Please provide feedback

Please support the ScholarWorks@UMBC repository by emailing scholarworks-group@umbc.edu and telling us what having access to this work means to you and why it's important to you. Thank you.

Where Does Work End and Home Life Begin?

W

Zane L. Berge
University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), USA

Cassie Bichy
University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), USA

Candice Grayson
Greater Baltimore Medical Center, USA

Anthony Johnson
University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), USA

Stephen Macadoff
Community College of Baltimore County, USA

Kathryn Nee
University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), USA

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, it was a commonly held belief that technology would improve industries and service professions, which means that people could work shorter hours and their employers would make just as much money. Essentially, this is the central myth of modern capitalism. Modern technologies are the shackles that bind today's employees to their jobs long after they get home from work. Beginning in the 1990s, technology made working from home possible for a growing number of people. At first this was perceived as the era of great things to come. At home, many people had personal computers connected to their corporate network. It quickly became clear that telecommuting and the rapidly proliferating "electronic leash" of cell phones made work inescapable in the 24/7, on-demand work accessibility (Curry, 2003).

Today, according to the Families and Work Institute, almost half of America's workforce is using computers, fax machines, e-mail, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and mobile phones during what is supposed to be non-work time (Galinsky, Kim, S.S. & Bond, 2001). Stress is often the result of management's demand on employees to be at their fingertips 24/7. Rapidly sinking under the weight of being connected, people are dealing with increasing family problems because of the blurring line between home and work. When workers are not at home or work, it is not hard to find people working: now armed with their trusty laptops, cell phones, pagers, and PDAs. Even in places of leisure, like bookstores, cafes, and neighborhood stores, Internet availability is easily accessible. Technology has made the world into a connected, global community. In a perfect world, this community is an ideal. But we are in the real world, and technology may be a nuisance that is not easily escaped.

This article addresses the following issues relating to where work ends and home life begins, that is, the work/home life-balance: (1) how increased work demands and job learning expectations in today's 24/7 economy create situations where employees' quality of work, personal and family relations, and health are seriously threatened, (2) how the increasing use of technology is infringing on the personal and family time of employees, (3) why continuing education is presented to employees, and, (4) how corporations respond to their employees' needs. Increased work demands and job learning expectations in today's 24/7 economy create situations where employees' work, personal and family relations, and health are seriously threatened. Former American Labor Secretary Robert Reich stated ". . . the new economy is relentless. It is changing the norm, it is changing values, changing our culture. It is putting enormous pressure on people to work, and to make work the center of their lives"

(Smith, 2003, p. 1). Considering these pressures, some people find themselves challenged to find a workable balance between organizational, employee, and family needs (Tayika, Archbold, & Berge, 2005).

BACKGROUND

Challenges to Home/Work-Life-Balance

Participation in both work and family roles often presents challenges. According to Greenhaus' (2002) study, work-family conflicts occur from:

- The time demands of one role that interferes with participation in the other role.
- The stress originating in one role that spills over into the other role, detracting from the quality of life in that role.
- Behavior that is effective and appropriate in one role, but is ineffective and inappropriate when transferred to the other role (p. 6).

Environmental factors also produce work-family conflict. These include extensive, irregular, or inflexible work hours; extensive travel; work overload and other forms of job stress; interpersonal conflict at work; career transitions, unsupportive supervisor or organizations; training that takes place outside of work hours; presence of young children; primary responsibility for children; elder care responsibilities; and unsupportive family members space (Greenhaus, 2002; Thomas, 2006).

Another area of work-family conflict develops when a company decides to operate nonstop. Increasingly, the focus is on the machines, not the people who use them. The responsibility for this new strategy is economics based (Aeppel, 2001). Often, these companies also go to 12-hour shifts. This means, for most employees, although they get off more days, the increased workday is more demanding. More demanding days may increase worker fatigue, which in turn affects the accident rate and the quality of the product or service. How people react to these continuous hours depends on where they are in life.

