



HUNITE WILLIAMS

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS NEWSLETTER

Work-Life Balance or Work – Life Integration?



For many years we have been hearing the term "Work-life balance". There have been training sessions and books on the topic to help us all to figure out how to create that balance between our career and personal lives. We have been taught that in order to truly experience a successful and fulfilled life, we need balance.



Weekends were created as a way to ensure that we take time off from working. Working hours were specified in different industries, and in some countries, made law, to help us to have healthy boundaries, be able to function. We were expected after a long day of working and a commute, many times under grueling traffic conditions, to get home and spend time with our spouses and children, create meals, assist with homework, clean-up, care for ourselves and still get enough sleep, to be able to wake up and start all over again the next day.

Then, the Coronavirus came along and disrupted the whole world's way of life. We have all undergone restrictions to our daily living. Our children are attending school at home. There are no day care or babysitting centres available. Many of us have had to work from home or to work less hours in office on a rotation. Most companies have at least had to experiment with remote work in order to keep their companies running. Many professionals and analysts agree that the world will not be going back to life as we knew it anytime soon. The good thing is that, if we were to stop to think about if such a pandemic had happened to us 10 years ago, we would not have been technologically equipped to be able to deal with it the way we are now. Our children would be out of school indefinitely, and remote work would be very difficult to accomplish. Losses would have been much greater. Economies would have suffered more destruction and rebuilding after it all would be extremely difficult.

This brings us to a very pertinent question about the work-life balance theory. Sandy Carter, Vice-President of Public Sector Partners and Programs with Amazon Web Services, presented a unique way at looking at this equation at this year's Inbound Conference. She argues that this pandemic is teaching us that "it was never work-life balance; it was always about work-life integration."¹ We have spent so much time forcing ourselves to compartmentalize the different areas of our lives instead of finding harmony within all the processes. Now, we are learning how to spend more time with our families, while doing work and other tasks. Attempting to separate the different areas of our lives has actually contributed to the regression of years of progress in the fight against discrimination against women in the workplace. We can no longer expect our employees to separate the different components of their lives without causing extensive complications and stress.

What does this mean for the world of work moving forward? HubSpot Co-founders, Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, believe that getting great employees will become more difficult, especially for companies that have not embraced change. The demand with regards to what qualified professionals will now be looking for in a company has changed. The companies that will be able to hire and retain the best talent to help them build and progress will be those who have shifted their company's culture to one of flexibility, transparency, diversity and allows for autonomy in accomplishing tasks.²

Work-Life integration means that now, most people will be expecting employers to change their policies and processes to allow employees to work more from home, so that they will be able to take care of all their other responsibilities. They will be looking at what measures have been put into place to make the company resilient to withstand future pandemics or global changes; measures that make the working world more inclusive for those who do not have alternatives with regards to their children and that celebrate diversity.

Embracing change does not have to be intimidating. Once accepted and embraced, it can be a great stride towards progress in areas we may not have ever imagined. Changing your company culture in the face of a pandemic, such as the one we are all experiencing this year, is a step in the right direction. Make this the time to create a company culture in which you and your employees can thrive. A thriving workforce converts to success. If you need assistance in thinking all of this through and creating your ideal, resilient work culture, remember that the team at Huntewill Inc. is always ready to help you progress.

References:

1 - Inbound 2020: "Scaling Innovation & Culture"

Sandy Carter - Vice-President of Public Sector Partners and Programs with Amazon Web Services - September 22nd, 2020. (www.inbound.com)

2 - Inbound 2020: "The Future of HubSpot and the Current State of the World"

Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah (moderated by Christopher O'Donnell) - September 23rd, 2020. (www.inbound.com)

Please note that the information contained herein is not exhaustive on this topic. For further information and guidance, please contact us at kbobb@huntewill.com (1-868-360-6278).

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