Organizational Dynamics, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 177–193, 2002

www.organizational-dynamics.com

ISSN 0090-2616/02/$–see frontmatter
PII S0090-2616(02)00100-6

Work/Life Balance: Wisdom or Whining

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On the morning of April 23, 2002, the White House held a press briefing that surprised the nation: Karen Hughes, a counselor to the president, manager of the White House press and public relations offices and one of the highest-ranked women in American politics, was resigning. She said her husband and 15-year-old son were deeply unhappy living in Washington, D.C., and she was leaving her post to return to Texas with them.

President George W. Bush's response was swift and clear: he said he supported her choice and believed her decision was correct. Within days, the media responded with national interviews, polls and stories on work/life balance and the relationship between families and careers. Polls showed that the majority of Americans agreed with Hughes' decision to resign.

Meeting employee work/life balance concerns is now a strategic imperative for many organizations. In some industries, global competition for human resources has made an organization's ability to facilitate work/life balance an important competitive factor in attracting talent. According to McKinsey & Company's *The War for Talent*, work/life balance factors account for more than two-thirds of those work characteristics rated ''absolutely essential'' to attracting and retaining talent. Barnett and Hall's recent article, ''How to Use Reduced Hours to Win the War for Talent,'' reports that over half of the professional workforce wants to work fewer hours and that they are making employment decisions that allow them to do so.

For managers to make informed strategic, structural and staffing decisions regarding work/life policies they must understand exactly what facilitates work/life balance. To advance that understanding, this article starts by analyzing recent changes in the dynamics of work/life balance. It continues by describing the major resources associated with achieving work/life balance. Next, it focuses on a key lever to enhance work/life balance: *personal resource management* (PRM). It continues by presenting research that demonstrates how PRM improved the job satisfaction and performance of service workers in a relentless, 24/7 occupation. It concludes with recommendations on how most workers—with the assistance of enlightened leaders and organizational policies—can enhance their personal resource levels and thus improve both their organizational performance and work/life balance.

OLD WHINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

What is at the root of this powerful, new national sentiment? Have we become a nation of whiners with an adolescent sense of entitlement? Or are there some genuine issues behind the need for work/life balance today? In fact, changes in (1) social needs, (2) available technologies and (3) personal expectations have altered the dynamics of work/life balance.

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Greenblatt has been active in research and consulting for a variety of organizations in the leisure, health, education, law, art, travel, and entertainment industries. Her recent research partners include Club Med, DigitalGriot.Net, Syncor, and Albrecht Productions.

She has authored or co-authored 10 articles, books, and instructional videotapes. She is currently completing a book, *Surviving Occupational Paradise: Depletion, Restoration, and Emotional Labor in a Total Institution*. Greenblatt is the recipient of numerous research grants and awards, and has been a National Science Foundation Fellowship Honoree. She is a member of the Academy of Management, the American Psychological Association, and the National Wellness Institute. She holds a B.A. in world arts and cultures and an M.A. in dance ethnology from the University of California at Los Angeles. She subsequently received her master's degree in psychology from Harvard University and received her Ph.D. in organizational behavior from the Harvard Joint Doctoral Program. She has promised to stop collecting degrees.

Changes in Social Needs

Social forces have altered the needs of both employees and employers. In the past, two-parent households typically supplied a male to the workforce and a female caregiver to the home. Today, the number of traditional two-parent U.S. households is less than 25%. Extended families are often too geographically dispersed to help with child and elder-care, and the costs of preparing children for professional success and nursing the infirm have skyrocketed. As a result, employees' family-related financial, temporal, and social burdens have increased dramatically.

Similarly, organizational needs have changed. Bartlett and Ghoshall implore managers to recognize that, ''there is a surplus of capital chasing a scarcity of talented people and the knowledge they possess. In today's economy, that (not financial capital) is the constraining—and therefore strategic—resource.'' The shortage of talent has prompted organizations to hear and begin responding to workers' concerns for work/life balance.

