

Finding the right balance

By Jack McGinn

It can be easy when life gets busy to lose track of the balance between work and home life, but is it really worth the personal toll?

According to Logic Health Managing Director Eoghan McKenna, the answer is a resounding no.

"The relationship between work and all the other commitments in your life is probably the best way to explain work-life balance and it's massively important," he told *Leader*.

"There are numerous surveys and research that show salary isn't the number one priority for employees – it's actually the work-life balance and the culture of the organisation they're going to."

Logic is an organisation specialising in physical health and injury risk assessment, which carries out work helping organisations to lower their health risk profile.

Mr McKenna said in his experience there were a number of things employers could do to help their staff achieve a work-life balance.

"Having a good work-life balance and promoting that in the organisation has massive benefits, not only for productivity but for the workplace culture and being an employer of choice," he said.

"Some of them are providing flexible working arrangements, which is a big thing at the moment for a lot of organisations.

"They provide flexi-time or employees work an extra half-hour a day to earn an extra day off once every fortnight. There are a lot of different arrangements an organisation can put in place.

"It's up to the employee and the employer to come to an agreement on something that might suit the individual employee, because what you might want for your work-life balance might not be what I want for my work-life balance."

Though much of the focus around work-life balance is about a healthy lifestyle, Mr McKenna said people's individual values would factor in to how they achieved best results.

"Work-life balance is about your life commitments," he said.

"If you exercise and value staying healthy and your organisation promotes that it's great because it does fit with your values.

"While you're at work you can participate knowing they provide these services or healthy eating options. If that's of value to you it will help you get your work-life balance in order."

And while maintaining the balance can be difficult for staff at all levels of an organisation, Mr McKenna said it was of particular importance at the top of the chain.

"I think a lot of business leaders have pressure on them, both internally and externally," he said.

"It might be from the board, it might be from upper management, so having that work-life balance is even more important.

"You're going to be more productive that way. If you continue to bog yourself down in work, your stress levels are going to be quite high, you can be more likely to get sick and you can get run down and fatigued.

"Having that work-life balance helps you get away from the work you could constantly be doing as a business leader and gives you a bit of an escape."

Whatever the means, Mr McKenna said there was huge incentive for companies to help look after the balance of their employees at all levels.

"When the balance is right your employees are more productive, they take less sick leave and your absentee and presentee rates stay down, which has a big impact on your overheads," he said.

+ Tips for a work-life balance

- Set time aside each day for yourself and don't let work interfere. This time needs to be in your calendar.
- Try to limit work emails and work calls creeping into your personal time.
- Turn off the alert every time you receive an email on your phone.
- Learn to say no.
- Get seven to eight hours' sleep every night.
- Exercise regularly as science reveals it helps reduce stress.
- Work smarter, not harder.

+ Tips for your workplace

- Find out what employees value and use this to create a work-life balance.
- Don't expect your employees to constantly answer emails outside work hours.
- Explore the provision of flexible working hours.
- Trial working from home arrangements – Although this may seem counterproductive, if you find employees are getting more work done at home then it is a win-win.
- Explore group exercise options or health and wellbeing initiatives in your workplace.

