



ROLE OF TRAINING IN PROMOTING WORK LIFE BALANCE (WLB)

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Abstract

Work and life are two sides of a coin. They are interwoven in nature and overlap. An emotionally intelligent employee well knows how to strike balance between work and life, still lot of support is needed from top management/employers. Business organizations in India still have a long way to go so far as the espousal of WLB practices is concerned. In India, the private sector organizations have an edge over public sector organizations in name of WLB. Organizations, which attach adequate value to organizational learning, deliberately devise a well meditated training strategy. Some of the organizations resort to training exercise in a less formal manner. Training can modify the attitude of employers as well as employees towards WLB. As it is an established fact that employer and employees both are equally responsible for promoting the WLB initiatives in an organization, training can encourage both of them to be WLB conscious.

Keywords: *Work Life Balance, Training, Interplay, Stress, Parenting*

“Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.” - Mark Twain

Prologue

Work and life are two sides of a coin. They are interwoven in nature and overlap. An emotionally intelligent employee very well knows how to strike balance between work and life, still lot of support is needed from the top management/employers. A professionally sound organization can pledge to strike balance between work and life and keep its employees smiling. Indian business organizations as compared to their foreign counterparts have lesser concern for WLB. Business organizations in India still have a long way to go so far as the espousal of WLB practices is concerned. It is an established fact that the private sector organizations are doing better as compared to the public sector organizations in name of WLB.

Some of the Indian business organizations particularly in the public sector are yet to be identified with the term WLB. One of the reasons responsible for this may be that there is very less scope for WLB in such organizations. Either many of the people are hardly working or they are not properly engaged. The weak work culture appears to be a reason for overlooking the need for WLB. Majority of the organizations are not acquainted with the newer WLB practices. There is a lack of systematic viewpoint/approach towards WLB. Besides, Indian business organizations confront with several problems including the problem of indifferent attitude of employers and employees towards training that work as hurdles for them in becoming WLB savvy.

Question crops up in mind, why training is at all required? The apt answer to the question is training enables organizations adapt to the shifting conditions and be ensuring its survival as well as success in the market. Training is an effective tool that facilitates the organizations in accomplishing their objectives in a meaningful manner. The term training, development and

education are relative in nature. Training concerns with the acquisition of KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) to perform the task at hand in an effective and efficacious manner. Development focusses on the attainment of KSAs needed to occupy the higher position. Education puts stress upon the acquisition of KSAs general in nature. Training and development are often used interchangeably.

Training is a process including several steps. The success of training activity entirely depends upon how effectually all these steps are dealt with. There may be the following stages in the conduct of a training program: Step-1: What are the training needs to be identified? Step-2: What are the training objectives to be accomplished? Step-3: What training methods need to be deployed? Step-4: What paraphernalia needs to be arranged to conduction the training program? Step-5: How the effectiveness of the training program will be measured?

Many of the related works were reviewed. Most of them by and large focus on significance of training in improving upon the abilities/attitudes, skills and knowledge of the employees. Besides, some of them revolve around role of training in augmenting the individual as well as organizational effectiveness and efficacy. The author could not come across an article/paper solely talking about significance of training in promoting a balanced work life.

Some of the pieces of literature reviewed are as follows: The work of Aguinis, Herman, and Kurt Kraiger (2009) contains a wide-ranging review of training and development literature from 1999 to 2009 with an emphasis on the benefits that training offers across multiple levels of analysis.

The work offers a comprehensive meta-analysis of the relationships among training design and evaluation features and various training effectiveness outcomes (reaction, learning, behavior, and results). Arthur, Winfred A., Jr., Winston Bennett Jr., Pamela S. Edens, and Suzanne T. Bell (2003).

The work is a comprehensive review of training and development in work organizations with an emphasis on the processes necessary for training to be effective for improving individual and team performance. Brown, Kenneth G., and Traci Sitzmann (2011).

How do you draw the line between work duties and home life? Sociologist Nippert-Eng, C. E. (1996) explores the answer to this question in her research. She finds that persons set several symbolic and practical boundaries to make these two crucial roles distinctive in life.

This piece of literature presents a typology summarizing elements of training and work environments that foster transfer of training. Russ-Eft, Darlene (2002).

How does training help in striking balance between work and life?

