

Achieving a Work Life Balance: How Cornflakes Revolutionised the Working Week

By Lyndsay Swinton

Wondering if you are achieving a healthy work life balance? Tell tale signs of poor work life balance include high stress, overtime, absence and staff turnover.

Achieving a balance between work and life become increasingly important when family responsibilities increase, and care for children or other dependants is a priority.

Who wouldn't want to work for a progressive company?

It's a classic win-win. Company's who offer flexible working enabling employees to achieve a work life balance, will increasingly become employers of choice. In return, employees with a good balance between life and work generally offer many benefits to a company – they don't go sick, they are loyal, and save money and CO2 when they work from home.

How cornflakes enabled work life balance

Balancing home life and work, enables you to meet several of your [basic human needs](#). Let's face it, working less hours frees up time to focus on other things such as your community, your health, your family, your hobbies and so on.

In the 1930's, the Kelloggs Company introduced a 30 hour working week. This was an altruistic effort to spread work around the maximum amount of families during the Depression. In some families, mom worked the early shift while dad got the kids off to school, and later mom fixed dinner while dad did his shift.

Who's holding the baby?

Don Browning, an ordained minister, advocates the 60 hour combined week. It

doesn't matter who works which hours, but mom and dad's total work effort is no more than 60 hours.

The time deficit many of us feel would disappear but at what cost? For many there is an economic necessity to work greater amounts of hours to maintain a lifestyle. A recent poll on this site showed 82% of you work more than 35 hours per week, so who's left holding the baby?

My professional childcare provider is not unusual in paying their staff relatively low wages, and some may argue this is acceptable as keeping overheads low increases the accessibility of childcare to low income families. (Personally I'd prefer to see childcare workers paid more, increasing their long term commitment to the job but that's a whole other debate).

Frugality is the new excess

The current mood of frugality is affecting even the wealthiest families. A US study conducted in June 2008, by Harrison Group and American Express Publishing, showed 80% of the top 10% wealthiest families are reviewing each spend category. (Just to put this into context, wealth was defined as households with discretionary income of at least \$100,000, after taxes, mortgage and education costs and other regular payments.)

So what's the best way to balance your books? Work more hours? As in the 1930's depression, redundancies are soaring so work is becoming increasingly scarce. And those that are in work are finding life increasingly stressful.

Worried workers take time off

First Care, a UK absence management company with clients such as Coca Cola, British Gas and the NHS, have recorded a massive increase in absence in September 2008. Twice as many people have phoned in with flu like symptoms and a third as many with gastro intestinal problems including ulcers and irritable bowel syndrome.

A golden cage is still a cage

So, it may be timely to assess your work life balance. Think big. Could you downshift your life, live in a smaller house, make fewer trips, or buy less stuff? Build a business online so it doesn't matter where or when you work? (That's what I did and you can [find out how here](#)). Could you rent out a room in your house, have an overseas

student, or sell your stuff on e-Bay? Achieving a work life balance could be more than whether your employer offers compressed hours or part-time work.

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