

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1146 In Search of the Elusive Work-Life Balance

We frequently hear the term “work-life balance,” but what does that mean in practical terms, and how many of us have different ideas on what it means to us personally? I’m Jerry Roberts and we’ll talk about balance in the workplace, next, on The Extra Point.

In a July article, Forbes magazine defined work-life balance with this: “To some, work-life balance means the convenience of being able to manage a personal life during the work day, without the hassle of having to get permission or explain our activities to others.”

Website qualtrics.com had this: “Work-life balance involves the minimization of work-related stress, and the establishing of a stable and sustainable way to work while maintaining health and general well-being.”

Maryville University, a small school in St. Louis, Missouri, offered something a bit different. First, they define work-life balance as, “How people manage the time they dedicate to work and the time they spend on other activities.”

Then, they add another term you may not have heard much about, work-life harmony. In their words, “Work-life harmony involves incorporating work into the rest of life in a way that promotes happiness both at home and in the office... many of today’s business leaders are now embracing the idea of work-life harmony.”

For our purposes today, we’ll set the “harmony” definition aside and focus on the balancing of work and life.

Once we settle on what work-life balance means to us, we come face-to-face with the reality that we may not agree on the details. If you can imagine a manager with 10 workers on his/her team, each wanting balance but in a somewhat different way.

It quickly becomes obvious that there is no perfect solution for work-life balance. This is

not to say we shouldn’t strive to find a good way to design it into our company culture, but we should have reasonable expectations that it’s not going to match up with everybody’s expectations and desires.

If we start with this mindset, it will be a far smoother path from idea to implementation.

There are no perfect companies and there are no perfect jobs. Nobody will find complete joy and happiness every day. Circumstances change, such as projects and workloads. Even though we seek balance, somebody may have to work in an unbalanced manner from time to time to meet the demands of the organization.

In my opinion, managers should talk with their team about finding a balance between work and the rest of life, and factor in the reality that the success of the company puts food on tables. Thus, sacrifices may be necessary.

That said, we should make sure that everyone is sharing in those sacrifices, and they don’t fall to a few people on a too-regular basis.

That kind of conversation is meaningful. It shows that the company is thinking about a balance, and is including the workers in the decision of how it’s going to work.

Pick your definition as a group, then try to find some common ground on what is acceptable to both the employees and the company. The process shouldn’t be painful, and can display how positive communication is where you work.

That’s the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I’m Jerry Roberts.

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