

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Making Work-Life Balance Work



Everyone wants work-life balance, but most struggle with it. Some of this is natural because work-life balance is a moving target that requires constant tweaking. Here are a couple of tips for success. First, define what “work success” means to you. Really pin this one down—do you want to become vice president in five years, or is becoming the recognized expert in widget design your goal? These definitions of success are different and require different work-life achievement strategies. Second, once your work-success definition is clarified, you can discuss work-life balance action steps with those you love. This clarity and team effort will reduce your frustration in seeking work-life balance and help you formulate with awareness the life you want to live.

The “Two-Minute” Rule

David Allen wrote the bestselling book “Getting Things Done,” and offered a productivity tool called the two-minute rule. Try it for five days to see how it performs for you. The challenge: Be mindful as you go about your day, and recognize how many tasks and chores confront you. Consider how much time they take. If you estimate any task will take less than two minutes, do it immediately. Keep a diary to look back on, and be amazed at how much you achieve. Source: “Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity” by David Allen.

Business Case for Diversity

Diversity awareness is about tolerance and respect toward others, despite differences found among the workforce. And the business case for diversity is that synergy and greater productivity come with diversity. To achieve these goals, no employee can be left behind. Beyond making dignity and respect shared values, here are a few tips to encourage employee contributions:

- 1.) When you hear a different point of view, probe to learn more about it. You will discover how diversity influences wisdom, problem solving, and perception, and can produce new insights.
- 2.) Make attempts to apply knowledge and skills learned from others to your work problems.
- 3.) Think of diversity as a resource—actively seek solutions by borrowing skills and perspectives from others.

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Don't Fool Around with Fatigue

Fatigue plays a role in many accidents and injuries, so recognizing its symptoms is important to protect yourself if your job includes risk of injury. Fatigue is feeling weary and tired, and lacking in energy. Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is a disorder of relentless fatigue, but more often fatigue results from lifestyle issues like excess physical activity, jet lag, lack of physical activity, lack of sleep, medications, alcohol abuse, and unhealthy eating habits. Emotional stress, trauma, depression, and grief can also trigger bouts of fatigue. A list of fatigue symptoms can be found at www.cdc.gov.

Soft Skills to Know: Accepting Feedback

Ouch—constructive

feedback! You will find plenty of tips on giving feedback so a well-meaning critique is received and understood, but less help on how to be a



good receiver of feedback or having your reviewer feel welcomed back. Accepting feedback is a soft skill that will elevate your reputation. Employers love employees who receive feedback well because it helps drive productivity. This makes “the ability to accept feedback” important in many annual reviews. Keys to becoming a feedback dynamo: 1) Remember, no one enjoys constructive feedback that challenges their predetermined notion of a job well done. It’s a shocker. So, accept that life includes this reality. 2) Nearly all reviewers experience anxiety associated with giving constructive feedback. Empathy for this role will help you minimize defensiveness, set your reviewer at ease, and seal your reputation as having an outstanding ability to accept constructive feedback. 3) Prepare yourself for constructive feedback by consciously deciding to appear excited to get it, to discover what you don’t know, to be inquisitive, to thank the reviewer, and to not dwell on disappointing news.

Heading Conflicts Off at the Pass

Follow the “Rule of Immediacy” in resolving relationship conflicts. Be proactive, after any incident, and seek a private meeting with your coworker or colleague to discuss comments, issues, or behaviors that concern or offend you. Conflicts are normal and unavoidable in any work organization, but they do not have to be as harmful as many people make them. This “keeping the air clear” approach to resolving early-stage conflicts is sound. Most employees want to get along with each other, avoid conflicts, and know their relationships are successful and tranquil. “Why didn’t you come to me sooner” is one of the most frequent responses heard in workplace conflict resolution.

How to Be a Thought Leader

A “thought leader” is a person with a reputation for being an expert and also a great influencer.

Thought leaders are not talkers. They’re doers who teach others “how to do it.” Thought leaders acquire prestige, but the bottom line is their leadership in helping others and making contributions to their field. People pay attention to thought leaders because they know the shortcuts to success. If you love what you do, have what it takes to lead, and are certain others could benefit from your innovations, find a path to thought leadership. Best ideas: 1) Author a free e-book and distribute it widely. It’s easy. Learn how with excellent instructions at www.wikihow.com. 2) Consider free seminars on topics that would attract small groups of peers. Grow from there, using feedback to hone your ideas. 3) Ask yourself what it is that you really know well that others do not, and then pursue this niche to become the expert. 4) Find a funnel to channel your expertise so you can remain visible, such as an association, a community organization, or a business engaged with the larger community.

Back to School Tip: Create a Family Schedule

School will begin soon. As your family slowly turns to a new, exciting school year, consider this exercise to establish a schedule: With a whiteboard, have a brainstorming session to create a list of tasks and activities to be done in the morning, at midday (if necessary), and during the evening, so a “master schedule” can be created. Spend 20-30 minutes collecting ideas—all ideas are welcome. Suggest times for waking up, going to bed, departing for school, arrival at home, chores, extracurricular activities, breakfast, packing lunches, making beds, brushing teeth, feeding and walking pets, laying out clothes, bathroom schedules, etc. After sufficient time, create the schedule and plug all the information into it. Everyone gets a copy. By actively having children participate in creating the schedule they own the need for the transition, understand their responsibilities, and feel empowered by the planning experience. .Bonus: Your children will learn about brainstorming and its value years before being taught it in school.