that having proper retention strategies is key to retain employees. To foster an environment that motivates and stimulates employees, managers need to incorporate motivation-building practices into their corporate culture. These practices include listening to employees and respecting their opinions, basing rewards on performance, and being available to them for everything from listening to their ideas and concerns to assisting them with their career advancement.

Employees need to feel valued and appreciated, be given feedback, provided with growth opportunities, be given work-life balance options, and have trust and confidence in their leaders (Branham). All these retention strategies are beneficial when an employer wants to keep employees within an organization and keep costs of turnover low.



Work-life imbalance impacts both the organization and the employees negatively. As much as employees suffer from health issues, stress, family-life conflicts, low self-confidence etc, the organization too faces several problems such as high productivity costs, employee turnover, economic loss, low morale and lack of loyalty. Therefore, both the organization and the workforce need to take collective efforts for enhancing work-life balance. The above model shows that organisations need to further promote the concept of flexible timings, have a transparent culture, give job autonomy, have counselling and grievance cells, promote team-building exercises have employee engagement programmes and structured policies that will pave way for achieving work-life balance. The employees too will need to be willing to learn & train, be team players, manage time effectively, opt for job sharing, plan & prioritise, develop healthy attitude, discipline and be creative & adaptable at work. These strategies, it is believed will enhance work-life balance in organisations.

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