



THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The term, work-life balance is used a lot around workplaces, but what is it about and what does it mean? Below are some major points I have made about it to employers in the past.

One of the most important reasons for adequate time participating in non work activities is that it enhances a persons physical and mental health. Both employer and employee benefit from this. Some of the most important benefits include the reduction of time off due to " burn out " and illness.

What is work-life balance?

- Work-life balance is where work interacts positively with all the other activities important in life, e.g. family time, leisure, self development, community participation, care responsibilities.
- Work-life balance will vary for each person and will change throughout life.
- It is not just for families or for women.
- It is not just for busy executives who work long hours to get ahead, it can also be for the disabled whose problem may be lack of flexibility and choice.

Employee benefits from work-life balance:

- Easier ability to participate more fully in paid work as well as other activities that are important, e.g. spending time with family, leisure, personal development and community activities.
- Improved self esteem, health, concentration, confidence, loyalty and commitment.
- Not bringing problems at home to work and vice versa.
- Greater control of their working lives.
- Happier at home as well as:
 - Greater responsibility and a sense of ownership.
 - Better relations with management.
 - Ability for women in paid work to take time off rather than resign from their jobs to stay at home, or to return to work too early after childbirth.

Work-life balance issues for New Zealand:

- The population is ageing.
- More workers will have childcare issues at one end and elderly parent care issues at the other, as adults chose to have children later in life.

- New Zealand faces skill shortages and needs to be able to attract workers to jobs. Work-life balance initiatives could help to lessen long term or permanent skill loss, enhance general skill development and ease barriers to workforce participation.
- It will allow people to do the voluntary and unpaid work that underpins our society and economy.
- It will enable improved quality of life, whilst enabling variety, flexibility and choice in work.
- Initiatives like flexible work arrangements and career breaks can be low cost options that could help to lessen long term or permanent skill loss, enhance general skill development and ease barriers to workforce participation.

Work-life balance benefit to employers:

- Business will attract and retain the best people.
- Increased employee retention.
- Reduced absenteeism.
- Employer loyalty.
- Increased productivity and profit.
- Maximised available labour.
- Making employees feel valued.
- The reputation of being an employer of choice.

International employer initiatives:

- Time banking – saving up time as “credit” to be taken later to meet domestic or other commitments.
- Career breaks schemes.
- Childcare and elder care services.
- Encouraging staff to pursue other interests.
- Paternity (and other types of) leave.
- Home working or term time working (for parents of school children).
- Diverse shift patterns and compressed hours such as the nine day fortnight.