

BE WELL

Work-Life Balance in the Digital Age

What is work-life balance?

Someone achieves work-life balance when they are able to satisfactorily engage in both work and nonwork roles.¹ This requires minimal conflict between work and nonwork roles.² These nonwork roles can be related to family, friends, community, or other important facets of someone's life and identity.

Awareness of work-life balance can allow everyone to live a more meaningful and intentional life. Research has shown that better work-life balance contributes positively to work, such as increasing job performance and decreasing job burnout.³ Work-life balance also contributes positively to nonwork parts of life, such as improving marriages, increasing family satisfaction, increasing leisure activity time, and decreasing conflict with family members.⁴

How the digital world influences work-life balance.

The ability for employees to work in-person, at home, or a mix of both has altered the workplace. Depending on the person, this could bring benefits or drawbacks. According to an American Bar Association survey conducted in 2022, most attorneys have the option to work remotely. About 30% of attorneys work from home all the time, about 30% work in the office all the time, and the other approximately 40% do both.⁵

Remote work can allow employees to have a more flexible schedule.⁶ This can allow employees to make room for important nonwork parts of their life. Whether this is working at a different time, allowing a greater ability to manage health, or

being able to take their dog on a lunch walk, remote work can give employees more control over what they are able to do with their day. Additionally, the ability to work from home saves time by cutting out the daily commute and prep that goes into working from an office outside of the home. This could also save employees money by cutting down on gasoline, public transportation costs, or car maintenance costs. For employees who prefer this kind of work, remote work can help improve employee well-being.⁷

While remote work has its benefits, it's not necessarily best for everyone. Remote work can cause a lack of connectedness with coworkers and increased social isolation. Additionally, those whose home is their office may also have a decreased ability to separate work time from time set aside to other parts of their life.⁸ Particularly among young employees, remote work can negatively impact their ability to receive mentorship.

These benefits and drawbacks are highly dependent on many factors, such as the work environment, the home environment, distance of commute, and whether someone's home office is segregated from the rest of their home.

Ideas to achieve better work-life balance.

Of course, each of us needs to determine whether full-time in-person work, full-time remote work, or a mix of the two is the best for us – if our work affords us the ability to choose.

Part- or full-time remote workers can take advantage of the benefits of remote work while minimizing the detriments. The

benefits, such as increased time and flexibility, can give remote workers more control over their daily lives while still allowing them to meet their work goals. While this is true, remote workers must also be careful not to allow their work to overpower the nonwork needs in their life.

For example, remote workers can help separate their work and nonwork obligations by creating a physical separation. This could include putting your office in a spare room with a door and shutting that door when you decide to put work away. This can also help minimize distractions when you are working so you can maximize your working hours.

Work-life balance is a journey, not a destination. Life changes and so do your needs. This could mean that at one point in your life in-person work is the best option for you, but later down the road a part-time remote schedule makes more sense. In order to maintain work-life balance, we must continuously reassess our needs and situation to determine whether we should make adjustments.

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¹ M. Joseph Sirgy & Dong-Jin Lee, *Work-Life Balance: an Integrative Review*, *Applied Res. Quality Life* 12:229-254, 230 (2018).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* at 236–37.

⁴ *Id.* at 237.

⁵ ABA survey: Most lawyers want options for remote work, court and conferences, American Bar Association (last visited March 4, 2024) <https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2022/09/aba-survey-lawyers-remote-work/?login>

⁶ L. Vyas, "New normal" at work in a post-COVID world: work-life balance and labor markets, *Pol'y & Soc'y* 41(1), 155-167, 160 (2022).

⁷ Dodi Wirawan Irawanto et al., *Work from Home: Measuring Satisfaction between Work-Life Balance and Work Stress during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia*, *Economies* 9:96, 2 (June 25, 2021).

⁸ *Id.*; Vyas, *supra* at 157.

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