Training is an off shoot of HRD. HRD is an integral part of HR. Training is regarded to be a critical activity to the growth and development by many of the organizations. However, some of the organizations still treat it as a cosmetic exercise. Many of the organizations show a proactive approach towards training whereas; some still have an indifferent attitude towards training and possess a reactive approach towards it. The organizations, which attach lot of value to organizational learning, deliberately devise a well meditated training strategy. Some of the organizations resort to training exercise in a less formal manner. They get motivated to conduct training because the successful organizations conduct it. Figure-1 depicts the role of training in WLB vividly.

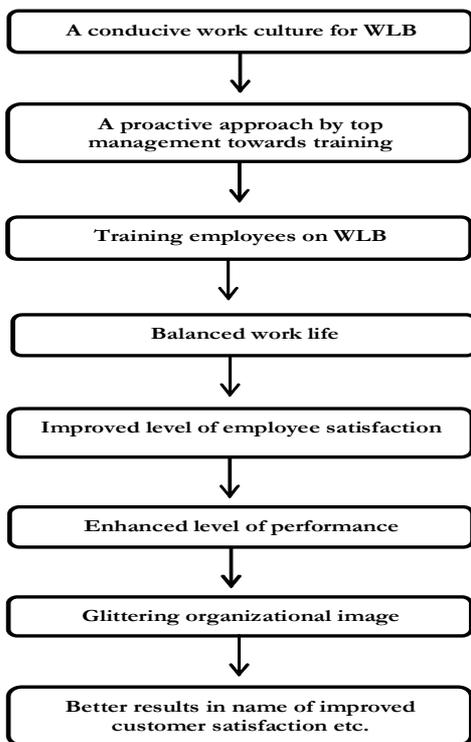


Figure 1 – Training and WLB Interplay

Training is an investment not wastage of resources. In the light of the statement, it can be conveniently argued that training guarantees return on investment provided it is conducted in an effective manner. Returns on training can be delayed but not at all denied. Training can also play a pivotal role in boosting up the concept and practice of WLB in an organization. The following points highlight the training and WLB interplay:

Training needs to be regularly rendered so as to help employees in addressing work and personal responsibilities.

The employer can outsource trainers of WLB so as to provide the employees with the latest trends and practices to its employees.

The managers must possess the proper tools and receive appropriate training skills that are necessary for an effective implementation of organizational work-life balance policies.

Employees should actively participate in the training sessions on WLB related issues conducted by the organization.

Designing a WLB Training Program

A well contemplated training program on WLB can do miracles in making the trainees learn about the criticality of need for WLB training program, connect between WLB and Law, benchmarking WLB initiatives, time and stress management and so on. The description of training program is as follows:

WLB Training Program

Purpose

A training program on WLB entitled, “Resolving Work Life/Life Work Conflict Meaningfully” has been evolved with a view to render training to the employees working in Indian business organizations so that they can be enabled to strike balance in their work and life.

Learning Objectives

On the completion of the training program the participants will be able to:

- Figure out and define the term WLB;
- Understand the purpose and implications of WLB initiatives;
- Examine the work-family family-work conflict;
- Learn the benefits of WLB;
- Be familiar with the antecedents and consequences of WLB;
- Know the relationship between WLB and Law;
- Comprehend WLB and stress interplay;
- Realize the role of stakeholders;
- Learn the role of time management in striking balance



between work and life; and
Transfer the learning to job.

Methodology

The training program will be conducted through an experiential method so as to encourage the participants to be ready to change. A variety of instructional strategies as lectures, case studies, class discussions/interactions, assignments and presentations (Individual/Group), management/business games, exercises (behavioral aspects) and role plays will be used. The use of ICT enabled instructional aids as multimedia presentations, slides, audios and videos, flip chart etc. will be made so as to make the program lively.

The program can be of two to three days. The program can be attended by practicing managers, employees, consultants, faculty members of business schools, researchers and students. The fee for the training program can be as per the prevailing norms and specifications:

Modules

The training program includes the following modules:

Module-1: Introduction

Objective: The basic purpose of the module is to orient the participants about the topic, purpose and schema of the training program and to make them familiar with one another and arouse their interest in the program.

Contents: Welcome and introduction; Ice breaker; Why training program on WLB?; Relating the expectations of trainees with training agenda; Objectives of the training program; The relevance of WLB in today’s work environment

Review Questions

Module-2: How Do I Perceive WLB?

Objective: The elementary objective of the module is to persuade the participants to exchange their perceptions and experiences regarding WLB with one another. The information generated through the exercise can assist in sketching probable problems/challenges in striking WLB and their solutions.

