

## Corporate Social Responsibility in COVID-19 Times – From Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Blend\*

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### Abstract

Corporate social responsibility is an important factor in how it is accepted by the environment. It influences customers' purchasing decisions and can be taken into account by job seekers. CSR activities have proven to be important and visible during the ongoing crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has put the organization under the greatest pressure on the technology they have ever encountered. Most companies and their employees have adapted to the changes in the working regime they introduced during the pandemic. The goal of the article is to analyze how to move from Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Blend. It provides a few steps for the smooth progress of work-life blending in each company.

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility, COVID, employees, work-life blend

### Introduction

The past decades have seen a growing pressure from various stakeholder groups on corporate firms to consider social and environmental consequences of their operations within their decision making (Engida et al., 2020). There are many of them, companies that have realized that generating nice profits and sending people a paycheck. That they want to bring something good back to the companies where they do business and create. And that they want to do more than just once in a while, fill out a check and send money to charity. There is a simple term for this in English - CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility. Profitability is a famous topic for studies of a lot of authors (e.g. Fiala et al., 2020; Hedija et al., 2017), but has not been the only goal of companies for a long time

A company that subscribes to this concept behaves responsibly not only within its stores but also in the field of environment (Norberg, 2020; Scholz et al., 2020), community (Mahmut et al., 2020; Glonti et al., 2020), education (Haski-Leventhal, 2020); considers the social impacts of the operation of the company.

It's actually a simple idea: If I do business decently and take an interest in the people and the environment around me, I will also gain a competitive advantage. Because what companies build with this approach is a good reputation. And customer confidence. A customer or client who trusts a given brand is a loyal client who likes to return.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility and COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the organization under the greatest pressure on the technology they have ever encountered (Talbot and Ordonez-Ponce, 2020; Galetska, 2020). The outbreak of the pandemic forced organizations to be perhaps the most important social experiment in the future of work, and social distancing fundamentally changed the way we collaborate and interact. Hongwei and Lloyd (2020) argue that Covid-19 pandemic offers a great opportunity for businesses to shift towards more genuine and authentic CSR and contribute to addressing urgent global social and environmental challenges. However, it changes not only where the employees do the work, but also how and what we do.

Many employees perform tasks they could not even imagine before. Examples are textile and clothing companies, which have shifted from day to day to manufactures of protective equipment. Food companies, in turn, produce disinfectants, and IT companies, for example, are developing platforms to allow small traders to sell online while their brick-and-mortar store is closed. (Butler, 2020)

According to Aguinis et al. (2020), CSR policies in response to COVID-19 are created by organizations but are implemented by individual employees. The goal of the article is to analyze how to move from Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Blend. It provides a few steps for the smooth progress of work-life blending in each company.

The current situation is actually a great opportunity to start reorganizing jobs in the organization and let employees take on various responsibilities to better respond to the evolving needs of companies and customers. It's a great opportunity for agile transformation, about which so much has been written. How to prepare for it?

For most full-time employees who are used to commuting to the office, the transition to working from home can be challenging. People communicate more often across a variety of digital communication tools and expect immediate responses. Many of them experience cognitive overload. He gets lost in the organization.

### **How to Work-Life Blend**

With a changing demography and social structure, the work-life balance is according to Bhattacharya et al. (2020) a major concern felt by employees of most organizations. Work-Life Balance is a term for the relationship between the type of working day and housework or family care (balance between paid and unpaid work). Alonso-Dominguez et al. (2020) came to conclusion, that their data indicate that the type of working day affects the balance between paid and unpaid work less than might be expected, since in all cases, it is women who do more unpaid work, while men's involvement in housework changes little, whether they have a continuous or a split working day.

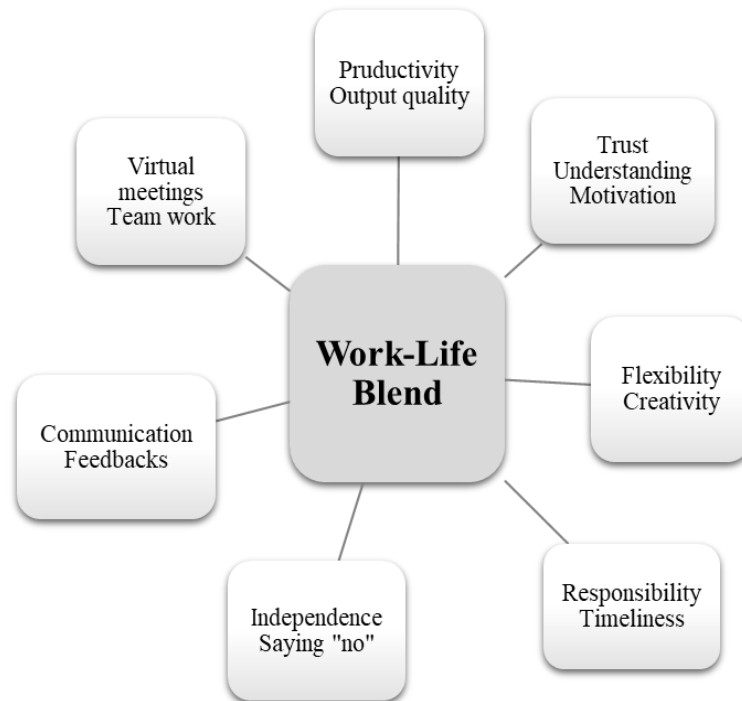
At present, it seems that Work-Life Balance, when it comes to finding a balance between work and private life, its structure and content, is no longer working (Bhende et al., 2020). We live in a time when it is not possible to separate all our aspects of life well enough. Or even if it were possible, for many people the traditional model with the division of time into working and free time and necessary to ensure the physiological needs of life does not work.