Adding to this work-family conflict is the expectation to stay current in job learning. As training evolves into performance Improvement, and as technology allows this training to occur 24/7, the time needed to obtain this training also affects the work-family conflict. If we have incompatible work, training, and family systems, tools are needed to help balance these systems.

MAIN FOCUS: HAVING A HEALTHY WORK/HOME BALANCE

Work has always been part of life. For many of us, it is the primary way in which we interact with others in society. However, new technologies, growing competition, and the intensification of customer demand means that for more workers, life has become work, and while some people are thriving, others are increasingly unhappy.

A work/home life-balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society (The Work Foundation, 2003)

Time sovereignty is the control an individual has over their work and workload, including when, where, and how they work. The more autonomy individuals have, the less stressed they are likely to be.

What are the consequences of living in imbalance? The more out of balance and out of control one's life is, the longer hours one works (Andronache, 2006; Rosen & Weil, 2003), and the more intense the work experience, the greater the likelihood is that one will pay a physical and emotional price. The individual will probably not eat as well. One may consume more caffeine, more alcohol, more sugar, and more fat. One is less likely to exercise on a regular basis. There is less likelihood of getting enough sleep. The individual is less likely to have a sense of satisfaction or accomplishment and commitment to the organization. One has a greater likelihood of either getting sick, getting sick more often, or being sicker whenever that person becomes sick. One has a greater likelihood of having relationships that are either unhealthy or unstable and that are more prone to breaking apart (Human Resources Development Canada, 2003). The following are examples of organizations that created a healthy balance between their employee's work and home lives (Dex, 2003; Tombari & Spinks, 1999; The Work Foundation n.d.; TUC Online, 2001):

- *The Royal Bank of Scotland Group,* founded in 1727, developed flexible working options in 2002 that were extended to all employees. They immediately found out that their employees worked more effectively under their newly created standard.
- *Inland Revenue and Public and Commercial Services Union* were able to extend operating hours with employees who could work weekends instead of their normal 9–5 workday.
- *IXL Laundry Services Group LTD* was able to attract employees from a very low unemployment percentage population. Flexible start and stop times brought in candidates who could not work the typical 9–5 slot, but could work a 9:45–5:45 option.
- *Marks & Spencer* has 347 food, fashion, and interior stores around the world. They believe that continuously updating its policies and creating innovative solutions for both customers and staff helps to keep them as an "employer of choice."
- *Unilever* is one of the world's leading consumer goods companies and has developed work/home life-balance initiatives because of a desire to innovate and increase employee satisfaction. Their research has determined that they have enjoyed a 300% increase in women returning from maternity leave
- *Eli Lilly & Company Ltd.* has 41,000 employees worldwide, and adopted work/home balance programs in 1995. They are attracting and retaining high caliber employees through flexible programs and continuing to learn about the important aspects of a work/home life-balance culture.
- *BT* has 21 million international customers for its telecommunications, Internet and I.T. services. BT has reduced employee turnover to 3% compared to a national average of 8.5%. They also have a 98% rate of its new mothers returning from maternity leave, saving the company about £3 million in recruitment and induction costs.

By keeping a balance between their employee's work and home lives, organizations can continue their trail of success.

Employees and Continuing Education

New employees enter the job market feeling an increasing sense of stress and anxiety due to the fear that cur-

rent jobs carry a heavier workload, pressure to update and maintain skills, and possibly the loss of the job. The desire to maintain skills and knowledge appear to take away from home/leisure time and add to our concept of work. There is a cry from both employees and employers markets to reach a compromise in time management. A sense of imbalance and dissatisfaction with a workplace can lead to decreased motivation and productivity. To help ameliorate this, companies have started to offer employees wellness programs and offering knowledge/skill-based courses during the workday (Taylor, 2005). With ever decreasing job markets, employees need to gain skills and knowledge constantly. With constantly changing technology, employees need to be flexible and remain on top of their field. What flexibility does the company give its employees?