Changes in Available Technology

Laptop computers, PDA's, cell phones, and the Internet have made flexible work arrangements more reasonable and cost-effective. For employees with heavy outside responsibilities, once irreconcilable demands are now technologically feasible. For example, parents with young children and children with infirm parents can often work from home. Even for those with less complicated lives, technology provides the ability to reduce commuting time and increase control.

Changes in Expectations

Finally, social and demographic changes have altered the expectations and priorities of the workforce. The national sentiment that endorses the sacrifice of some professional success in order to resolve work–family conflicts is growing. The success of the women's

movement, for example, has raised expectations about what is possible for women to accomplish in a lifetime. In their new book, *Geeks & Geezers: How Era, Values, and Defining Moments Shape Leaders*, Bennis and Thomas explain how attitudes towards work/life balance vary by generation. The geezers, those currently in their 70s, still believe that work/life balance is a hard-earned luxury, not an organizational imperative. In contrast, other generations are more concerned with balance. Baby boomers—feeling their mortality and educated about the impact of social support and stress—are no longer willing to give their lives (literally) to the firm. Generation Xers and Yers, many of whom were latchkey kids or children of divorced parents, are committed to successfully meeting both family and work responsibilities. Bennis and Thomas point out that ''geeks,'' like 34-year-old Elizabeth Kao of Ford Motor Co., are committed to and institutionalizing these pro-balance beliefs. Kao's leadership helped create Ford's *Total Leadership for the New Economy* program. This program requires formal performance appraisals in three performance domains—work, home, and community—with assessments made by family and friends as well as the full complement of at-work stakeholders.

In sum, strong social and technological forces have all converged to move work/life balance battles from the living room into the boardroom. Companies that do not have policies conducive to work/life balance will have increasing difficulty attracting and retaining talent. These organizations risk a shortfall of intellectual and social capital vital to competing in today's economic environment.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: THE CORE OF WORK/LIFE BALANCE CONCERNS

Work/life balance is most usefully described as the absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and nonwork demands. Discussions and research on work/life balance usually focus on how to manage competing demands for resources. Simply put, achieving work/life balance depends on obtaining and managing sufficient resources to do, have or be those things that are most important to people. For most, this means meeting one's real and perceived personal and work obligations, and thereby satisfying the key needs of both oneself and those one is committed to support. The three types of resources most frequently discussed in the work/life balance arena are (a) temporal resources, (b) financial resources, and (c) control.

Temporal resources provide the time to do everything one needs or wants to do. Telework (working from remote locations), multitasking (i.e., teleconferencing while driving), and information technology systems are among the common approaches to optimizing time use. *Financial resources* provide the money to buy goods and services that either improve life satisfaction, or create opportunities to free up time to do so. Budgeting and downshifting (intentionally reducing material lifestyle expenses) are among the strategies used to address financial resource constraints. *Control* provides the ability to select when and how to create important outcomes. Empowerment, self-directed work teams, and flexible scheduling have all been proffered as ways to increase employee control.

What these three resources have in common is that they are the products of social contracts rarely determined by a single person: in the normal course, time is allocated, money is earned, and control is established through social interactions. Obtaining and maintaining these resources is normally the result of a negotiation between an individual and another social entity. Further, once the allocation criteria determining one's share of these resources within an organizational context have been determined, any attempt to obtain a larger or changed allocation will disturb a number of carefully balanced social systems (and thus the attempt itself will consume material amounts of such resources). In short, increasing employee access to money,

time, and control is very difficult to accomplish at both the organizational and individual levels. Despite the hundreds of books, articles, and work/life programs available, individuals and organizations are still struggling to find practical ways to increase work/life balance.

There is a fourth, less frequently discussed group of resources critical to work/life balance. These are *personal resources*: the physical, psychological, emotional, and social resources at the disposal of an individual. Enhancements to personal resources can directly increase a workers' ability to perform at home and at work. Because they reside within the individual, personal resources can often be managed at low social and financial cost. This can lead to improved work/life balance for the individual while improving performance at work. The next section describes how personal resources work. This understanding can help managers realize the potential of *personal resource management* (PRM) to increase work/life balance.

