

Balance or blend - a better work-life solution for all ages

By [Andrew Robinson](#)

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We all know that the way we work has changed considerably over the past few years. Technology has become a great enabler for productivity but has also blurred the lines between personal and professional time. So in addition to all the talk around digital disruption and workplace transformation, the topic of work-life balance is high on everyone's agenda too. If it's not, it should be.



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Today's workforce is diverse, consisting of five generations from traditionalists to Gen Zs, all of whom have to work side by side, making it necessary for companies to work inter-generationally and design organisational structures that cater to the needs of everyone. Successful organisations need to understand what work-life balance means for everyone and create an environment that remains appealing for all. Otherwise, they can expect a hard time attracting and retaining the best possible people for the job.

There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach as the balance is different for everyone. This makes it really important to consider what work-life balance means to each generation. Let's be clear: it's not just about finding a good job with flexible working hours but also about setting boundaries and integrating health and wellness into a daily routine.

For most digital nomads – the growing number of individuals globally without a home-base, who are location-independent and make the most of what technology has to offer them in order to do to their job - there is a very fine line between work and personal life, in fact they've very cleverly found a way to combine their work and life goals into one.

Generational shift

Research shows that Baby Boomers and Generation X make little to no attempt to avoid burning out mentally and physically. The younger Gen Zs and Millennials are more preoccupied with preventing things like burnout, so they work in terms of prevention.

The reality is that neither work nor personal lives need to suffer if you get that balance right.

A Harvard Business School study a few years ago reported that 94% of working professionals claimed to work more than 50 hours per week and nearly half said they worked more than 65 hours per week. Lack of responsiveness due to round the clock accessibility and fear of job loss were quoted as contributing factors to these long hours.

Promoting and enforcing a positive balance in the digital age often falls on employees; you know, take time to exercise, or meditate or simply unplug, but if the fear factors quoted above are true (and I suspect they are) employers need to be involved too.

Continuous connection and a lack of boundaries – whether perceived or real - puts employees in the burn-out zone, which has made creating and sustaining a healthy balance an imperative for employers who want the best from their workers.

Forward-thinking companies are moving toward smarter, more holistic ways of guiding employees to their full potential, which means ensuring there's enough time to enjoy a fulfilling personal life too. Some current best practices include setting priorities and boundaries, defining work and communication hours, encouraging and enforcing digital downtime and leave days and more flexibility available to manage family commitments.

But what about some more radical approaches?

We're starting to see a relaxation of dress codes and leave policies which play into the idea of making work life more about lifestyle. This is clever; instead of trying to separate the two, companies are finding ways to better blend personal and professional lives. This is also one of the reasons why there's such a growth in popularity for clever flexible workspace offerings that bring exercise classes and healthy juice bars, and even children's creches and pets, into the workplace. Less pressure to keep these activities separate makes keeping the balance a lot easier.

There are even some players globally adding great accommodation options to their workplaces meaning that people can travel and work simultaneously. Imagine it: connect in the morning to catch up on your mails, go for a surf, join a team chat online, go for a walk and lunch in the local park and then work for the rest of the day and even into the night with your colleagues while they're in the office back home. The restorative power of connecting with nature and natural surrounds is a wellness hack well understood by these guys!

The ability to perpetuate a desired lifestyle while maintaining a rewarding career is an incredibly attractive offering for all generations. Companies who are prepared to think out of the box and offer a work-life blend will beat those who simply just offer a work-life balance and win the war for talent, of all ages.

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