

What Would It Be Like If Work and Life Were in Balance?

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In this issue, we're going to take a look at the subject of work-life balance and discuss ways in which you can increase retention through strategies revolving around this growing issue. In today's workplace, employers are becoming more and more imaginative in helping employees to bridge the gap between life and work. Research shows that helping employees achieve a work-life balance pays big dividends, including cutting soaring health costs and energizing performance and commitment.

It's September, and we just observed the Labor Day holiday. Did you know Labor Day was started over 100 years ago as a protest for workers demanding eight hours of work, eight hours of rest, and eight hours for the family? Work and life balance is a basic need. Today, Labor Day is observed as a celebration of the working population, as well as the end of summer.

So with autumn on the horizon, I'd like to continue to recognize the working population (and if you're reading this, yes, you are one of us!) by asking this question, "What would it be like if work and life were in balance?" I'd also like to offer some ideas about how you can help your staff. Think of the hiring attraction and retention you'll be able to cultivate!

One recent survey of employees showed that even though job satisfaction may be high, the majority of workers rated the balance of work and family life as more important than **any other employment factor**. Below are some ways in which helping employees strike that balance can be beneficial:

- Attracts new employees
- Helps to retain staff
- Builds diversity in skills and personnel
- Improves morale
- Reduces sickness and absenteeism
- Enhances working relationships between colleagues
- Encourages employees to show more initiative and teamwork
- Increases levels of production and satisfaction
- Decreases stress and burn-out

Let's look at where we are:

For the first time in American history, four generations—Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Generation Yers—are working side-by-side. This new workplace diversity can present challenges for employers in many areas. For the purposes of this article, I'd like to address work-life balance initiatives for all and provide a few ideas that promote the notion that maybe one size **can** fit all! Simply put, work-life balance initiatives are any benefits, policies, or programs that help foster a better balance between the demands of the job and the enjoyment of life outside of work.

Let's look at the need:

In doing my research for this article, I discovered that 87% of today's working population's biggest challenge and cause for stress results from **household responsibilities**! Think about it: if your household responsibilities were taken care of, or reduced, you would have more time for your life.

Let's look at a few simple solutions:

Whether you work for a large corporation or a small family business, we all have basic responsibilities of life, and you, as the employer, can be a hero to your employees by providing practical solutions. Most will cost you absolutely nothing except for the time it takes to put them together. I believe this can be successful for day, evening, and night shifts.

I suggest that you use your negotiation skills to secure significant discounts for each of the services below for your employees:

- Delivery of groceries (that your employees have ordered on-line), either to their homes or the work place. People will spend four to five hours shopping for groceries each week, and that doesn't include stopping on the way home for that last-minute dinner or take out! Offer delivery at least two times per week.
- Housecleaning services. Smaller operations do a tremendous job at much better rates.
- Laundry service, pick-up, and delivery.
- Lawn service. I recommend smaller operations, which would benefit from the additional business.
- House painting or repairs. These are projects that employees often use their vacation or holiday time to complete. Helping in this area would be of tremendous benefit to them.
- Auto repair or detailing. Find a business that will come to your location weekly.
- Pharmacy deliveries
- Daycare or childcare services
- Elder care services
- Health club facilities

Now take a moment and ask yourself this question: **“What would it be like if my work and life were in balance?”** By answering this question, you can envision how offering these solutions can relieve the stress in your employees' lives and create more balance for them. Now conduct an informal survey of your employees, supervisors, and managers. Ask about their specific needs and/or concerns, and base your course of action on their answers.

You can be tremendously effective for your employees, as well as cover all shifts worked, by offering discounted services that address the household responsibilities issues. The availability of these services will add hours to your employees' lives, which they can spend however they choose. And when it comes to job satisfaction and how those same employees feel about the company for which they work, you can bet they'll choose to be more loyal and to resist the temptation to go elsewhere.