PERSONAL RESOURCES AND WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Personal resources provide the fuel necessary for an individual to engage with and accomplish all of life's activities. Many work/life conflicts arise within and between people who feel and/or know they cannot physically, psychologically, cognitively, or socially manage all the demands placed on them. Increasing personal resources can help resolve some of the conflicts between work and nonwork.

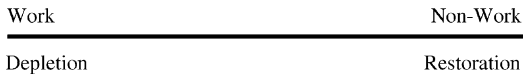
Based on my research, it appears that increases in employee personal resources are associated with multiple work benefits. Heightened personal resources in a workforce increase satisfaction with work/life balance, and may contribute to enhanced retention, reduced burnout, and lower turnover rates. Most importantly, a workforce functioning at a higher personal resource level is one more capable of high performance. Hence, improving employee and managerial knowledge of personal resource enhancement is a cost-effective, results-producing tool to improve work/life balance. This approach not only enables individuals to improve their ability to meet home and work demands, but also provides an integrating framework for understanding how benefits accrue from various performance enhancement strategies (e.g., promoting mindfulness and directed attention; maximizing opportunities to experience flow, and treating employees as corporate athletes).

Maximizing Personal Resources

To maximize personal resources, individuals can focus on increasing any or all of the four key personal resources—*physical*, *psychological*, *cognitive*, and *social* resources. *Physical resources* include physical and psychophysical capabilities—strength to lift, the endurance to climb, and the restfulness to stay awake during 4 p.m. staff meetings. *Psychological resources* include all types of affective and psychological capabilities and responses—those necessary for patience, self-esteem, competent leadership, empathy, competitiveness, and commitment. *Cognitive resources* include natural and learned intellectual capacities as well as the metacognitive (the ability to access them). In addition, cognitive resources include the energy necessary to use these abilities. The human resource (HR) executive who has just completed 15 360° assessments is not less smart than he was 10 hours prior, but the resources necessary to utilize that cognitive capacity are depleted. *Social resources* include one's social capital—the network of one's interpersonal associations—and the abilities necessary to access them for personal benefit. For example, adequate social resources might provide the access, skill, and energy necessary to call in a favor from an old college friend.

An impediment to using PRM as a tool to enhance work/life balance has been a common cultural assumption that work is depleting, and nonwork activities are restorative. This typical view is depicted in Fig. 1.

FIGURE 1 TYPICAL VIEW OF PERSONAL RESOURCES AND WORK/LIFE



Given this view, personal resource enhancement is the result of reduced working hours. This approach is wrong because it does not reflect work/life realities. An alternative view of how work and nonwork are related to personal resources reflects findings by work/life balance researchers. This view, depicted in Fig. 2, shows that some behaviors and conditions at work are restorative and some are depleting. The same is true for nonwork.

Using the view depicted in Fig. 2, personal resource gains can be realized by increasing the frequency and extent to which activities (in both domains) are restorative. While recognizing that the ability to change these relative proportions requires coordination between both work and nonwork domains, the focus here is on how work-focused decisions can lead to personal resource gains.

More often than not, multiple personal resources are required to accomplish a task. For example, participating effectively in an all-day staff meeting requires the expenditure of physical, psychological, cognitive, and social resources. One must stay alert, be patient with tedious agenda items, contribute useful ideas to the discussions, and enlist the cooperation of colleagues to create consensus on important decisions. Activities that increase any of these four personal resources contribute to a more effective meeting by creating more capable participants. Managers should be asking, how do we choreograph work in order to optimize workers' personal resources in general, and more particularly, the personal resources critical to high occupational performance? The first step in answering that question is understanding the personal resource system.