Contents: Exchange of views among participants regarding WLB in general and their own organizations in specific; Understanding Work–family and family- work conflict; Measures they took/take in resolving the work-family and family- work conflict

Review Questions

Module-3: Criticality of WLB Need

Objective: The prime purpose of the module is to underscore the significance of WLB in wake of the employee performance and organizational effectiveness. The employees can be made aware about the recompenses

of balanced engagement in work and family roles.

Contents:

In case there is balance between work and life there will be: Sound wellbeing; Improved morale, motivation and commitment; Augmented performance, productivity and profits; Glittering organizational image

In case there is imbalance between work and life there will be: Stress and burnout; Health related risks; Poor performance, productivity and profits; Bleak organizational image

Review Questions

Module-4: WLB and Law

Objective: The basic objective of this module is to make the participants known to the legal implications related to WLB. Participants will also be made aware about the privileges available to the employees relating to WLB.

Contents: Acts/laws related to WLB; Legal aspects of WLB; Employee privileges relating to WLB as maternity leave, paternity leave, child care, time off for dependents,

Review Questions

Module-5: WLB and Stress Interplay

Objective: The purpose of this module is to make the participants able enough to understand the WLB and Stress relationship.

Contents: Understanding psychological perspective of stress; Learning organizational standpoint of stress; Reasons related to poor work life balance responsible for stress at work and home; Implications of stress generated through imbalanced work and life; Strategies to cope up/mitigate stress in life in general and at work in specific.

Review Questions

Module-6: Analytical study of the current state of affairs with regard to WLB in respective organization

Objective: The analysis of the current situation in relation to WLB within the own organization will serve as a source so as to plan, pledge and put to practice the future courses of action in name of development of work-life-balance.

Contents: Organizational profile; Need for WLB; Promotion and implementation of WLB measures; Evolving an effective feedback and follow up mechanism

Review Questions

Module-7: Benchmarking WLB practices

Objective: This module will help in arousing and sustaining the motivation of the participants to encourage them to transfer their learning to job. They will be able to apply WLB related initiatives in their professional life. For this the certain best practices from other reputed organizations will be offered and deliberated.



Contents:

WLB practices prevailing in various known organizations:
Flexi work hours; Compressed work week; Job sharing;
Part time working; Telecommuting/work from home; Part
time work; Job share; Flexible starting and finishing times;
Flexi time; Rostered days off (Phased retirement); Use
flex days or rostered day off as half days; Work from
home on an ad-hoc basis; Telecommuting; Compressed
work week; Study leave; Career break; Paid parental leave;
48/52 working week per year; Paid leave for religious
holiday; Shift working; Annualized hours

Benchmarking WLB practices

Review Questions

Module-8: Examining role of stakeholders in promoting
the concept and practice of WLB

Objective: The module will assist in convincing the stake
holders as employers, employees, government, NGOs and
social activists about their roles in striking the work life
balance in organizations.

Contents: WLB and its stakeholders; Role of employers;
Role of employees; Role of government; Role of NGOs
and social groups/activists; How to work in unison

Review Questions

Module-9: Managing time importantly at work and home

Objective: The module will serve the purpose of the
participants of learning the art of time management.
They will be able to hone their time management skills so
as to be adequately capable to accentuate the value of
time in managing WLB.

Contents:

Time management and its significance in life in general
and in WLB in specific

Time management skills: Cost/benefit analysis of time;
To prioritize; Time logging; Chalking out action plans;
Designing time tables; To do lists; Managing time at
home.

Time management and WLB interlaces

Review Questions

Module-10: Parenting Skills and WLB

Objective: The main objective of the module is to assist
the dual career couples in proving to be good parents.

Contents: Parenting and its implication in the wake of
WLB; Understanding elementary needs of children;
Knowing implications if these need remain unfulfilled;
Rearing out children as champions by inculcating sound
personality traits in them without compromising with
organizational commitments.

Review Questions

Epilogue

Training as and activity is an integral part of an
organizational functioning. Training recompenses
organizations in a variety of ways as improved employee
morale, enhanced performance level, increased
productivity, improved employee retention, glittering
organizational image and so on so forth. Training can also
facilitate in modifying the attitude of employers as well as
employees towards WLB. As it is an established fact that
employer and employees both are equally responsible for
promoting the WLB initiatives in an organization, training
can facilitate/motivate both of them to be WLB
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