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# Conquering the Sickness of Workaholism— An Overview

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## INTRODUCTION:

Over the past three decades, there has been a substantial increase in work due to rapid growth of technology and intense work environment. With global recession, employees are under pressure to work hard and more, in all organizations. Management experts forecasted that application of new and advanced technologies would reduce the workload and provide executives more time to spend with family members. However, in reality, advancements in work styles elevated workload to unprecedented heights. With the International economy showing signs of recession and snowballing growth, employees in almost industries are made to work for long hours. **Madeline Bunting**, in her book "Willing Slaves –How the overwork culture is ruling our lives" stated that Americans have increased their average working hours to a considerable level due to the pressures of corporate world and increased competition. It is reported that the average weekly work per person shows an increase of 30 hours in recent years. Due to the apprehension of loss of job and its income, professionals are under peak pressure to work extra hours. Globally, this phenomenon has become a challenging issue. While becoming productive at work is, undoubtedly, a worthwhile goal for them, having a fuller and more balanced life is even better. Many times, professionally successful people, in the quest for reaching the top or retaining their superior positions work very hard that they miss out on the real pleasures of life. For many top notch professionals, work is something that has taken much of their time and energy that they resent rather than enjoying it. They don't understand that while it is great to have a flourishing career, it is greater to have a life outside work.

## WORKAHOLISM MEANS.....

Workaholism is the excessive obsession to work at the cost of social and personal life of an employee. In the words of Spence and Rubbins "workaholic is a person who exhibits three properties: high work involvement, feeling driven to work because of inner pressures and low in enjoyment of work". Workaholism is a habit of employees, which could be beneficial to organizations but problematic to the family of employees. If workaholism is thrust upon employees, it will have adverse effect without making any qualitative and quantitative results. The result of this psychological state of staff always need not be positive. In recent times, advancements in IT and constant urge to stay competitive in the business world have created a complex situation to all companies. Failure to make an impact and stay focused will be leading to obsolete over a period. This pressure has created an atmosphere in which the employees have performed at all times or perish. In the present work environment, employees are putting in extra hours of work and experiencing burnout and the result is unhealthy work life balance.

## BENEFITS OF WORKAHOLISM:

The positives of workaholism, as perceived by the executives and organizations are:

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- Quick career growth for executives
- Better recognition of work
- Increased pay and perks in few cases
- Professional success from enhanced competence level
- Timely completion of assignments
- Quick decision –making
- Optimum /full utilization of employee’s skills
- Reduce idle time and encourage enthusiasts.

**ADVERSE EFFECTS OF WORKAHOLISM:**

When viewed from a different perspective, workaholism is a symptom of poor time management supported by the inability of employees to begin, pursue and complete the tasks within the stipulated time. The job becomes all even at enormous amount of personal loss. Employees keep continuously thinking in terms of their work and finally end up losing sleep. It causes burnout syndrome. It leads to psychological problems and insomnia. Soul-destroying addiction changes the personalities and the values of people.

Workaholism gives rise to cardiac arrest, stress, depression and adversely affects the immune system. People who experience workaholism are likely to suffer from all other types of mental health problems and even from certain cancers. Healthcare expenses of the workaholics are almost 50% higher than other employees. Long term loyalty has been eroded by a performance culture that expects more and more from the employees yet offers very little security and returns. In this scenario, employees are not able to accomplish as much as they are capable of achieving. Alternatively, those who have control of their work lives experience less stress are more relaxed and much more productive in their endeavors.

Workaholism results in unhealthy balance between personal professional lives. It causes heightened tension to employees leading to problems in keeping the relationship with near and dear people. There is never enough time to be intimate even with family members or to share with close friends. People who are secure in one setting (official) are tense and

insecure in others (personal, social). They strive for good life management.

**WORK LIFE BALANCE:**

God has made no discrimination between people while distributing time. Each employee has exactly the same amount of time day after day. Despite the fact that they get equal time, many people complain lack of time to meet their personal responsibilities amidst the routine work schedules. The fault lies with them as they have not learnt how to manage time and make best use of it. Many employees are not able to take time off their regular work by striking the right balance between professional, personal and social lives. In a society, that applauds professional achievement more vehemently, doing something just for its own sake and maintaining personal relationships, unfortunately, occupies a very low priority. Hence a vast majority of employees are not looking at the issue with due consideration. However, it is an important issue for individuals.

Work Life Balance (WLB) is art of making and maintaining an optimum balance between professional commitments and personal requirements. With everyone, face the issue of time management at one point of their career or another, WLB assumes greater significance. Responding to increasing work and simultaneously dealing with personal duties is not an easy thing. A recent study of employees’ performance has revealed that two out of every five employees are dissatisfied with their WLB. They feel that work is invading personal life and their personalities are affected by the stress of trying to balance all responsibilities in life. Long work hours, changing demographics, more transportation time deterioration of boundaries between offices, home, and work pressures are the major causes for the imbalance, they complained.

