



HRxaminer

Examining practical HR issues business owners and managers encounter every day

Balancing Work and Life...

July 2006

The Choice is Yours

Try these work-life options, or come up with others that work best for you and your people:

- ▶ job sharing
- ▶ reduced work schedules
- ▶ compressed work weeks

...Not Necessarily An Oxymoron

I'm working with a non-profit organization who has dedicated a tremendous effort to address the needs of its employees regarding work-life issues. In last month's [HRxaminer](#) we talked about time off in the workplace, giving it and taking advantage of it. But addressing work-life issues is much larger than accruing and taking vacation.



In my web search for a definition for work-life, I found the following:

Work-life is the practice of providing initiatives designed to create a more flexible, supportive work

- ▶ flexible schedules
- ▶ summer hours
- ▶ employee assistance programs
- ▶ financial counseling and advisory services
- ▶ prepaid legal insurance
- ▶ child care resources
- ▶ in-house day care
- ▶ elder care resources
- ▶ in-house gyms
- ▶ discount memberships

environment, enabling employees to focus on work tasks while at work.

It includes making the culture more supportive, adding programs to meet life event needs, ensuring that policies give employees as much control as possible over their lives and using flexible work practices as a strategy to meet the dual agenda -- the needs of both business and employees.

We all know that work affects life and life affects work, and that it's difficult to truly separate the two. But what does the see-saw of work life balance really look like in your organization?

At this same non-profit, we conducted an on-line survey of their employees regarding their HR practices. The top two HR services valued most by employees and management were (a) benefits and (b) contributing to work-life balance -- both answers were relevant to our employees' lives outside of work.

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Are we really surprised by this?

Look at your work culture? What can you do differently in your organization to help employees find some semblance of balance? Studies have told us that Generation Xers (born 1965-1990) have made work-life

▶ concierge services...

Try them on for size -- some will fit, others won't. And don't expect a one-size-fits-all success. All employees don't have the same needs or interests. Just keep an open mind and ask your employees what might work for them.

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balance their priority. As Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964) enter retirement age, they're beginning to acknowledge that the Gen Xers have the right idea!

So what do you already have in place that is working and what can you do differently to enhance this balance? Some options are more commonplace or are legislated, such as FMLA and/or parental leave (for mothers and fathers), bereavement leave, PTO and flexible benefits. Others are growing in familiarity, such as telecommuting and wellness education programs.

What else can you do? In the column on the left, I've brainstormed some options and ideas for you to consider:

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About Arlene Vernon

Arlene Vernon, PHR, partners with small businesses as their Human Resource Xpert to create their HR systems and solve their HR problems.

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