6 Ways to Promote Balance Among your Workforce During Times of Crisis

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN FROM THIS ARTICLE

1. Why work-life balance matters
2. 6 tips for promoting better balance
3. How to access employee insights and your crisis toolkit

INTRODUCTION

Many organizations encourage a positive work-life balance among their workforce, yet when a crisis hits, this core corporate value can take a backseat to more pressing organizational needs. Subsequently, we often see employee work-life balance severely impacted during times of crisis (Guerrina).

That said, there is opportunity for organizations, and their employees, to excel during uncertain times. A 2017 study from Shobhit University found that work-life balance could improve organizational performance, including: enhanced social exchange processes, increased cost savings, improved productivity, and reduced turnover.

MANAGER TRAINING MATTERS MOST

Organizations often do not know where to start when it comes to implementing and nurturing a successful culture of work-life balance.

Studies show that it begins at the top. Harvard Business Review research demonstrated that the attitude of management is crucial to instilling a culture of work-life balance. "Employees who work with a supportive supervisor... experience reduced work-life conflict, improved health, and increased fulfillment on the job and at home."

An organization's first step must be to train its leaders on the benefits of work-life balance the health, well-being and productivity of their teams as well as the organization as a whole. The next step is to lead by example and support employees along the way.

6 WAYS TO SUPPORT BALANCE WITHIN YOUR WORKFORCE

1. MODEL GOOD WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Setting the example sets the tone.

A FlexJobs survey showed that one-third of managers are not good role models for work-life balance. Only one in 10 employees said that the work habits of their boss make it easy for them to have a good work-life balance.

Tip to managers: Take time off, set realistic deadlines, and don't expect email replies after hours.

2. MEASURE AND MAINTAIN ACHIEVABLE WORKLOADS

A Unison study found that workload is a major concern for maintaining work-life balance. Expecting too much of employees, especially during times of crisis, means that working hours bleed into personal time, eroding the ever-important work-life balance.

Tip to managers: Monitor each team member's workload, ask how employees are feeling about their to-do list, and push back on tight deadlines.

3. ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO SWITCH OFF

Perhaps due to ease of access through technology, eagerness to get a head start on the next project, or an adjustment to working remotely, finding the end of the workday can be a challenge for many employees.

CIPD research shows that employees are struggling to disconnect from the workplace in their own time. Couple that with a large number of workers now working remotely, clocking out can feel harder than ever before.

Tip to managers: Do not email or send messages to your team members outside of work hours and encourage employees to take vacation and enjoy their personal time—even if business is busier than ever.

4. DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF WORK

Research from the RSA found that 73% of people think there needs to be a bigger focus on the quality of work, as opposed to quantity.

This point is increasingly important during times of crisis when employees may be concerned about the stability of their jobs and feel compelled to output a greater volume of work to demonstrate their productivity, despite agreeing that quality should remain the focus.

Tip to managers: Focus on and recognize the quality of employee achievements, rather than celebrate the number of hours they've worked.

5. ALLOW WORK-LIFE FLEXIBILITY

We're all human, and there are times when traditional work hours conflict with our personal needs. To reduce work-life conflict, and the stress that goes along with it, Hill et al found that workplace flexibility was beneficial to employees

Tip to managers: Whenever possible, offer flexible work hours to accommodate things such as doctor and dental appoints, daycare drop-off and pick-up times, and understand that employees working from home may take breaks to walk the dog, do laundry, etc. Supporting these personal needs helps your employees perform better during their working hours and helps them better manage their work-life balance.

6. EMPOWER MANAGERS TO START THE CONVERSATION

When organizations communicate with their workforce, everyone wins.

Without or without the presence of a crisis, empowering managers is key to supporting work-life balance across the organization, and it all begins with a conversation. Not sure where to start? Arm managers with the conversation prompt from the Achievers Workforce Institute Critical Event Toolkit: "I know that balancing work and personal responsibilities may be more challenging that usual right now. What can we do to help you manage that balance?"

Tip to managers: Leverage the Achievers COVID-19 Employee Survey Template and Toolkit [link: achievers.com/covid-19] to gain valuable insights on how your teams are coping with crisis and how you can support them during this time.
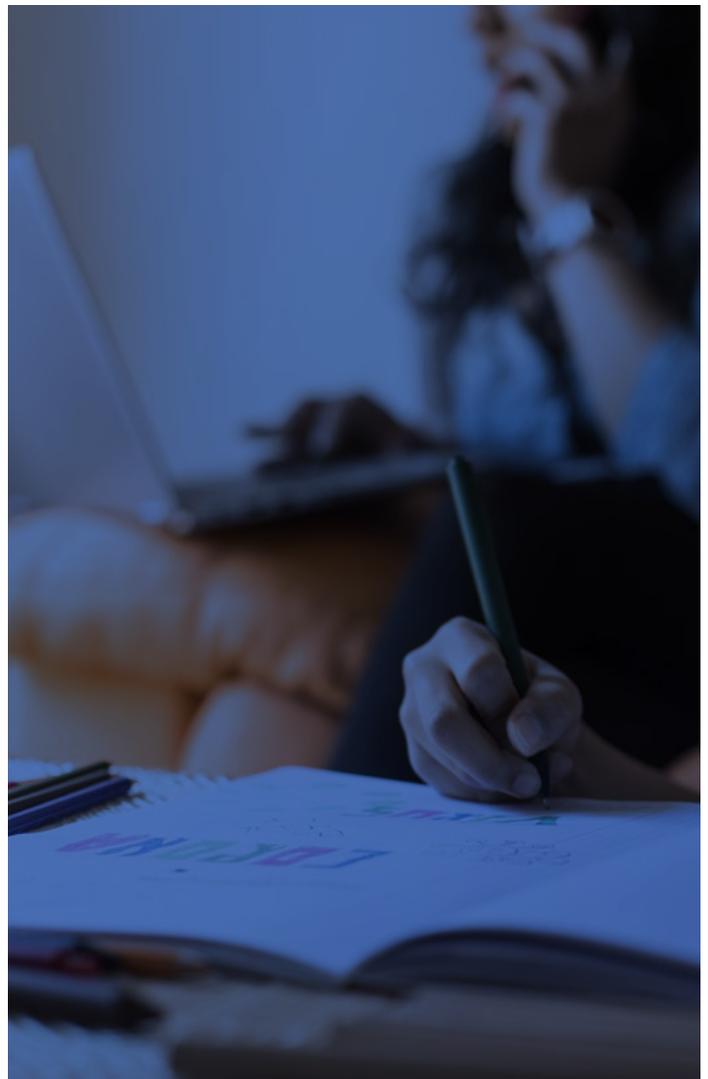
CONCLUSION

Work-life balance is not a buzz word. It is a corporate culture construct that can have a big business impact. In times of crisis and uncertainty, the organizations that train and empower management to support their employees in the key areas identified above will create a better employee experience and see improved organizational performance.

Be sure to get your free Achievers COVID-19 Employee Survey Template and Toolkit [link: achievers.com/covid-19] today to learn how best to support your workforce during a crisis.

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