STRATEGIES FOR OPTIMIZING PERSONAL RESOURCES

To effect changes in personal resources, one needs to understand how various conditions

FIGURE 2 RESEARCH-BASED VIEW OF PERSONAL RESOURCES AND WORK/LIFE

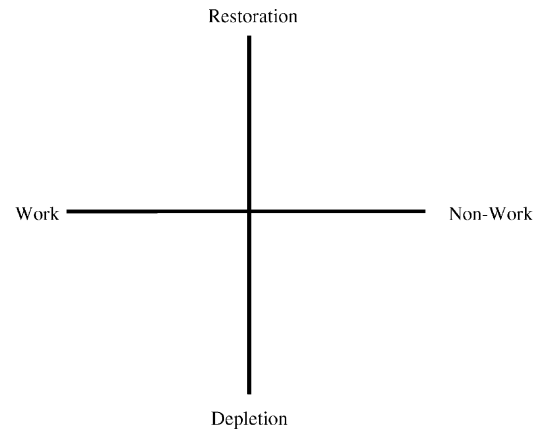
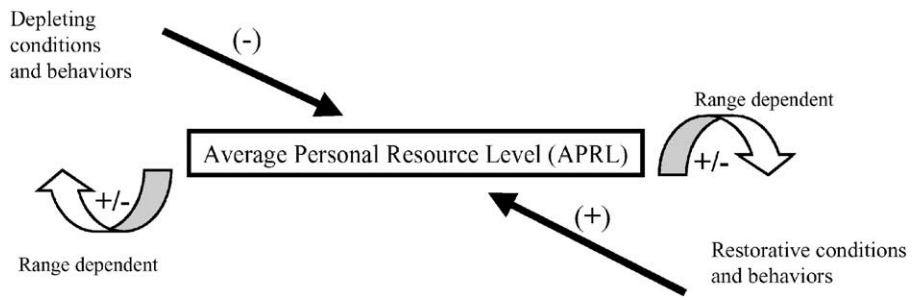


FIGURE 3 PERSONAL RESOURCE FEEDBACK LOOP



and behaviors affect resource levels. The Personal Resource Feedback Loop shown in Fig. 3 illustrates how the personal resource system is characterized by cycles of depletion and restoration. As depicted in Fig. 3, there are two direct ways to increase someone's *average personal resource level* (APRL)—the relative amount of energy and ability available to him or her from all four key personal resources.

The first direct way is to increase exposure to known resource-enhancing conditions and behaviors. Some activities consistently affect personal resources. For example, adequate sleep enhances physical resources, while insufficient sleep reduces them. Less obviously but equally importantly, insufficient sleep also reduces cognitive, social, and psychological resources. Getting a good night's sleep or taking a nap can directly enhance physical resources and, as a result, increase the other three. An organization that structurally and culturally begins to encourage employees to get the rest they need is likely to see performance gains from higher APRLs. A cot and an alarm clock placed in a quiet corner of the employee lounge can send this signal. The possible loss of time spent sleeping will be, in most cases, more than offset by the increased productivity of a well-rested worker.

