

CAN WE REALLY BALANCE WORK AND LIFE?

The Work/Life conversation has changed significantly over the years and the idea of Work/Life balance has become obsolete.

With all the changes in the way work gets done, the focus is more Work/Life Integration or Fit. The conversation about Work/Life integration must include the many generations at work and the competing demands that are life stage driven.



Many point to the influx of millennials into the workforce along with technology as pivotal influences resulting in the ever evolving workplace boundaries. The way work gets done is no longer from 9-

5 in one place. The boundaries have expanded. With technology we now answer business and personal emails everywhere and conduct business at all times of the day and evening and often simultaneously. In a results driven workplace, it's not when you work but the results that matter.

The millennial generation is cited as one of the driving forces behind this evolution, yet it has been changing as technology grew and Gen Y realigned the workplace to value personal time and a "balance" in how we live our lives. The changing workforce boundaries that started with Gen Y also benefits Boomers as they step back and seek flexible alternatives to full time work at the office as they wind down careers. This changing way that work is getting done helps Boomers construct a new work paradigm as they sometimes switch to consulting or part time roles. With technology leading the way

Boomers can also work anytime, anywhere. Seen in this way the generations are often more alike than different. Whether you are Boomer, Gen Y, or Millennial, technology and the flexible way to view how work gets done allows each generation to meet their career and life goals.

In a Harvard Business Review article in October 2014, Stew Friedman identifies several leaders who have exemplified the coming together of all the components that make one's life. He points out that those who have successfully made it work have nurtured a life driven by values, social contribution and personal growth. It's not about the daily integration of all these components but the "body of work" over a lifetime.

What does that mean in practice as individuals and organizations strive for integration across generational boundaries, across the life of a career and across the span of a personal life? Based on the descriptions of real people by Stew Friedman, it seems that life decisions driven by values, one's passions and the coming together of those things for continued growth make the difference. So where do you begin to make your organization Work/Life savvy? Start with organizational values, goals, and purpose. Examine how the organization values people and demonstrates that value to its people. Is it evident to your staff that you value their passions and decisions? How can you convey this to your employees so that your organization walks the talk. Starting with small changes will go a long way.

As Ruth Bader Ginsburg said in an interview with Katie Couric – "You can't have it all at once. Over my lifespan, I think I have had it all, but in given periods in time, things were rough. And if you have a caring life partner, you help the other person when that person needs it"

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