

Work Life Balance

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Introduction

Since the start of the global pandemic Work-Life Balance has been a topic of conversation at many organizations. Creating and having a work-life balance is an idea that many organizations are successful at creating and many are not. The goal of this research is to determine whether the banking industry in New Hampshire is good at creating a work-life balance for their employees. As a working mother, I too feel the effects of working full time and balancing family and professional life. I began to wonder does Work-life Balance exist in the banking industry in New Hampshire? The term Work Life Balance is the ability to be able to balance your personal and professional life. Clarke et al. (2004) described work-life balance as an equilibrium between the amount of time and effort somebody devotes to work and personal activities, in order to maintain an overall sense of harmony in life.

The goal of this research is to determine if managers in the banking industry of New Hampshire have work-life balance. Work-life balance means having the necessary time away from work, while still being successful, as well as having adequate time away from work spending time with your family. Banking Industry for this particular research is defined as a brick-and-mortar retail banking office. Research results that are gathered, will identify if a problem with balance exists, and the steps to take to create a better work-life balance in the banking industry in New Hampshire. My hypothesis is that there will not be a balance and organizations will need to create a better balance for their retail managers.

Literature Review

Work-life balance is not a new topic of discovery, work-life balance research has been completed, however previous work has focused on females outside of the United States (Sidhu&Saluja,2017). There is a gap in the previous work due to the fact no one article focused solely on the banking industry, without also identifying female participants. An additional gap in the previous research is that no one article identified the necessary steps to create a more positive work-life balance for your organization (Dhuru, 2016). This study will occur in the United States include both men and women of varying stages of their careers. Different countries have different work ethics, customs, and expectations of gender and overall definitions of work-life balance. What we identify as a positive work-life balance in the United States may differ than work-life balance of people in differing countries.

Dhuru presented a survey to married woman of public and private sectors of banking. They state a good work life balance is central to employee effectiveness and satisfaction (Dhuru, 2016). They concluded that if an organization provides a positive work-life balance, employees are more engaged, happier and therefore there is less turnover. By analyzing both the public and private sector banking industry, the surveys were in favor of public banks having a better work life balance compared to private banks. “Work-life balance initiatives should be designed to help employees to balance their work and personal lives” (Dhuru, 2016). However, Dhuru did not explain how these initiatives can be implemented. Implementation of policies and practices is essential to any organization that wishes to support work- life balance. Organizations need to understand the value in having a positive work-life balance. If they cannot identify that a gap exists then it cannot be improved.

Similarly, Mordi and Ojo support work- life balance in Nigeria. They feel work- life balance is important and banks need to have policies and flexibility for their workers (Mordi&Ojo,2011). Communication was identified as being a key factor in implementing a policy as well as employee satisfaction. Communication in any organization plays a key role not only in employee satisfaction, but in work- life balance. Employees need to feel that they can communicate their thoughts without being reprimanded. They need to have the ability to communicate what they need for a work-life balance. It is the responsibility of the organization to take into consideration the ideas of employees and communicate with them clear expectations of the job at hand. Without clear communication from the employer and the employee nothing can get accomplished. For this particular study however, Nigeria as a country does not have the support or resources to be able to implement these work -life changes (Mordi&Ojo,2011).

Additionally, Mengistu and Worku believe in the positive effects of work- life balance for workers in the banking sector of Ethiopia in their article titled *Effect of Work-Life Balance on Organizational Commitment in Commercial Bank of Ethiopia*. They recognize there is correlation between organizational commitment and work-life balance. The lower the work-life balance the lower the organizational commitment. A better-balanced employee has a higher organizational commitment which leads to less turn over and longevity with the organization (Mengistu&Worku,2020). Organizational commitment means that employees are dedicated to the culture that is created and are satisfied employees. By being a satisfied employee, this leads to satisfied customers, and creates a better overall customer experience rating for organizations.

Sidhu and Saluja concluded that work-life balance in working woman needs to be recognized by the Human Resources department as an important topic. High level executives are aware of the policies in place but often did not follow them. They looked to identify the factors

that enabled or constrained the performance of a professional working women. Also, the coping mechanisms for these women to deal with their dual roles at home and in the workplace (Sidhu&Saluja,2017). Based on the research it is unclear overall if work-life balance is a problem for women working. The data was clear in the research that demographic information such as age, income family statistics all have a different role in work- life balance. Additional research would be to take place on demographic information in relation to work-life balance. The research study on work-life balance in NH banks will not be looking at specific demographic information, as the participants will remain anonymous. Lastly, in India specifically, the term needs to change from work-life balance to “work-life integration” (Sidhu&Saluja, 2017). Separation from work and home was also identified as an area that needs improvement. One of the biggest areas of concern was staffing levels prohibiting managers from feeling like they could get away from the office. Organizations need to understand that separation from work is healthy for the mental health of their employees. Creating a positive work environment creates happy employees, creating less turnover.