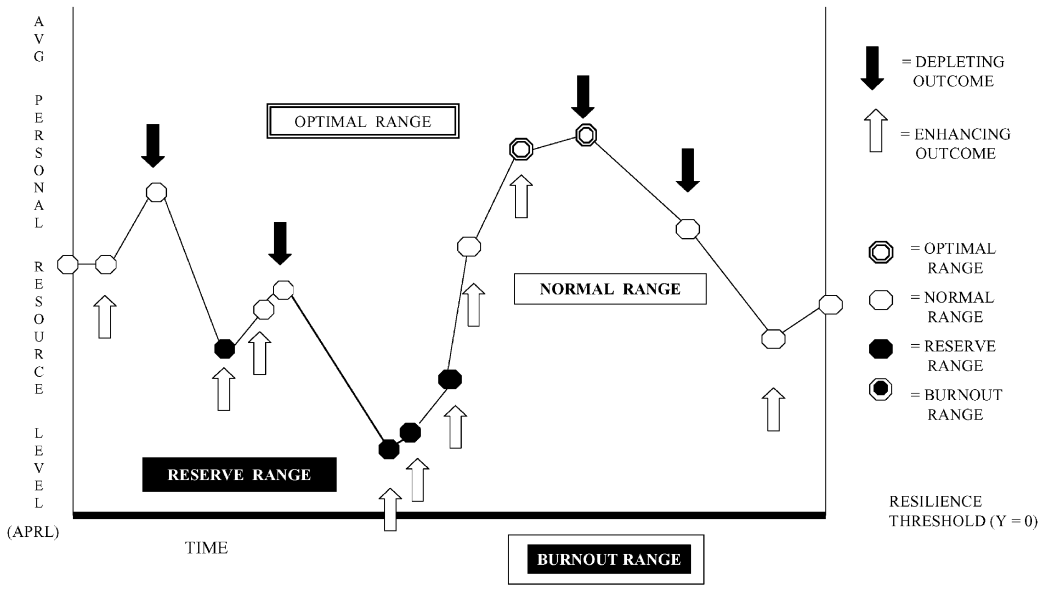
The second direct way to increase APRLs is to reduce losses from depleting conditions and behaviors. For example, there are many for whom visual clutter and aural noise reduce cognitive and psychological resources. For such persons, organizing one's working spaces to reduce clutter, and wearing earplugs reduce the depletion of personal resources. Both of these direct approaches increase APRLs.

Indirect strategies for optimizing personal resources involve modifications to the sequencing and timing of the sources of restoration and depletion. My research indicates that the individual's preexisting available personal resources significantly affect the impact of a resource-changing event. Thus, successful use of indirect strategies requires an understanding of the dynamic operations of the personal resource system.

In Fig. 4, the Personal Resource Model shows how changes in APRLs occur over time. Recall, a worker's APRL is an estimate of the relative amount of energy and ability available to her from all physical, psychological, cognitive, and social resources at a given moment. As one's APRL varies over time, so does one's ability to accomplish a given task. A worker with more personal resources simply has more available energy to engage in the service of the organization and in her outside obligations.

Each arrow in the figure represents a depleting or restorative outcome associated with a work-related event. Each event either increases or decreases one's resource level. For example, a complimentary phone call from a client would be depicted as an up arrow because the recipient gains psycholo-

FIGURE 4 PERSONAL RESOURCE MODEL



gical resources in the form of increased self-esteem. A healthy breakfast or well-balanced workout would also register as an up arrow. Similarly, reports of impending layoffs would register as a down arrow.

My research describes four personal resource ranges for any given individual. On a continuum from lowest to highest, they are depicted in Fig. 4 as the burnout, reserve, normal, and optimal ranges. Vertical movements in the resource level represent the impact of a resource-changing event. The impact of any particular event, however, is not independent of the individual's personal circumstances at the time of the event. Rather, the impact depends on a number of factors, including the resource range in which the person is operating at the time.

The heavy line at the bottom of the exhibit indicates the *resilience threshold*. That is the point below which one's resources are in burnout range. I define burnout as an extreme case of personal resource depletion—a condition that occurs when the net sum of all depletion and restoration brings one's resource levels below minimum operating levels. My research suggests that when an individual is in burnout range (and to a lesser extent in the reserve range), the effects of various resource-impacting events are significantly different than when the individual is in the normal or optimal range. In effect, there is a resilience threshold below which the typical impact of depleting events is magnified and the impact of restorative events is reduced. When one's personal resources drop towards the burnout range, otherwise reliable restorative sources tend to provide significantly less restorative effect, and otherwise insignificant sources of depletion cause significant resource losses. For example, under burnout conditions, an employee normally restored by a weekend's rest and recreation might need a week's vacation in order to receive a comparable restorative effect. Similarly, a mildly critical comment to an abnormally depleted employee could have the same effect as a stinging rebuke.

