

Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
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Work-Life Balance

The concept of work-life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities and more as complementary elements of a full life. The cited benefits of this to the organisation include improved recruitment and retention of staff, employee satisfaction and work productivity. The individuals are said to benefit from less stress, improved health and a more fulfilling life.

This concept is an important one for facility managers in three ways. Firstly, FM is itself a demanding role that can intrude upon family life around the clock; secondly the facilities team is a large one where many team members will have to work unsocial hours so the welfare of the people involved should be of great concern to a good FM; Finally, the design and operation of the facilities and the delivery of facilities services such as catering, security and homeworking support can have a major impact on the Work-Life balance of the entire organisation.

There is increasing evidence which suggests that employers who support a work-life balance ethos and offer flexible working arrangements are likely to have a competitive advantage in the labour market; in particular in relation to the new generation of employees. Personnel Today reported on a survey carried out among 6,000 students in 44 universities which showed that 'achieving a healthy work-life balance is the most important consideration for graduates when it comes to choosing an employer'

Evidence also indicates that work-life balance policies and practices can make a difference to women's career progression. A study undertaken on the experience of women in senior management positions by Oxford Brookes University clearly showed that the younger generation of senior women, who had access to improved maternity rights and family-friendly working arrangements, were able to progress along a more linear career path and more quickly, compared to the senior women belonging to the older generation.

Where people are struggling to maintain a work-life balance, juggling work with home responsibilities, for instance, or working long hours that result in exhaustion, stress and reduced effectiveness, a toll is taken not only on their approach to their work but also on their health and wellbeing. Flexibility in working patterns means that employees can look after dependants in their time, not the organisations.

Employers who support the Work-Life balance argument claim that it makes good business sense to provide opportunities for their workforce to achieve a better lifestyle with a pay-back of increased morale, better effectiveness and productivity, and the ability to embrace change. The workplace has altered dramatically over the years and old methods are no longer appropriate for organisation that believe their most valuable asset is their workforce.

The Work Foundation has a number of useful reports and resources on Work-Life balance on their website www.theworkfoundation.com