Finally, the authors of *Long Hours' Effects on Work-Life Balance and Satisfaction* concluded that long hours do effect work-life balance. Authors utilized four separate questionnaires to gauge the respondents, occupational stress level, work-life balance, job satisfaction and perceived control over time (Hsu, et al.,2019) This was the only research that broke down the different aspects that could affect overall work- life balance. This article was inconclusive, because common sense tells us that working long hours is stressful. Therefore, it will affect work-life balance. Organizations need to be observant of the hours employee's work. Organizations need to be able to identify ways to allow employee flexibility, so that the stress levels do not get too high.

No literature was identified that did not support the concept or idea of work-life balance. They all identified it was an important concept for employers and employees to embrace. However, there was not enough information in any article, that showcased the ways to implement work-life balance practices at organizations, which resulted in an additional area for future research.

Key themes in all of the literature reviewed was communication of policy is essential to any organization. Employees need to understand, self-advocate, know where to find the policies, if they exist, in order to make them successful. Employers have a responsibility to set clear expectations of the job and communicate them in a way that is easy to understand. If you have clear communication from both sides, that creates a harmony in the workplace which will lead to a positive work-life balance culture at your organization.

Methods

Twenty-one branch managers were recruited personally by me and emailed invitations with informed consent attached, then a survey was issued electronically; they were asked five open-ended questions:

What does the phrase “work-life balance” mean to you?

What do you think the employer’s role is in creating “work-life balance”?

What is the employees’ role in creating “work-life balance”?

Tell me about your “work-life balance”.

Is there anything else you wish I had asked? Or anything else you wish to tell me?

Participants identities were anonymous. After the thirteen results were captured, I coded the results in a qualitative way in order to understand the findings, as well as uncovered major themes throughout each participants’ comment.

Results and Correlations of Work-Life Balance

After reviewing the data, three major themes were identified to be of major importance: Knowledge, Separation, and Communication.

Knowledge was identified as a major theme within a majority of the respondents. There are many ways today that people are able to do their banking. The digital sector of banking is being explored and technology is always changing, this is why it is important that employer/employees understand the needs of the retail banking office. The participants identified the importance of the employer understanding the workloads for their managers. However, managers as individuals running a retail branch office need an understanding of the work load. Knowledge of running a retail banking office is identified as a major point in the research both for the employer as well as employees'. It was identified that the employer needs an understanding of workloads and clear expectations need communication. One respondent described it best when they stated "Employers play a huge role. Ensuring the proper staffing levels and workloads are appropriate for operating hours. Most companies are extending the work week to accommodate flexible lifestyles and working hours but not increase the FTE levels. Over the years I have seen roles cut to compensate for the digital expansion in the banking industry, however, the new staffing levels do not correspond to the increased levels of service for inadequate software or training to complete the jobs".

Another key element to the research was being able to separate work from home and vice versa. Few participants felt that they did a good job of balancing their work and home life, while others felt that they did not. Lack of staffing was identified as the major problem managers had in being able to get out of the office and separate their time at work from time outside of work. This theme of staffing is not uncommon in any organization, but without sufficient staffing

levels, managers found it difficult to leave the office. Others stated that they did not really have a life much outside of work. One participant stated “I tend to give of myself more readily to my job than to my personal life. Because I do not have a busy social life or family at home, it is easy for me to overlap work and home life. I am trying to get better at separating and creating a haven at home that is not controlled by my job. I realize that it is needful for my mental and physical health to leave work stress in the office as much as possible and create a life for myself outside of my job”. However, it was also identified that managers need to leave home problems at home and work problems at work. Personal identification and advocacy went hand and hand to the theme of separation. Managers need to recognize balance of work-life is being tipped one way or the other, however, managers must advocate for themselves in order to get the scales balanced. In order to self-advocate for yourself and be a role model for your staff, you need to have a role model you can communicate with. Being a good leader means leading by example. Employees see you taking time for yourself, creating a positive work-life balance, then they too will create balance for themselves. Employees have to make the personal choice what is important to them, but need to communicate what they want, without communication work-life balance does not exist. On the opposing end of separation was the idea that when you are home, work needs to be left at the door. One participant stated “I disconnect from work devices when at home.” Another said “...don't take work home with them, leave home problems home.” Creating that separation whether at home or leaving work, need to balance.

