



# You Manage It! 2: Emerging Trends

## Work-Life Balance Is the New Perk Employees Are Seeking

Joe (not his real name) has risen through the corporate ranks to become an executive at a major bank. He thought his workload would become lighter as he moved up, but the opposite has occurred. He now works 6 or 7 days a week, from multiple locations. He keeps an apartment in New York and is on the road another 3 or 4 days per week. Only on weekends does he see his wife and three children, who live in Connecticut.

Does this sound like fun to you? No? Well, you are not alone. Although some ambitious individuals are willing to sacrifice their personal life to satisfy their ambition, a growing number are not. According to a recent survey by the Association of Executive Search Consultants (AESC), 85 percent of recruiters have seen candidates reject a job offer because it lacked work-life balance.

For companies competing for talent, it is becoming increasingly important to provide work-life balance in the positions they are seeking to fill. The AESC survey revealed that two-thirds of companies are developing programs to help top recruits increase their family time without sacrificing their careers.

Job candidates are learning that they can bargain with their employer for more than money. Lisa Patten, a director at the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), proved this point when she was being recruited from her previous employer. Because she was not dissatisfied with her former employer, she compiled a list of requests to PwC that included a 4-day workweek so she could spend more time with her children, and the flexibility to work from home if not on a client visit. PwC did not hesitate to approve these flexible work conditions for Patten.

Although Patten's productivity in terms of billable hours and new business brought to the firm increased, PwC has found that flexible work is not a good fit for every employee. It reports that employees most likely to be given flexibility in work hours and location are those who are disciplined and self-motivated and have a clear set of performance measures to ensure accountability.

## Critical Thinking Questions

2-13. Which types of jobs are best suited for flexibility with regard to hours and office location? Which types of

jobs are less likely to afford this type of flexibility? Explain.

2-14. Earlier in this chapter, you learned that most work in today's workplace is now being done by teams of employees. In your opinion, does the intensive use of self-managed teams make it easier or more difficult for employees to achieve work-life balance? Explain.

## Team Exercise

2-15. Form a small group with several class members and discuss the following scenario: The owner-manager of a small, four-person consulting firm works long hours on multiple projects and expects his three associates to spend most of their time in the office to learn consulting skills from him and to attend meetings with clients that take place at the office. What objections would the owner-manager have if the three associates requested policies promoting greater work-life balance? How could the associates present their interest for greater work flexibility in a way that is likely to receive a positive outcome? Be prepared to present your answers to the whole class.

## Experiential Exercise: Individual

2-16. Think about your own goals to achieve work-life balance in your work life. How will these goals influence the type of career choices that you make? What about the type of company or industry that you will seek out for employment? What trade-offs are you willing to make to achieve your goals for work-life balance with regards to salary, ambition, or geographic location? Be prepared to share your answers to these questions with the class if called on by the instructor.

*Sources:* Based on Ridge, S. (2007, March 19). Balance: The new workplace perk. *Forbes.com*. [www.forbes.com/2007/03/19/work-life-health-lead-careers-worklife07-cz\\_sr\\_0319ridge.html](http://www.forbes.com/2007/03/19/work-life-health-lead-careers-worklife07-cz_sr_0319ridge.html); Hewlett, S., and Luce, C. (2006, December). Extreme jobs: The dangerous allure of the 70-hour workweek. *Harvard Business Review*, 49-59; Shipman, C., and Kay, K. (2009, June 1). A saner workplace. *Businessweek*, 66-69.