Burnout can occur as a result of a singular, dramatic event, such as downsizing, merger, physical injury, or large-scale orga-

nizational change process. However, typically burnout occurs as a result of a series of smaller resource losses that are insufficiently offset by restorative sources, eventually dissipating the personal resource reserves necessary to successful coping behaviors.

Project and task allocation decisions that take into account the current personal resource levels of key workers are more likely to produce desired results than are those that assume a person's ability to perform remains constant over time. This strategy is illustrated in the following case study.

SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL USE OF PRM: A CASE STUDY

My research reveals how variations in PRM are related to variations in burnout and job satisfaction rates among front-line service workers in a seemingly idyllic work environment—Club Med vacation villages. I conducted extensive research on sources of restoration and depletion among Club Med organizer hosts, *gentils organisateurs* (GOs), the live-in staff who provide all front-line services to vacationing guests. For a total of 4 months between 1996 and 2000, I gathered data through interviews, surveys, and participant observation (working as a GO) in multiple North American and Asian villages.

Club Med vacation villages provide an environment that is rich in the physical resources associated with work/life balance—one unrivaled on any business campus. The social environment of Club Med is similarly choreographed to be pleasant on multiple levels. Young, fit, enthusiastic coworkers serve relaxed customers who are having fun and feeling pampered. By most standards of measure, this is the ideal physical and social environment for work/life balance.

GO life, however, is rife with the resource constraints characteristic of contemporary work/life as well. The GO career allows for almost no discretionary time, provides low pay and affords very little control over work schedules and task design. In this environment, only those who successfully manage their time and focus are able to restore adequately. These conditions made GOs an ideal group from which to learn just how much of a difference PRM can make. Quantitative and qualitative data revealed how effective PRM contributed to workers' ability to sustain high performance while achieving work/life balance. Collectively, these resource-enhancing strategies, many of which were enabled by organizational and team-level actions, contributed to consistently high customer satisfaction and client return ratings.

The Club Med GO Experience

''Like the view from my office?'' David from the beach team asked, gesturing broadly towards the azure seas and a sparkling white sand beach strewn with catamarans, kayaks, and bronzing beauties. To the east was an equally sparkling turquoise swimming pool surrounded by lounging vacationers. Not a palm pilot, laptop, cell phone, or child's car seat in sight to reveal the visiting villagers' status as successful businesspeople with families. Only towels, sun block, piña coladas, and dog-eared novels were in view. To the west, three rope hammocks were hung between coconut palms adjacent to a fully stocked bar tended by a tanned, Polynesian-print shirt clad 20-something barman. Behind him stood a restaurant where all the meals were free, a well-groomed ball field and a flying trapeze with smiling, helpful staff members stood ready to fulfill lifelong dreams of flying through the air with the greatest of ease.

David described his typical workday.

> I get up in the morning, eat from a sumptuous buffet breakfast, and walk to work on the beach, teach people to sail, and entertain them a little. On my way to lunch, everyone gathers at the main pool and we dance some little dances for about

> 10 minutes. It's fun. Then it's off to eat lunch with some wealthy, educated people; at least they are successful enough. I return to the beach for a few hours and then go back to my room. Oh yeah, sometimes during the day we meet and send off the guests for a few minutes. After a quick shower and a change of clothes, I have a drink at the main bar while single women flirt with me. I go to dinner with at least one of them and then either perform on stage for a captive, supportive audience or spend the evening socializing and participating in different kinds of entertainment. Some nights I spend an hour or so dancing in the disco and drinking with co-workers and folks I met on the beach that day. Sure, there are times its feels like work—we do have rehearsals and a weekly staff meeting—but for me, it's not often.

Angelique, a career employee at the same site, describes a somewhat different view of the quality of her work/life:

> You devote all your life, all your time. Every single minute of your life is with people. But, you, in fact, are alone. The guests don't give a damn about you. They're not your family. Not your mother. Not your father. Not the people you love . . .. It's a problem . . . As soon as you leave your room, you no longer belong to yourself. You belong to the public. And, you must always, always be pleasant to them. This work is very difficult. I love it but it is very exhausting and very difficult.