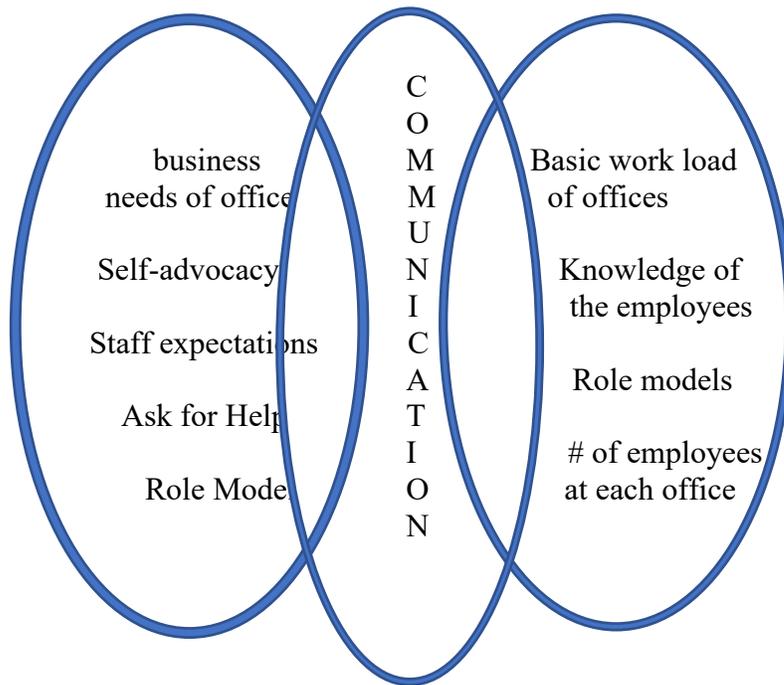
Without communication by employees or employer you fail. Organizations' role in communicating policies and procedures with the management team should be a top priority. If a work-life balance policy exists at the institution it should be shared. Managers must have a knowledge and understanding of what it takes to run a retail banking office, and clear

expectations from Human Resources (HR). If the expectations are not communicated, how can they be held accountable. HR has a responsibility to the employees to clearly communicate the expectations to their staff. However, managers also have a responsibility to self-advocate for themselves if their work-life balance needs improvement, and that cannot be done without communication. Based on the research the biggest complaint from employees is often I didn't know. How can we expect your staff to communicate with us if we are not communicating with them? One research participant summed it up best when they stated "Employees at all levels should be upfront about what they want and expect in their schedules during –the interview process. If your schedule changes or you are taking on more than you can handle, they should speak to their manager for resolutions and solutions to ease a better work-life balance". Another common theme among research participants was asking for help and learning to say no were identified as positive ways to have a better work-life balance.

Without knowledge of employee/ employer expectations, separation from work and communication work-life balance fails, employees get burned out, you have unsatisfied employees and turnover is high. In order to provide a positive work-life balance all three need to correlated to each other. Below is a diagram depicting this:

Things Employees
Should Know

Things Employer
Should Know



Employees need to understand their expectations, the employer needs to know the expectations and they need to be clearly communicated then you will have harmony in your organization as well as satisfied employees and create a positive work place.

Conclusion and Future Plans

Based on this research study it is found that work-life balance needs improvement with managers working in the banking industry in New Hampshire. Communication was identified as the most important factor to successfully creating a positive work-life balance. If organizations can set clear expectations for their managers and the managers can understand the expectations, and they are successfully communicated then, the banking industry in New Hampshire can successfully create a work-life balance.

Next steps in the research would be to delve into a deeper dive of the work-life balance policies that exist at any particular organization. Analyze the results of a larger research group to include not only just managers but all employees. Look at demographic information to see if that makes a difference in work-life balance. Understand and analyze the company culture around work-life balance and based on the data found adjust the policies as needed. Work-life balance is an area of improvement for any organization and with time and additional research work-life balance can and will exist.

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Appendix

Things Employees
Should Know

Things Employer
Should Know