Thanks to - for some because of - technology, our careers, personal and social lives are integrated and difficult to separate. Not only do we mix our personal lives between work responsibilities, but on the contrary, even during holidays or our evening "free time", technology brings us closer and brings us back to work. Moreover, the concept of seeking balance suggests to us that one side is negative. There is nothing negative about "having a job" or "having a personal life". (Alvarez-Perez et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2020; Chaudhuri et al., 2020)

And that's why Work-Life Blend comes in handy instead of creating individual fixed time zones. Forget the work-life balance. Instead, try to achieve a natural blend of work, social and personal life

without remorse. The truth is that to achieve satisfaction with the reality connecting the world of work and private, you will need to make some effort (St-Jean and Duhamel, 2020). It will be difficult, but it will be worth it.

According to available literature and studies of different authors (Mansour and Tremblay, 2018; Peters et al., 2020; Shaw, 2014), a few steps or tips could be determined for the smooth progress of work-life blending in each company (see Figure 1).



**Fig. 1: Model for work-life blending. Source: own processing**

Today, the deadlines are getting tighter and an individual's job is not only to match that deadline but also to give **quality output**. Due to this work pressure, it becomes exceedingly difficult to maintain a family life. It doesn't matter what work styles and habits you have, but what really matters is the quality of the output for the client.

**Trust** is essential on the part of the employer. Believe that the employee can set aside time to work. He has **independence** and **responsibility** in his hands and when he needs to, he will receive support and consultation. The employee wants to feel that what one is doing is one's own choice. If I can determine for myself what, when and how I will do it, I will be more motivated than if everything is prescribed to me in detail. This applies not only to employees. Too structured program, kills motivation and destroys **creativity**.

In many companies, driven by orders and prohibitions still prevails. However, for the satisfaction of employees, a functioning mutual **communication** between them and the management is necessary. In these turbulent times, open communication is a prerequisite for transparency. **Talk to people** and find out how people want to do the work activity and try to give them space to implement their ideas. Allow them to freely organize their time and the way they will perform the activity. Teams that organize themselves through “what works and what doesn't”, “what is more or less effective”, etc. feedback loops have the best performance. The boss can design the basic structure of the work and help people with implementation, monitor progress and give constructive feedback.

For many of us, this is unthinkable, and anything to **refuse** is simply not worn now. We are afraid that we will look arrogant in the eyes of others. But then we spend most of our free time doing work that is beyond our normal content. Of course, the occasional help is fine but provided that the person in question or someone on the team repays you. If it's just one-sided, then get paid for your time, or politely decline. But be prepared for strong reasons for rejection. Or suggest that you complete the task instead of another one you were supposed to work on at the time. You will show willingness, but at the same time, you will clearly define the rules.

In a pandemic situation where even cafes and bars are closed in many cities, working from home with limited **interpersonal interaction** (no community life) can evoke feelings of loneliness in some people, which can undermine productivity and engagement. However, it can be beneficial for each employee to participate in regular business phone calls or video calls with their colleagues or to use digital tools for easier collaboration. Examples of suitable measures include virtual coffee sessions, happy hours, book clubs, online gaming and other ways of virtual socializing. While these activities may not replace common rooms, kitchens, and community events in the workplace, they at least help maintain the spirit of the community until life returns to normal.

## Conclusions

Modern technologies give us enormous opportunities, but at the same time deprive us of a balance between privacy and work. It's getting harder to keep her. Widespread use of work from home. A mixture of work and personal and family and social life. The phenomenon of recent months.

The coronavirus crisis has caused profound mental changes in thinking about how to continue working and organizing the work of its people. And not only from where to work but also how to (in) flexibly approach the reconciliation of work and personal life from the employee and the employer. The well-grasped Work-Life Blend model allows companies to survive periods of change and crisis. And it can be the answer and potential for the more challenging challenges of today's volatile world.

However, all steps must be individualized and adapted for a specific company. Flexible settings may not work for everyone. Needs change over time, depending on the things we are currently experiencing and solving (childcare, help for parents, health problems, internships abroad, etc.).

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