Work Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model – A Weapon to Retain Hi-Tech Employees

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ABSTRACT
this paper presents an integrated model of retaining IT professionals in the organization. Nowadays, the competition among the hi-tech companies is increasingly focuses on the competition in hi-tech employees. In today’s fast paced society and an intensely competitive environment, the Human Resource Managers are seeking options to improve employee morale, retain hi-tech employees with valuable technical knowledge and keep pace with workplace trends. If the HR Managers of IT firms will not be careful, it will result in the outflow of innovative and technical employees who are regarded as the core of human resources for the organizations. Therefore, the outflow of the hi-tech employees counts a lot to the organizations and they examine the means of talent retention. This paper emphasizes on an important weapon in the form of Work Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model to retain the hi-tech employees through encouraging Work Life Balance in the organization. WLBR Model reveals that work-life balance is both important for the organization and for its employees particularly in current dynamic organizational scenarios. It helps the organization to improve productivity, efficiency, competitiveness, morale and hence gain a competitive edge. Similarly employees are benefited from work-life balance initiatives through increased motivation to work, enhanced satisfaction, empowerment, commitment and ultimately retention in the organization.

Keyword: Employee Retention, Work Life Balance, Work Life Balance Retention Model, Retention Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION
The greatest challenge to the Human Resource Managers nowadays is to cost-effectively recruit, train and retain their employees. The organizations have now understood that the key resource for high tech organizations to compete in the new economy is no longer capital or hard assets but qualified, well trained talents (Gardner, 2002). Due to the constant changing economic conditions and demands of the society, work has changed its role all over the world. Previously, ‘survival’ and ‘necessity’ were related as the subjects of work but today in addition to necessity, work is seen as an important contributor to the ‘personal satisfaction’ as well (Tariq, 2012; Joshi, et al., 2002). Workers or employees are widely acknowledged as the most challenging and competitive capital of an organization. In order to maintain the quality hi-tech employees, organizations in the new economy must understand what the employees want and how they can obtain job satisfaction. With the continuous increasing development of high technology, the demand for hi-tech employees has increased greatly. The aggressive competition for talents has been called “the war for talent” (Chambers et al., 1998). This war needs to be win by the hi-tech companies by encouraging a practical and workable work life balance policy, benefiting and meeting the needs of both the companies and its employees. In this regard, Work Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model based on win-win approach has been introduced to improve employee retention in the organization. The WLBR model shows that better work life balance will positively improve the performance, productivity and the retention of employees.

2. WORK LIFE BALANCE CONCEPT
Work Life balance has been a growing concern of the organizations nowadays which helps employees balance work and non-work responsibilities. This concept focused primarily on helping employees balance work and family responsibilities by offering
family-friendly benefits. A number of changes in workforce demographics and social have brought work life balance issues to the attention of companies as a way of attracting and retaining the hi-tech employees. Work Life Balance is defined as a Balance of Family, Life and Work. In broader sense, it is defined as a satisfactory level of involvement between the multiple roles in a person’s life. It involves the examination of people’s ability to manage simultaneously the multi-faceted demands of life. Work Life Balance is defined as “A state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person’s job and personal life are equal” (The Word Spy, 2002). Work Life Balance is also defined on the New Zealand Department of Labor work life balance website (www.dol.govt.nz/worklife/whatis.asp) as being about “effectively managing the juggling act between paid work and the other activities that are important to people.” Although work life balance has traditionally been assumed to involve the devotion of equal amounts of time to paid work and non-work roles but recently the concept has been recognized as more complex involving some additional features (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003):

- **Involvement Balance**, meaning the level of psychological involvement in, or commitment to work and non-work roles.
- **Time Balance**, which concerns the amount of time given to work and non-work roles.
- **Satisfaction Balance** means the level of satisfaction with work and non-work roles.

