

WORK LIFE BALANCE IN PHARMACEUTICAL SECTORJagadeesh Induru*¹ and Ayub Khan Pathan²¹Gokaraju Rangaraju College of Pharmacy (GRCP), Bachupally, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India.²Gokaraju Rangaraju Institute of Engineering and Technology (GRIET), Bachupally, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India.

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ABSTRACT

Work life balance (WLB) is the current distinct issue of pharmaceutical industry. The employees always want to succeed and progress at work place, at the same time spare some time for family and recreation. Balancing these two extremes is the cause of burn out of employees and hence the employers recognized this as a need of hour and want to introduce the work life balance strategies, plans and formulate policies to improve the employee morale, motivation and productivity. Work life balance does not mean working less to fulfill personal responsibilities at the cost of organizational productivity. In fact it is to work productively and improve the personal life simultaneously. The work life balance practices achieve retention of the employees and reduce the absenteeism. This paper enlightens the wide options for employers and employees to link work life balance practices for organizational and personal performance.

Keywords: Work life balance, work life imbalance, pharmaceutical sector, strategies for employees, strategies for employers.

INTRODUCTION

The achievement and enjoyment at professional and personal lives are the front and back of the coin of value in life. We don't have one without the other and at the same time the coin with only side does not exist. Hence many a times it happens that the successful people are not happy or not as happy as they supposed to be. Therefore, the full value from life cannot be achieved without achievement and enjoyment. The focus on both achievement and enjoyment in day to day life helps to avoid the burnout. The simple concepts are focused as key components of the day such that they are not that hard to implement. Hence they make it happen for them self, their family and work every day for the rest of the life to achieve and enjoy.

The performance of employees in organizations can be improved by integrating work-life initiatives to core business strategies and human resource systems. The traditional attitude of merely providing work life programs to address the problem of attrition should be changed and organizations should continuously strive to redesign its work processes by changing the organizational culture thereby creating integrated solutions for work, family, and community to optimum level. Employees encouraged to get retained in those organizations where the work life balance is practiced as a way of life and in daily life. Elbert Hubbard says that "One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man". Hence the whatever money, time and resources to create and retain the good people going to give huge returns of

increased morale, loyalty to organization and productive at professional and personal lives with simple tasks of arrangements and adjustments made as a policy.

Many employees are struggling with family, work and life demands, and hence it continues to be important for HRD scholars to study the barriers and solutions associated with work life challenges and their possible implications on performance and health/well-being of the workforce.¹ The simple approaches for both employers and employees which make great difference by focusing at work life balance are enlightened in this article.

WORK LIFE BALANCE STRATEGIES

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving." - *Albert Einstein*. To keep moving with simultaneous achievement and enjoyment possible if there is less friction, boredom and burnout at home and work. It is clear that workplace performance at the individual, group, organizational, and community levels is dependent on work life issues.² The understanding of work life theories, issues, challenges and possible solutions enable employers to take necessary steps strategically to change the work culture. The strategies enable the employees to be more engaged, productive, and fulfilled to reach their full potential in their work/life roles such that their employers are more competitive and profitable and influence the health and well-being of their respective communities.³

As the pharmaceutical sector is complex and unique in its challenges makes the work-life balance practices as necessity and at the same time tough to be implemented.

Uniqueness of pharmaceutical sector

The pharmaceutical sector is a unique sector and hence

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special emphasis should be given to introduce the work life balance strategies by considering the following features specific to this sector.

- Hazardous environment: Even a small error can lead to drastic effect causes damage to property, people and image.
- Continuous work environment: the complexity and lengthy uninterrupted processes makes the necessity to continue the work around the clock on all days.
- Regulated environment: Being linked to health of people, this sector under strict regulatory frame work with respect to local and international norms of Foods and drugs administration, environment, health and safety.
- Complexity of environment: This sector requires skills and talents of diversified areas at all grades and levels.
- High risk environment: The sector urges the high inflow of funds by means of costly materials and equipment for the process results in irreversible loss because of poor work performance.
- Work environment away from home: The hazardous nature and regulatory requirements makes the location of pharmaceutical industry away from the domestic areas makes it critical to disturb the personal lives.

