



A Tough Balancing Act

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The challenge of balancing work and personal life is a reality for most working families. Although not a new challenge, the increase in dual career families, single parents and blended families has certainly accelerated the challenge into the forefront. Work-life balance (WLB) has become an area of concern for both workers and their employers.

Consider these statistics:

- 70% of employees do not feel there is a good balance between their work and their personal life.
- 61% of adults say they would give up some of their pay for more time with their family.
- 46% of employees either feel overworked or overwhelmed by the quality of their work or lack the time to reflect on their work.

The problem for some lies in the fact that many employers still view the “ideal worker” as one who works long hours and is supported by a spouse who takes responsibility for childrearing and other family issues. But let’s face it, June Cleaver has traded her apron for business-casual attire and Ward is finally learning his way around the kitchen.

For others, technology has become a dual-edged sword. Although computers and remote access have allowed us to work more efficiently, they have also blurred the boundaries between home and office. Surveys indicate that workers do 21% of their work at home, and executives and professionals do 31% of their work at home.

The stress of balancing work and personal life impacts employees in all industries, all economic groups, and surprisingly, all age groups. For example, a larger number of older workers are looking for phased-in retirement or part-time work as an alternative to a permanent separation from their jobs.

The reality is, when true balance between work and non-work is achieved, both employee and employer benefit. And credit unions, with their “people helping people” philosophy, are certainly in a position to lead the way in helping their employees attain a balance between work and personal life.

For employees, a balance means higher job satisfaction, less anxiety and a satisfying personal life. Reduced turnover, better attendance and improved morale are just a few of the benefits that employers may recognize.

Although there is no one right solution to help employees achieve WLB, experts agree that the answer lies in a collaborative effort between employees and employers. Programs such as childcare/eldercare assistance, telecommuting, flexible scheduling, employee assistance programs, and on-site fitness centers are gaining popularity as solutions to WLB issues.



A survey of your employees is a recommended first step to reveal what programs would be appreciated and embraced by staff.

Programs and initiatives aside, the best approach is for managers and supervisors to show their commitment through their words and actions. When a manager takes a vacation or shares stories of quality time with friends and family, it shows that they are committed.

In many respects, work-life balance is the next step in achieving and maintaining a diversified work force. Perhaps not long from now, in addition to EOE and M/F/V/D at the bottom of recruitment ads, we will see, "We are committed to WLB".

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