Thus, the proposed work life balance retention (WLBR) model depends on the right balance between three features of WLB i.e. involvement, time and satisfaction for work and non-work roles. Work life issues are about achieving a better balance between the requirements of employees and achievement of organizational goals. According to Lockwood (2003), work-life balance has different meanings regarding the context in which it is used. There are different terms that are used regarding work-life balance, such as work/family, work/family conflict, family-friendly benefits, work/life programs, work/life initiatives and work/family culture. A review of current literature illustrates that today’s technical employees want flexible work schedules, career development policies, job security, the opportunity to gain respect by doing a job well and the opportunity to improve their job skills via dedicated training. The work life balance benefits need to be delivered in conjunction with a competitive salary if employees are to remain satisfied and productive.

### 3. WORK LIFE CONFLICT CONCEPT

Work life balance was initially conceived in terms of work family conflict (Kahn et al., 1964), work family enhancement/facilitation (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000), or, work family balance (e.g. Hill, et al. 2001). Kahn et al., 1964 defined role conflict as the “simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other”. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) based on the work of Kahn et al. (1964), defined work family conflict as: “A form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role.”

Conflict between work and family has been found to be bi-directional (Frone et al., 1992a; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Most researchers make the distinction between work-family conflict, and family-work conflict. Work-to-family conflict occurs when experiences at work (e.g. extensive, irregular, or inflexible work hours, work overload and other forms of job stress, interpersonal conflict at work, extensive travel, career transitions, unsupportive supervisor or organization) interfere with family life,. For example, an unexpected meeting late in the day may prevent a parent from picking up his or her child from school. Family-to-work conflict occurs when experiences in the family (e.g. presence of young children, primary responsibility for children, elder care responsibilities, interpersonal conflict within the family unit, unsupportive family members) interfere with work life. For example, a parent may take time off from work in order to take care of a sick child (Wikipedia, 2008).
Thus, Work Life Conflict phenomenon exists when the pressures from one role make it difficult to comply with the demands of the other. This means that if employees feel that they are not able to manage a good mix and integration of work and non-work roles, then they may experience negative or conflicting outcomes. (Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997). This implies a bi-directional relationship where work can interfere with non-work responsibilities and vice versa (Frone & Carlson, 1999). Employees who experience increased stress due to work life conflict and decreased perceptions of control over their work and non-work demands are less productive, less committed to, and satisfied with, their organization and more likely to be absent or leave the organization. (Frye & Breaugh, 2004)

4. WORK LIFE BALANCE RETENTION (WLBR) MODEL – A WIN-WIN APPROACH FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

With the growing diversity of family structures represented in the workforce in the new millennium, it is important that human resource professionals better understand the interface of work and family relationships and the resulting impact in the workplace. Work-life balance that people demand today is not different from what people wanted yesterday. The only difference lies in the demands of the society, as society has changed from what it was yesterday to what it is today. Today the trend has moved towards single parent and dual-working parents with increased domestic responsibilities. It is very critical for the organizations to attract and retain their best human capital in order to remain competitive. The best way to do so is to consider “what employees want?”

Today the answer to this question is “work-life balance” which majority of the employees want without taking into consideration their age, gender, type of the job, experience, etc. (Miller, 2006, Tariq, 2012). A range of government policies has been developed supporting work life balance in response to economic and cultural trends. In addition to the development of government policies, organizations have increasingly been developing formal policies that attempt to facilitate the work/life balance. The organizations have a responsibility to establish clear policies and communicate expectations for those policies. It should also provide commitment to a rewarding work environment that leaves time for employees to engage with their family, friends, and community without impacting their opportunity for career development. Organizations that are failing to consider these issues are facing the crucial problem of brain drain and are losing their hi-tech employees. Joshi et al (2002) emphasized that work-life balance is a two dimensional approach i.e. organizational approach and individual approach. Work-life balance was traditionally defined in the framework of organization as what organizations do for the individuals (organizational approach). The second dimension (individual approach) emphasizes the fact that what individuals want for them. Cascio (2003) describes retention as initiatives taken by management to keep employees from leaving the organization, such as rewarding employees for performing their jobs effectively; ensuring harmonious working relations between employees and managers; and maintaining a safe, healthy work environment. Hence, it is important that the retention policy should be started at the time of HR planning, recruiting, selecting and the commencement of the HR management.

