**Personal Influence – Work-life Balance**

#### What to Know:

It is very common for employees to feel like there is more work to be done than can be accomplished in a day. However, if work-life balance is an engagement driver for your team, it could be a sign that your employees are approaching burnout.

#### Mythbusters:

It can be tempting to conclude that more head count is needed to improve work-life balance, and sometimes that is the answer, however often the solution lies in areas like clearly defining priorities, ensuring people have the resources they need to do their best work, or proactively managing change. Check in with employees to understand pain points that get in the way of efficiency.

**Questions to Ask** (often best discussed in one-on-one conversations)**:**

* What does work-life balance mean to you? What do we do well to promote work-life balance? What could we do better? After the team responds, ask “why” those things get in the way. Keep asking why until you get to the root of the issue.
* What resources are available to you to help you keep a healthy balance between work life and home life? Are they helpful? Why or why not?
* Do we have clear priorities for our work? Are roles and responsibilities clear? If no, why not?
* How do we communicate with one another when we are under pressure (e.g., communicate openly, shut down)? Why?
* How could we support each other better as a team to accomplish work-life balance?
* What is the best way to prioritize our time when we are very busy?

**Best Practices:**

* Implementing flexible work arrangements can greatly increase employee satisfaction and retention by fostering better work-life balance. Flexible work schedules can take many forms (flextime, compressed workweek, job sharing, telecommuting, and permanent part-time arrangements.
* Review workloads/projects with employees regularly and be open to putting lower priority projects on the back burner or eliminating them altogether. Ensure employees know it is okay to say, “yes, at a later time” or “yes, and that means something else needs to come off my priority list” in reference to requests.
* Provide opportunities for employees to learn how to manage time more effectively.
* It is important for leaders/managers to lead by example in maintaining work-life balance by taking time off, leaving work on time, and not checking email while on vacation, for example.
* If possible, focus more on ensuring the work is getting done on time and to quality standards as opposed to being at work during certain hours.

#### What Managers Can Do:

Encourage the team to review and eliminate items that no longer add value. For example, there may be a report you run that is no longer used. Can we stop doing that work?

Assume best intentions of employees and offer flexibility when possible. Generally, when leaders offer flexibility to their employee, they are more likely to reciprocate when work is needed outside of typical hours.

Model the best practice of taking care of yourself first. Be in tune with what helps you feel “centered” and prioritize those things even during busy times. For example, regular exercise, eating well, family time or a hobby can help us be our best selves at work and sets the example for others.

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#### What Employees Can Do:

Have a conversation with your manager about what work-life balance means to you. How can you balance your home life and meet the requirements of the job in a way that works for everyone?

Picture your life as a bucket. Ideally, the bucket is full but not overflowing. Now, make a list of your work and home priorities — daily tasks, professional development, time with kids, working out, etc. Write down what percent of your bucket each of the priorities would ideally comprise; next, write down how much they actually comprise in your life and note other things that are causing your bucket to overflow. Is your bucket ideally 50% home items and 50% work priorities, or a different breakdown? Remember to be realistic. What can you do to balance your bucket to its ideal state?

#### What Leadership Can Do:

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Help identify clear priorities (meaning 2-3 key areas of focus). Avoid the trap of everything is a priority, so nothing is a priority.

Acknowledge expectations regarding work hours. For example, you may explain, “I send emails on nights or weekends because that works for my schedule, but I do not expect you to respond immediately.”

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**Watch:**

* [How to gain control of your free time | Laura Vanderkam](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3kNlFMXslo)
* [My year of saying yes to everything | Shonda Rhimes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmj-azFbpkA)

**Read:**

* [*Overwhemed: How to Work, Love and Play When No One Has the Time*](https://www.amazon.com/Overwhelmed-Work-Love-Play-When/dp/1250062381/ref%3Dsr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1490194979&sr=1-3&keywords=overwhelmed)
* [*How to Improve Work-Life Balance for Employees*](http://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com/2016/02/10/how-to-improve-worklife-balance-for-employees/)

**King County Resources:**

* [King County Telework/Telecommuting Policy](https://www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/employee-transportation-program/Telework.aspx)
* [King County Alternative Work Schedules](https://www.kingcounty.gov/about/policies/aep/personnelaep/per181aep.aspx)
* [King County Alternative Work Arrangements Guide](https://kingcounty.gov/~/media/audience/employees/policies-forms/hr-policies/IntranetTransfer/AlternativeWorkArrangementGuide.ashx?la=en)