The work life imbalance is most prevalent in pharmaceutical sector and hence the balancing of both professional and personal lives results in big returns. Some proactive employers are already benefited by work-life balance. But remaining employers need to develop practices that will be promising for their business and their employees. Even though it is a guideline, but not mandatory for pharmaceutical sector, this can enhance economic performance and also improve the quality of life of individuals. The world is fast growing and hence the goal is to ensure that the way of working today reflects both present and future. The implantation and practice of work life balance is application of common sense and good management practices. If government also working together with employers for work life balance by making it mandatory, it will dramatically show a real difference that yield more flexible, competitive and profitable businesses and a better quality of life of those who work in them. The approach of a work life balance is important for all staff, not just those who have aged parents or young children or newly married. The work life imbalance is progressing enormously because of varied reasons.

Reasons for Work Life Imbalance

- Increase in competition led excessive job demands and constraints to enhance productivity and cost-effectiveness at employers end.
- Increase on cost and needs of household items that necessitate overtime hours, or extra part time jobs and working of all adult household members, including parents from the employee end.
- The changing of time from husband earning and the wife staying at home to the time now where the husband earns and the wife earns too. But both are equally important to run the home. Hence imbalance of the work and life at home was aroused and critical especially for women.

In addition to the above complex reasons for imbalance, there some difficulties in the path of achieving the balance makes it tough to implement at work place.

Limitations of improving work life balance

- Long time process to perceive the prominent effect

- Creates friction between employees if not introduced equitably
- Difficult to maintain an organizational structure and culture by flexible and remote working conditions
- Hard to withdraw implanted policies if the company runs in difficulties.

Despite these problems the work life balance practices can benefit synergistically to both employees and employers if they individualized and tailor made to the need of hour.

Benefits of improving work life balance

The introduction of work life balance strategies at work place and home results in:

- Improved employee performance and increased productivity
- Enhanced morale
- Reduced attrition
- Decreased absenteeism and sickness rates
- Lowering of burnout and stress
- Retention of staff
- Rise in company image in society.

The above benefits can be materialized when the correct strategy is chosen at right time at correct situation from the available feasible strategies.

STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYERS

The employees are the only resources of the any organization in this fast growing technological world to sustain with creativity and innovation. Hence it is the responsibility of employer to protect the interests of this valuable resource with right strategies.

Finding the employee needs

The first step is to find the various work/home conflicts experienced by employees. This can be assessed by studying home situation which includes the proportion of employees with children or elderly dependants and the consequences of home commitments such as the amount of overtime worked, or number of days of missed work. The exit interviews are great help to find out the work life imbalance issues contributed to employees' departures. The research published in related fields like management, psychology and family sciences can also used for the exploration and investigation of the relationship between human resource development and the work life domain.^{2,3,4}

The focus groups can be set up as team to study the needs and in addition, surveys are also helpful. The employees should be involved from the initial stages of study which will reduce the resistance to change. The results of a business case for improving work life balance are related to the bottom line goals of organization and communicated to the most influential people in the organization such as staff associations and trade unions. It is also vital to identify financial resources and key personnel to carry out the implementation.

Organizational culture

The pharmaceutical sector is fast growing and hence the organization must be conducive to innovative work practices and should empower the employees to express or execute the creative ideas. This creates the flexibility in work and trust on the organization and hence employees feel secure which in turn improves employee retention. The traditional approach of control by command results in one way communication which is not conducive to creative atmosphere. Hence the organizational structure is considered to enable work life balance by implementing

the necessary steps. The focus should be shifted to the employee performance and not to look at the measures to see the employee physical presence in work. But both managers and employees should be conscious enough to prevent the abuse of work flexibility. It is crucial that supervisors act as a role models by setting up the examples by themselves such that work life balance approaches becomes integrated into the culture of the organization at all levels.

Enhancing personal and organizational efficiency

The organizational procedures are to be improved to make employees less tired and stressful. The critical aspect to be considered here is to make the work as axis but the means to achieve it is as smooth as possible. The important part of it is to nurture the skills of time management, prioritization, delegation that can reduce stress with improved productivity. This effort would reduce the need to take the work to home and avoid the unnecessary over load and hence enhance the personal and organization efficiency.

Setting up of policies

The research in human resources today revolves around specific policies, practices, programs, or strategic interventions that influence the performance.^{5,6} The readymade universal policies are not applicable and in fact not availability for a specific business set up. Each organization is responsible for setting their policies which suits for their work life balance. A few approaches are enlightened here but not restricted to this list.

