

From Information to Business



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Ask an Information Officer

A work-life balance initiative... Is it any of my business?

Anthony Pouw

Initiating a work-life balance for your business can help you and your employees better manage personal responsibilities with work commitments. With a good balance between priorities, everyone can bring positive energy back to work.

What does this mean for your business? A good work-life balance is associated with:

- reduced employee absenteeism and tardiness
- increased job satisfaction and morale
- better decision-making by you and your employees
- higher productivity
- establishing you as an employer of choice

This sort of initiative can also improve employee retention by building a relationship founded on commitment and loyalty. Even customer commitment will improve as their experience with the many faces of your business will be a positive one. All of these factors will not just save you money – they can also make you money!

What should your work-life balance initiative include? No two employees are the same. Gender, age, marital status,

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Manage stress risk in order to achieve work-life balance

Christine Thériault

Many people have dealt with workplace stress at one time or another. To a certain extent, workplace stress can present risks to safety, and mental and physical health. Excessive amounts of stress are produced when work is designed in a way that either ignores or devalues basic human needs, especially those that are related to mental or emotional health and well-being. Sources of stress may include high job pressure, low job control, and home stress.

In order to manage stress in the workplace, managers can seek advice on stress risk management, such as Health Canada's Best Advice on Stress Risk Management in the Workplace. Health and safety promotion initiatives are successful and address the low control/low reward problem of stress. This involves participation from everyone and allows more employees to get involved in the organization and to design their own work.

There are many ways to manage unhealthy stress:

1. **Take a deep breath!**
2. **Manage time** – One source of stress is caused by overcommitment or poor time management. Plan ahead and make a reasonable schedule.

3. **Connect with others** – To combat sadness, boredom and loneliness, seek out activities that involve other people.
4. **Talk it out** – When you feel something, try to express it instead of bottling up your emotions.
5. **Take a "minute" vacation** – Create a quiet scene for yourself and start dreaming away.
6. **Monitor your physical comfort** – Try to be as physically comfortable as the situation will allow.
7. **Exercise** – This plays a key role in preventing and reducing

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stress. Try to find something that you enjoy doing and make time for it.

8. **Take care of your body** – Make sure to eat healthy foods and get adequate sleep.
9. **Laugh** – Have a sense of humour.
10. **Know your limits** – Learn to accept what is, for the moment, until there is a time when you can change things.
11. **Avoid self medication** – Alcohol and drugs will not keep your stress under control. These will only mask problems that you have.
12. **Focus on the positive** – Don't obsess over things you can't control. Instead, keep your thoughts on what you love about your work.

Stress-related risk can be prevented or reduced when managers decide to govern the workplace differently. Employers need to take precautions in order to protect their own health and safety as well as that of their workers. Watch for signs of stress and take care of your business.

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Featured Website

Social Development Canada

Julie Penwarden

According to the Conference Board of Canada's Survey of Canadian Workers on Work-Life Balance, increased stress levels affect absenteeism, which has a direct impact on productivity. Numerous publications and statistics on the subject are available on Social Development Canada's web site, where you can also:

- Read a business case that addresses recruitment, retention and productivity, and how to identify a work-life business case for your organization.
- Learn from case studies based on Canadian businesses that implemented physical activity and healthy workplace programs.
- Search organizational profiles to discover strategies that well-known companies have used in an effort to balance work life and personal life for employees.

These resources can help you with individual and organizational development. Take advantage of the lessons other businesses learned in the process.

If you would like to implement initiatives similar to these, utilize Social Development Canada's Assessment and Planning tool to smooth the transition process. Help keep your employees in balance to ensure they are committed to the outcomes of their efforts.

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Our Mission

To improve the start-up, survival and growth rates of small- and medium-sized enterprises by giving business people in every part of Nova Scotia access to accurate, timely and relevant information and referrals

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and personality are just a few of the qualities that make each employee unique. Flexibility is paramount to any successful work-life balance initiative.

You can accommodate the uniqueness of each employee by building flexibility into employee work schedules. Some employees may prefer coming in earlier and leaving earlier whereas others may prefer coming in later and leave later. Managing schedules in this way can allow employees to better manage their responsibilities while increasing service coverage to better meet customer demands.

Here are a few ideas that aid with work-life balance:

- corporate membership or discount at a fitness facility
- allow employees to job share
- allow employees to telework (i.e. work from home)
- health & wellness committee
- on-site day care
- flexible work weeks/ hours

As you can see, a work-life balance is your business! Conflict between work and personal responsibilities can negatively impact your 'bottom line'. A work-life balance initiative may require some additional management on your part, but if properly implemented, you could be at the helm a finely tuned competitive business. Can you afford not to have one?

Hot Picks

The following books are available from the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre Library. These books may also be available in our resource centres, located throughout the province.

Managing Your Small Business

Entrepreneur Magazine Group

This start-up guide has a section devoted to time and stress management. Stress-reduction training is being delivered in private and public universities, seminars, corporations and small businesses. This training enables workers and managers to better analyze pressure situations, identifying and eliminating as many stressful factors as possible. The idea is to reduce the stressful elements in conflict and increase worker effectiveness. The overall goal in a stress-reduction program should be to improve the quality of the workplace. No amount of stress-reduction training will produce results if employees are mistreated, overworked or unduly pressured.

Work-Life Balance: Improving the Odds of Relocation Success

The Conference Board of Canada

With almost half of Canadian workers feeling a lot or a moderate amount of stress in trying to balance their work and personal responsibilities, it has become critical for Canadian employers to ensure the provision of programs and policies that help employees throughout their life stages. Raising children and caring for elderly parents are two commitments that come quickly to mind. However, one of the more stressful life events faced by workers, and which employers often overlook, is relocation.

Given the continuing importance of domestic and global transfers and their costs, it is essential for organizations to ensure that their efforts to relocate people are successful. This briefing looks at the work-life issues surrounding relocation and discusses how various initiatives can help alleviate many of the concerns and stresses felt by both the relocated employee and their family.

Top Manager: 12 réalités incontournables pour une gestion supérieure

Ibrahim Elfiky

Top Manager provides you with the latest and most effective management techniques and strategies. Used by senior managers all over the world, these techniques have a proven track record.

This book will help you to:

- manage stress and make better decisions;
- get motivated and mobilize your team;
- become an excellent communicator and master the art of persuasion;
- define your goals and better manage your time;
- become an excellent leader and build a winning team;
- hire and fire staff without making errors.

Reading this book will help you discover all your skills and become a top manager.