Based on the previous studies and the literature review, Work Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model has been designed which could be a win-win approach for employers and employees. WLBR model says that the Work and Life Balance Management could be achieved if policies related to Organizational Work Balance Dimensions and Individual/Personal Life Balance Dimensions are present in the organization. Every employee in the organization has different work-life balance from every other employee with respect to their age, experience, gender, employment status etc. In a holistic sense work-life balance is the match that a person achieves in multiple facets of life. Work life balance as the name indicates is to achieve a level of equilibrium,
symmetry or stability which thus creates harmony and synchronization in a person’s overall life (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004). Three features of work-life balance have been discovered by Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003). Involvement balance is the first one which emphasizes the degree to which one involves himself in work and non-work part. The second is the Time balance which emphasizes the time allotted to work and non-work part; and the third is Satisfaction balance which elaborates the degree to which one attaches his satisfaction to work and non-work part of life (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). If the Involvement, Time and Satisfaction (ITS) balance is achieved in the right proportion then the employee will gain Sense of Happiness/Accomplishment, Job Satisfaction, active Participation (Presenteeism) in all the activities related to his/her domain and finally results in maximizing productivity. On the other hand, if ITS is unbalanced then it will lead to Role Conflict & Job Stress, Employee Dissatisfaction, Avoiding Tasks (Absenteeism) and hence minimize productivity. WLBR model states that the correct evaluation on the effectiveness of WLB initiatives must be taken by the organization on the basis of the outcomes achieved. This will provide the organization an in depth understanding of the policies offered by them and their impact on the employees which will positively help in improving employee Retention.

Work-Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model - A win-win approach for the employers and the employees

![Work Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model](http://www.ijmsbr.com)

**Figure 1: Work Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model**
Organizations need their employees to put their utmost efforts to achieve organizational goals. As it is two way process, employees should also feel that the organization is concerned to their needs and helps in managing their work and family lives equally. WLBR model illustrate that every organization should honor the needs of their hi-tech employees by introducing the impartial and effective employee-friendly policies so that the employees can synchronize their work and non-work lives in addition with fulfillment of organizational goals.

Organizational Work Balance Dimensions (OWBD) –

![Diagram of OWBD]

Personal Life Balance Dimensions (PLBD) –
Figure 1(b): Personal Life Balance Dimensions

PLBD

- Finance
- Geographic Location
- Child Care Benefits
  - Family/Social Commitments
  - Training & Development
  - Medical & Other Benefits
    - Financial Assistance for Child Care Expenses
    - Time-Off Schemes
    - Child Care Arrangements
      - Rewards to children for obtaining best Results in exams
        - Medical Benefits
        - Superannuation / Retirement Benefits
        - Sports & Recreational Activities

Dependent Care Support
Marriage / Maternity / Paternity
Child Responsibilities
Unexpected Event

*Figure 1(b): Personal Life Balance Dimensions*
5. CONCLUSION

Work Life Balance Retention (WLBR) Model have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, increase sense of accomplishment and retain Hi-Tech employees. In today’s global marketplace, as organizations aim to reduce costs, it falls to the human resource professional to understand the critical issues of work life balance and create a mutually beneficial interdependence with employees. By continually evaluating and evolving WLBR model and by focusing on measurable results, a better work-life balance can be achieved and bring benefits for the employers as well as employees, bringing real productivity gains to the organization and a better quality of life to the employees. There are major four benefits in providing work life balance to the hi-tech employees -

1) Employees can reduce job stress, and become more productive and motivated, and happier, as they achieve a better work-life balance.

2) Organizations can enhance employee morale, and introduce flexible practices which will focus on efficiency and effectiveness rather than the long working hours.

3) Organizations can ensure career opportunities and arrange training for the development of the employees who are productive, but not necessarily constantly visible.

3) Employees can be attracted and retained in the organization for longer time period which result in improved organizational commitment, reduced absenteeism, higher retention, greater productivity and reduced work life conflict.

Thus, the better implementation of Work Life Balance Policies is dependent upon employers who have to be concerned and through proper communication identify the needs and concerns of the employees to help them in creating a balance in their professional and personal lives (Hayward, 2011). In this regard, WLBR Model is an attempt to maximize the productivity and improve employee retention in the organization.

6. REFERENCES


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