

HR Insights

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Work-life Balance Considerations Post Coronavirus

The coronavirus pandemic has sparked one of the largest social experiments in history. Virtually overnight, businesses across the world have been forced to rethink how they operate. Decisions made during this uncertain period will resonate for years and may serve as the base for a new, remote lifestyle post-coronavirus.

Employee work-life balance is especially important for employers to consider—namely, how old standards play into new working arrangements and how employers can help relieve potential employee burdens.

Old Standards, New Problems

The classic, white-collar 9-to-5 work shift has been around for decades—an employee works their eight hours a day, then goes home. This standard had worked fine, but it hit a major speed bump when two-thirds of Americans were essentially ordered to work remotely. Given that only 3% of full-time employees primarily worked from home a few years ago, this change has not been without growing pains.

A common complaint is the expectation of always being available. Some employees report receiving calls or emails outside their traditional work hours when they work from home. What's more, those employees are expected to reply quickly to those communications, even on the weekends.

Similarly, some employees say they feel like they can't take as many breaks or request time off when

working remotely because they fear it will reflect poorly on them.

How Employers Can Help With Balance

Many employees are contending with their own issues as a result of the coronavirus. For instance, employed parents must work and watch children simultaneously since schools are closed. Employees caring for aging loved ones at home have caregiving responsibilities on top of workplace ones. Even employees living alone must contend with loneliness and being stir-crazy.

All these issues illustrate the precipitous work-life balance that will likely endure long after the coronavirus pandemic starts winding down. Employers are in a unique position to help employees manage this important balance. Here are some suggestions:

- Clearly outline remote working expectations, including when employees are expected to be on call.
- Offer flexible scheduling whenever possible to accommodate other life responsibilities.
- Encourage breaks and time off to break up long working periods.
- Provide vouchers for therapy sessions or other mental health services.

Making even small accommodations can help employees balance their professional and personal lives. Moreover, having such offerings makes employers more attractive to those with busy lifestyles, such as working parents.

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