Many organizations are trying to address this very issue. Educational conferences have been held to address this issue of incorporating education in the workplace as an alternative to motivate and reward employees. While the concept of work has been around forever, the idea of what work is has changed. The term 8-hour shift now includes the commute, the continuing education for the job, and taking work home. Taking work home includes taking it to a home office and taking it home through such technology as a beeper and e-mail.

Along the same lines, home is being brought to work; stresses of a family and leisure activities are brought to the office affecting on-the-job performance while extending the ideals of a workday. Therefore, the idea of work encompasses more, so the day feels longer even if the actual time on the clock has not changed. Companies believe that if employees are dissatisfied with their home life or are trying to continue their education, that the preoccupation of these matters will directly impact their work production. Companies seek a flexible environment to handle these issues. As they ask their employees to be flexible with job changes, they too are required to be flexible with their goals and expectations.

Some of the most common forms of providing for their employees include tuition reimbursement, continuing education programs, corporate universities, seminars, or instituting leisure time programs such as wellness programs. Companies are investing in the mental and emotional health of their employees hoping that, in the long run, they will have better employees. Employees also seem to believe that job satisfaction

and job performance must be correlated (Odom, n.d.; Yasbek, 2004).

Acquiring further education in a job field has depended on the employee. There is now a need for the employer to bear responsibility of educating its employees. Employers should allow time during the workday for employees to update their knowledge and skills. By providing time during the workday to attend to their job-related educational needs, time is then available to leave work and enjoy their home life. Odom (n.d.) has noted that there is an obvious correlation between productivity and highly skilled and knowledgeable workers. By investing time and money into the continuing education of its workers, companies are investing in one of the most valuable assets of their company. By preparing workers for the constantly changing global market, employers are working toward greater productivity. Some companies have moved toward these concepts of changing the concepts of a workday. Xerox, Intel, Motorola, Hewlett-Packard, and Texas Instruments are a few large companies trying to incorporate flexible education programs. While providing funds to help promote educational activities for employees, there is a concern that one might take the information and leave for another company. Kulpa and Zeder (n.d.) note that the primary purpose of a retainer is to keep a person on the job. The purpose of motivation is to increase performance. To increase performance, management needs to set goals and then to link the accomplishment of those goals with rewards of value.

Money is a valuable reward for many employees. Additionally, there are many employees who have personal goals that have to do with meeting the challenge in their job performance or being given career development opportunities. Good supervision and motivation seek out personal goals and align them with the goals of the firm. Becker, a noted University of Chicago economist, has calculated that the individual rate of return on employee education is 12.5% to 25% (Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 2003). Benefits of employer-provided educational opportunities include:

- Greater productivity
- Increased employee retention
- Improved employee satisfaction
- Increased competitive advantage

Human Resource professionals are now moving to the workforce improvement initiatives to attain the balance for both employee and employer's home and work life. Many professionals believe that poor work attitude and environment directly correlate to poor work skills, and the only way to provide the win-win relationship for the two is to provide a flexible working environment. To attain a professional environment, companies are providing employees with life-long learning opportunities. Many professions that require recertification and continual education are now offering incentives to companies that provide services on site to their employees. None of these firms seem to offer hard data on what and how they can accomplish goals for individual companies, but all emphasize a recognition reward philosophy focused on employee learning.

FUTURE TRENDS: THE CORPORATE RESPONSE

Balancing work and home life in the 21st century will continue to be an essential workplace topic. Issues such as childcare, caring for relatives, employment and self-employment, flexible working hours, working sociable hours, and working around a spouse's work hours are essential to the employee of today's workforce (The Work Foundation, 2003). Some corporations have attempted to appease employees by offering levels of work/home life options. For example, Harris (1998) presented three levels of work/home life approaches existing today:

- Level One companies do not care about the non-work life of employees. Their programs meet state and federal guidelines and nothing more.
- Level Two companies focus on work/home life-balance. They attempt to find effective ways to balance work/home life demands above minimum guidelines. Most successful and profitable companies are at this level.
- Level Three companies focus on work/home life integration, going beyond an attempt to balance work and life into the new trend of work/home life integration.