These two workers' very different personal reports of their working lives are not distinguishable on differences in personality, job tenure, or general work duties. In fact, their early career experiences were virtually identical. They both loved and thrived in GO life. The source of the differences that developed between them over time, and, the two groups of workers they epitomize, is the extent to which each succeeded or failed at managing his or her personal resources. These differences in PRM contributed to significant differences in their satisfaction with, and hence their performance of, GO work.

GO Work

A GO's first obligation is to staff required services such as sports instruction and supervision, office administration, bartending, childcare, reception, entertainment, excursions, and boutique sales. In addition, each GO is required to provide many general services that enhance the guest experience: attending rehearsals and staff meetings; dressing in specified theme clothing; setting up for events; acting in tableaus at the restaurant entrance; recruiting guests for special shows, facilitating presentations and social activities; participating in formal performances; socializing with guests at the bar, at meals and in the disco; greeting and sending off guests in transit; leading participatory dances two or three times a day; and providing assistance to all village guests who approach them. Although their hours have since been cut dramatically, at the time of the study, North American GOs reported working an average of 12.5 hours per day, 7 days a week. Most obligations were completed by 11:00 p.m. and did not start again until at least 7:30 a.m. While it is not surprising that most GOs do not work in this capacity more than a year or two, the experiences of this very physically and emotionally taxing work vary dramatically.

Importantly, in studying this workforce, I found that even for GOs in the same position, the experience of emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and intention to quit varied by how effective workers were at managing their personal resources. Whether through intentional or accidental decisions and actions, an individual's success at PRM

depended on his ability to assess personal resource needs, develop a plan to avoid depletion and continuously restore, and then finally obtain the organizational and team support necessary to do so.

Reconciling Occupational Sources of Depletion and Restoration

In addition to individual PRM actions, organizations can contribute to improved APRLs. Consistent with the third strategy of incorporating personal resources into human resource management, organizational development (OD) professionals and managers can focus on two methods to help increase APRLs throughout an organization—*strategic sequencing* of work events and avoidance of *overdose effects*. *Strategic sequencing* is the intentional ordering of predictable occupational events to positively impact resource levels. Especially in today's characteristically unpredictable work environment, individuals who are able to strategically sequence known resource-changing tasks can realize substantial personal resource gains. Preventing *overdose effects* entails assessing and avoiding exposure to characteristically restorative events that, when experienced in excess, become depleting. Overdose prevention can be facilitated at all levels of the organization. Implementing these strategies requires understanding how job tasks and job design influence personal resource levels.