Employee assistance professionals in the organization feel that there is a work life imbalance and quote many reasons for this problem, ranging from personal ambition and the pressures of family obligations to the accelerating pace of technology. Over the years, managers emphasize the need to create a working environment, which provides the correct balance to their employees by letting their personal work completed in time. The evidence available on

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work life imbalance suggests that workaholics always fail to manage their time effectively and believe that greatest activity produces the best result. Therefore they complete tasks at the expense of everything else and drive themselves beyond their capacities. Such people are exhausted very soon physically and mentally because they never relax and renew their energy by keeping away the work for some time. They fail to understand that the amount of efforts by itself cannot lead to professional success unless it is accompanied by the quest for quality.

### **IMPROVING WORK LIFE BALANCE**

Maintaining a balance between one's professional responsibilities and personal life has become a major problem in recent years. Organizations and top – notch professionals are realizing this situation and are trying a lot to keep this balance. However, for a healthy work life balance, the situation needs to be the exception rather than the norm. In order to make and maintain a balance between work and other life, an employee can follow a few guidelines, which are summarized as follows:

- Time is indispensable and irretrievable for all. It is the most inelastic element, which cannot be preserved. Therefore, establishment of professional goals and prioritizing all activities with time limits will be helpful in devising correct programme for work life balance. An important part of good time management and work life balance is to take some time off the work to recharge the employees' batteries. What counts most is not how busy you are but whether you feel that you are making enough time for socializing.
- Executives face several demands on their personal and professional life. The inability to say "NO" would be a time waster behind inefficient work maintenance. Therefore, the employee must cultivate the ability to say no without giving offence wherever necessary. They should accept things in a selective manner.
- The employees should value their leisure time and put effort into really listening their personal

life's demand. They should consider the quality and quantity of time spent with their family members and friends as important as the completion of their official responsibilities. No matter how busy they are at work, the employees should plan for vacations and plan trips together with family members. It is also necessary for employees to share time with their children, as they need to know they are loved and cared about. They have to be taught proper things: values and morals of life.

- People cannot waste time; but they can mismanage it. Management of time not only for work but also for relationships and leisure activities is the key to maintain a complete work life balance. This will reduce the stress of the employees to a considerable level.
- According to a recent study, nearly 50 percent of the top executives are leaving their current position because of excessive work hours and resultant stress. At the work place, the employees should take the regular breaks after lunch/tea and talk to their colleagues about things other than the work. This will relieve their stress to some extent. At the home too, it is necessary to go for yoga or meditation or any other physical exercise to ease their stress levels so that they can attend with full energy and more enthusiasm.
- Being assertive at the work place and taking feedback helps in solving problems and making right decisions. The employees should not let the negative people drain their time and psyche. In the present competitive world, there will always be rapid changes and tremendous advances in the way of working. Negative psychology is likely to become a greater challenge in maintaining work life balance in the fast changing environment.

### **WLB – AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

An organization is a complex combination of many people individuals coming from different background. They have different interests, temperaments and behavioral patterns at work. For

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maximizing the results of operations, it is essential to improve the overall managerial effectiveness of the firm. One of the ways of achieving this effectiveness is to provide an atmosphere to the staff to balance their work with their personal lives. Organizations need to be clear about the benefits in terms of increased productivity, improved performance, and the consequences of doing nothing with mere presence. To achieve work life balance in any organization, the management at three levels must support such an initiative. They are:

- **Programmatic level** - Combination of programmes that truly support work life balance : EAP Programmes, Flexible Scheduling, Personal Time Off, etc.,
- **Cultural level** – Creation of culture that supports work life balance for all employees. This culture should be supported by senior management and incorporated at all levels
- **Individual level**– with a supporting culture, individuals can create work life balance on their own. Above all, it is their responsibility and accountability which makes a correct work life balance.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Employees can nurture the level of competency at any point of their careers. However, the things they lost in the personal life earlier could not be retrieved later. WLB is the need of the hour. In

an endeavor to address much anxiety – driven, work life issues many employees who have understood the importance of the matter leaving no stones unturned to keep WLB at a right level. Most people blame the organizations and employers for their poor use of time and work life imbalance. In reality, they themselves are responsible for these problems. Lack of ability to complete the job in time and procrastination are the major sources of work life imbalance. If the issue is paramount to the health and happiness of the employees, they should improve their time management by observing the real time spent on work and on personal life. Both workaholism and work life imbalance are more than that of learning. They require a lot of change in habits of lifestyles. Employees have to really answer a basic question: Do we live to work or Work to live? Everybody have only one life. People should make the most of it and the best of it.

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