Although a large percentage of corporations implement one of the three levels, mainly Levels 1 and 2, the progressive corporations of today have started to implement Level 3. These corporations offer activities

such as the following to jumpstart a work/home life process for their employees:

1. Survey employees to rank their most important outside-of-work demands or problems. Top responses are typically day care, bank business, elder care, and continuing education.
2. Form a work/home life integration committee of a cross section of front-line and management employees to reach consensus on creation of a pilot project.
3. Combine the results of the employee survey and the core tasks of the pilot group. Brainstorm ways to complete the pilot group's tasks around their life demands.

Often larger companies, such as General Electric, IBM, and PepsiCo, are borrowing ideas from small companies when it comes to balancing the work and home life issue (Outlaw, 1998). Non-profits, government, and educational institutions are also exploring in this area. The Human Resources Department at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill offers many incentives to balance the work and home life challenges facing today's workers, for instance:

- Training & Development sponsored skills updates
- Employee appreciation events
- Annual performance reviews with merit incentives
- Flexible work schedules
- Tuition waiver programs
- Child care options (camps, onsite babysitting, financial assistance programs, etc.)
- Elder care resources
- Employee assistance program
- Relocation program
- Campus-wide discount programs
- Employee incentive bonus program
- Recognition programs (Chancellor's Award, etc.) (HR Trumpet, 2001)

Additionally, the HR department at UNC-Chapel Hill has created several HR positions to insure the ease of operation these incentive programs generate. Two such positions are the Employee Assistance Program Counselor, and the Work/Family Manager, who coordinates all child care, elder care and work/life programs (Child Care Camps, etc.), as well as implementing training and development programs through the Training and Development Department at UNC-Chapel Hill. (HR Trumpet, 2001).

CONCLUSION

The trend of balancing work and home life for today's workers is on the upswing (Powers, 2004), and organizations around the world are meeting the challenges by implementing incentive programs and additional personel to coordinate them. There are many strategies that employees can exercise to create a balance between work, training, and home life. Corporate solutions for creating a balance are currently on the upswing. Employees are meeting the challenge by implementing incentive programs and additional personnel to coordinate them. A company's success in this area is gauged by their employees' satisfaction in seeking to find a workable balance between organizational and employee needs. Most employees in today's workforce attempt to keep work and home separate. They simply ask that their employers rise to this challenge and help to meet a work/home-life-balance.

REFERENCES

Aeppel, T. (2001). *Working an odd schedule can wreck havoc at home.* Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.careerjournal.com/myc/workfamily/20010803-aeppel.html

Andronache, T. (2006). IT industry feels effects of new work-life realities. *Computer World Canada.* Retrieved April 10, 2006, from http://www.itworld-canada.com/a/IT-Workplace/7a208511-cc5d-4f30-b3e8-1d20a583e3cc.html

Curry, A. (2003). *Why we work. USNews.com.* Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.usnews.com/usnews/work/articles/030224/24lede.htm

Dex, S. (2003). *Summary*: *Work and family life in the 21st century*. Rouwntree Foundation. The Work Foundation. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/foundations/923.asp

Drew, E., Humphreys, P., & Murphy, C. (2003). Off the treadmill: Achieving work/life balance. *National*

Framework Committee for Work/Life Balance Policies. Dublin, Ireland. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.worklifebalance.ie/offthetreadmill.pdf

Galinsky, E., Kim, S. S., & Bond, J. T. (2001). *Feeling overworked: When work becomes too much*. The Families and Work Institute. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.familiesandwork.org/product.asp?0=203&1=204&3=8

Greenhaus, J. (2002). *Work-family conflict.* Presentation at the 2002 Annual Invitational Journalism--Work-Family Conference Papers, Brandeis University. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.bcfwp.org/Conference_papers/Greenhaus.pdf

Harris, J. (1998). Retention@NetSpeed: How to retain top talent in an Internet-speed work world. *The Executive Forum.* Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.executiveforum.net/pdfs/harris.pdf

HR Trumpet. (2001). *The Human Resources Facilitator Newsletter, 3*(1). University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://hr.unc.edu/departments/hrf/hrf-newsletter/trumpet1999-11.pdf

Kulpa, A. & Zeder, P. A. (n.d.). *Rewarding and motivating employees.* Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http:www.alasofla.org/rewardingempl.htm.