- Work flexibility
 - Flexibility in working time
 - Flexibility in working location
 - Flexibility in work delegation
- Revitalization of work
 - Work pauses and breaks
 - Career enrichment
 - Work enlargement
 - Work rotation
 - Special leaves
 - Paid
 - Unpaid
 - Timely feedback on work performance
- Educare
 - Advices
 - Counseling
 - Information sharing
 - Training
 - Upgrading skills and attitudes
- Dependents care
 - Child care
 - Elder care
 - Care of physically and mentally challenged
- Health care
 - First aid
 - Creation of healthy environment
 - Medical and paramedical support
- Supporting services care
 - Payment of bills of electricity, phone etc.
 - Laundry services
 - Plumbing services
 - Car servicing etc.
- Personnel care
 - Cafeteria services
 - Drinking water at proximity
 - Rest room facilities
 - Cloak rooms

- Security services
- Special services
 - Pick up and dropping
 - Ambulance services
- Recreation
 - Week end get together
 - Team tours
 - Holiday packages
- Continuous improvement approaches
 - Feed back
 - Resource allocation
 - Encouraging ideas
- Job security
 - Provident fund/ Gratuity benefits
 - Permanent employment
 - Insurance benefits
 - Two way communication
- Retention strategies
 - Attractive salary
 - Promotion strategies
 - Bonuses
 - Awards
 - Job analysis and job evaluation
 - Job measurement
 - Timely Performance appraisal
 - Career path for each individual.

Flexibility in work hours allows organizing the working hours during the shifts to take care of their home lives by the suitable adjustments within the team. This can be achieved by pairing up the people such that they can work for each enable both to take time when they need by making the arrangements to get work done by the other. The same manner the teams can also work out their own sequence in the situation like critical path method to remove the bottle necks at work, and spare time for their family too. The flexible location by allowing to work from different office or from home on temporary or permanent basis may help to cope up with family responsibilities. This would be very good tool when the real work involves web or telephone conversation.

The paid or unpaid leave each year helps employees to get the time to cope with personal crises or family and household emergencies. The study leaves with varying length during the off load time improve the talents of employees and morale.

The counseling, advice or providing information pertaining to work and family matters such as medical or financial advice save the employees time and reduce the chaos and tension of employees. The voluntary work or many other activities improve both home and work lives. The training programs can be designed and career programs are tailor made according to the need. The organizational leaders should continually try to discover value added initiatives strategically.⁷

The creation of subsidized nursery and day care near the location of work may be the best option in comparison to work place nursery. The day to day household tasks such as grocery shopping or dry-cleaning delivered to home, or car servicing while employees are at work relieve the skilled employee burden by supporting their unskilled services.

It is not possible meet every need by the employer alone but can be traded by cut in pay for each need. The ideas of employees are accounted for the betterment of system and increasing its effectiveness. In case of the ambiguity the

new idea can be tested before actual implementation. One should bear in their mind that the best practice may provide the benefit but has some drawback too. Hence the flexible set of policies work better than rigid or one sided approaches.

Communication of the policies and benefits

The employees should be informed about the options available to them. Consider incorporation of the information into a staff handbook in an easy-to-understand way. Ensure that all staff has access to the handbook, either in paper or electronic format. The better approach is creation of the on line system for finding the services available, making the request for service required and giving the feedback too.

Implementation of policies

The success of the chosen right policies depends on their implementation. During the implementation of policies the consistency across the organization should be maintained, otherwise it results in employee disparity, friction and bad competition which threat the team work and organization building. The work life balance policies implantation should be treated as prior as that of organizational goals. The supervisors should be trained to educate the employees for the benefits and counsel them to choose right combination of approaches. This can also linked to annual performance appraisal system. The important aspect of the implementation is that policy should not be imposed but adopted willingly by employees to get the immediate results of it.⁸

Evaluation of success of work-life balance strategies

It is important to maintain the advantages of a good work-life policy by keeping it relevant and up to date. By measuring employee satisfaction, performance, and assessing the factors such as retention rate and feedback, the effectiveness of the policies can be evaluated. The policies should have a positive impact on the company's bottom line i.e. staff and customer satisfaction and retention, and the climate within the organization. Constant monitoring, feedback and adjustment will ensure the policies and their implementation is working well. Publicize successes by making use of internal newsletters and the local press, and encourage employees to take up what is on offer and spread the word.

STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYEES

There is no job that comes with the requirement that you should have no personal life. The core of an effective work-life balance is daily achievement and enjoyment.

Drop activities that waste good time and energy

Avoid the wasting of time that adds no value to career or personal life. For example, wasting much time at work place with gossiping, spending the time on web and social media sites.