Odom, J. (n.d.). Continuing education during the workday. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.iusb.edu/~journal/1998/Paper17.html

Outlaw, W. (1998*). Smart staffing: How to hire, reward and keep the best people for your growing company.* Chicago, IL: Upstart Publishing Company.

Powers, V. (2004). Keeping work and life in balance. *T+D, 58*(7), 32-35.

Rosen, L. D., & Weil, M. M. (2000). *Results of our 49-month study of business attitudes show clerical/support staff, managers and executives new using more technology at work and at home and becoming more hesitant toward technology.* Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.technostress.com/busstudy2000.htm

Smith, H. (2003). *Resources for employers.* Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.pbs.org/workfamily/

Takiya, S., Archbold, J., & Berge, Z. L. (2005). Flexible training's intrusion on work/life balance. *The Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, *6*(2).

Retrieved April 5, 2006, from http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/tojde18/articles/article5.htm

Taylor, C. (2005). Life in the balance. *Incentive.* Retrieved April 10, 2006, from http://www.incentivemag.com/incentive/magazine/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000740204

Thomas, C. M. (2006). Achieving work/life balance possible with lessons from career coaches. *Austin Business Journal.* Retrieved April 5, 2006, from http://www.bizjournals.com/austin/stories/2006/02/20/focus4.html?page=1

Tombari, N., & Spinks, N. (1999). The work/family interface at Royal Bank Financial Group: Successful solutions ± a retrospective look at lessons learned. *Women in Management Review, 14*(5), 186-193.

TUC Online. (2001). *Case studies*. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.tuc.org.uk/changingtimes/casestudies.htm

Worcester Polytechnic Institute. (2003). *Why corporate education*? Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Corporate/About/

The Work Foundation. (2003). *Work-life balance*. Retrieve July 20, 2004, from http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/

The Work Foundation. (n.d.) *Business case - Case studies*. Retrieved July 20, 2004, from http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/business/case_studies.htm

Yasbek, P. (2004). *The business case for firm-level work-life balance policies: A review of the literature*. Wellington NZ: New Zealand Department of Labour. Retrieved April 10, 2006, from http://www.dol.govt.nz/PDFs/FirmLevelWLB.pdf

KEY TERMS

24/7 Economy: The reality that for an organization to be competitive, individual employees must continually perform.

Corporate Universities: A corporate university, either physical or virtual, is formed mainly to relate its training, development, and education strategies to

its business strategy. The corporation is concerned that about coordinating and integrating intellectual capital and talent management within the enterprise.

Employee Wellness Program: An employee wellness program has, as a main goal, the promotion of health and wellness among the employees of the enterprise. The programs often encourage awareness of health-related issues, improve morale, and times many times strive to reduce cost of healthcare throughout the corporation.

Globalization: Globalization refers to the phenomenon of making any product or service global, as opposed to marketing in a single local, regional, or national market.

Lifelong Learning: Usually, this term is applied to learning that takes place by adults in the workplace, or to the learning that adults may wish to undertake to enrich their own lives.

Telecommuting: Work from satellite offices or at home using a computer and related equipment that links the telecommuter to the employer's main office

Work/Home Life-Balance: Work/life balance means putting in place working arrangements and policies that assist workers in combining employment with other responsibilities and choices. They also benefit employers by helping them to develop a more productive and committed workforce (Drew, Humphreys, & Murphy, 2003).

W