Cut down the works that have alternatives

This can be achieved by ordering of groceries online, having dry cleaning picked up and dropped at home, payment of bills online etc., by considering the possibility of outsourcing the time consuming household activities.

Make time for exercise

Experts say that even though it is hard to make time for exercise but it ultimately help to do work productively by boosting the energy level and ability to concentrate.

Take time to relax

Even during hectic day, take little time of 10 to 15 min for things that ignite the joy. The things like listening to the

music, reading trashy novel and going for a walk can recharge the batteries.

Allocating family prayer time irrespective of religion and faith

The family eats and prays together, will stay together. Make it happen possibly every day or at least in a week. Ensure that this prayer time is short and meaningful, to keep interest and to have it regular.

Assign family responsibilities to all members

Educate family members by calling meeting to do the enrichment activities/sports/music in addition to the family responsibilities. If the expectations are set at up front, the grumbling will be minimized.

Thinking about the priorities before making commitments for extra activities

One has to decide a particular activity is appropriate or not. Think before signing up for a suitable clubs and academies. Do signup only for suitable time period to avoid stress.

Selection of job

Select the demanding jobs in an employer organization which allows flexibility in individual career and personal lives of employees.

Planning family holidays in a relaxed environment

This would be difficult, but try to pack up for native place or to visit the relative's house. With this activity the entire family will comeback relaxed, fresh with ideas and a supportive family bond, which will boost the performance at work.

Cutting in the TV time

Once a clear schedule for TV time is agreed it is surprising to find the good quality time available for family.

Cut the Games, Internet Browsing and work at home

It makes healthy and suitable lifestyle. This brings the productive time to look into critical issues which make the person suffocating nearby future. It is always better to complete the task at work place itself by spending little bit more time than bringing the same to home.

Scheduling down time for personal life

This urges to be proactive about scheduling. Watch for signs of being overextended and adjust schedules as needed. Plan simply a free and relaxed time with family. This activity is simple and work wonders. The down time may be a Sunday or even an unplanned holiday, be at home or go to a nearby park. Many expect free time for recreation and social interaction.

Myth breakers

- Work life balance does not mean that sparing equal amount of time for work and personal life but fulfilling each demand effectively.
- The work life balance differs over a time. The activity of work life balance often varies on a daily basis. The right balance of single person varies after marriage and having children.
- There is no perfect blend of activities to create right balance for all similar background. The best work life balance is different because the priorities and interests are different.

Work life balance boosters

Create your own motivator: Even at work, one can create their own best work-life balance by making sure that it is not only achievable but also reflect the joy of the job and the joy of life, every day. If nobody appreciates

your achievement, pat yourself on the back and help others to do the same.

Be friendly: In this era of fast change, one cannot manage the tasks without friends because they are well wishers and don't expect any kind in return. Hence one cannot drop the friendship in lieu of the performance at work. In addition the traditional approach of doing friendship with one or two is not worth but being friendly with all is the need of hour at office and home. To achieve this hard task of not having enemy at all can be achieved by the attitude of humility at work and home.

Practice of humility: Humility is mannerism of showing lowness to all in this world. One can show humility to their superiors but that is their duty. Showing humility to equals is the courtesy and hence one has to do. But showing humility to lowers is nobleness, but the practice of it, is very difficult to inculcate in this materialistic world. If the organization culture encourage the practice of humility by the employees and employers can extinguish the problem of work life imbalance cause from the root. In fact it should be noted that, showing the humility to others is not the following bad instructions or obeying whatever others says or showing the unjustifiable mercy etc. But humility is showing lowness in spite of being high to others. This create conducive atmosphere, friendly

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CONCLUSION

In the fast moving life of 21st century, there are many pressures for working couples who have to deal with running a home, doing routines like cooking/cleaning, raising children and in addition handling the tight deadlines at work. There are many working couples and their family members, who constantly stay connected on mobile, email, social networking websites as well as use gadgets like network enabled spy camera devices at home. The technology not only just makes the life easy and simple, but also brings a work-life imbalance by getting connected to work around the clock at home also. The true work-life balance is dynamic and needs conscious actions after identifying the priorities. One formula does not work for all people at all times. To achieve better work-life balance, first task is to make clarity of priorities in life and setting healthy and effective boundaries. The successful people are only those who have flexibility to meet the demands of their professional lives and also accomplish personal goals outside their offices.