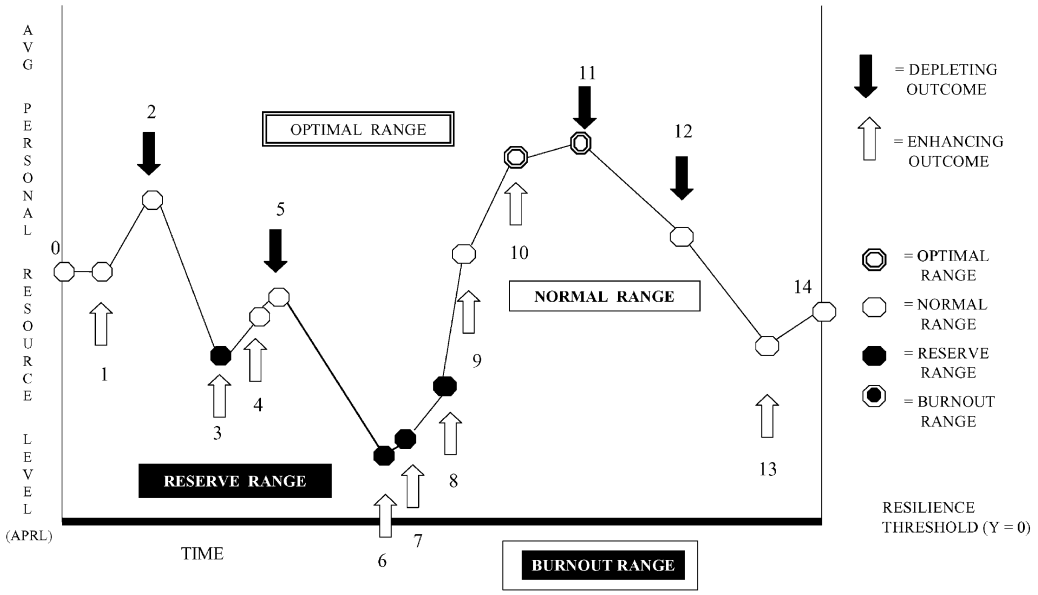
In the GO study, it was necessary to systematically determine the common sources of occupational depletion and restoration. Statistical analyses of a self-report survey, consistent with qualitative field data, showed that GO work provided three general sources of depletion: (1) depletion due to specific service tasks (e.g., teaching sports, pouring drinks); (2) depletion due to socializing (emotional labor); and (3) depletion due to being on display (performing ''in role''). For many, enjoying lavish meals with admiring clients, over time, was experienced as a burden of GO work and was associated with reduced employee satisfaction. Similarly, performing in formal and informal shows was an ongoing source of depletion. These findings illustrate that an activity's informal categorization as work, recreation, socializing, or fun does not accurately reflect its net effect on APRLs. At Club Med, socializing and performance opportunities were most often treated as benefits of working in the village and not as sources of depletion. The GOs who knew differently were those who best managed their personal resources.

Additionally, the study of depletion and restoration revealed that the net effect of various work tasks on this group of workers was not always the same. When describing their preferred restorative activities, many GOs reported socializing (a source of depletion in our analyses) among their five most restorative discretionary-time activities. For some, socializing for ''fun'' actually restored them. For others, it depleted them. What accounted for these differences was not variations in individual preferences or skill at managing interpersonal exchanges. GOs typically have excellent interpersonal skills and few suffer from shyness or high levels of introversion. Instead, findings revealed two key factors that affected GO personal resource levels: the *strategic sequencing* of work events and avoidance of *overdose effects*.

Strategic Sequencing to Optimize Personal Resources

Careful examination of the GO workday demonstrates how the strategic sequencing of resource-impacting events can maximize performance in a diligent workforce. The Personal Resource Profile of an exemplary GO's day is diagrammed in Fig. 5. It uses the Personal Resource Model to show how optimally sequencing depleting and restorative events can sustain high performance throughout a very taxing workday. This particular sequencing of work tasks maximizes the percentage of the work day GOs spend in normal and optimal ranges, and minimizes customer face time when GOs

FIGURE 5 AN EXEMPLAR GO'S PERSONAL RESOURCE PROFILE



are in reserve range. This sequencing also minimizes the likelihood of falling into the burnout range.

I draw on the GO study to provide an example of how strategic sequencing of work activities can impact a worker's personal resource level. Jane, the exemplar GO in Fig. 5, starts her day in the upper end of her normal range (0) and walks to the main restaurant (1). Breakfast is a source of resource enhancement (2). By the end of the morning, her service duties have depleted her such that she is running on reserves (3). Leading the Sun Dance begins to restore her (4), and lunch continues the process of returning her to normal range (5). Her afternoon service duties deplete her such that by the end of the afternoon she is running purely on physical and psychological reserves (6). She is only able to carry on through the last hour because she feels the support of her team and the enthusiasm of six-year-old guest with wondrous eyes. Back in her room, a shower and a glance at a letter from home begin to revive her (7). At the main bar, a guest buys her a drink and praises her talent, kindness, and beauty (8). She has dinner with his family and by the time she leaves the main restaurant for the theater she feels like herself again (9). Her singing and the audience's response to her performance feel electrifying, and our GO Jane is rejuvenated (10). The music and dancing of the Macarena and other line dances top off Jane's resources (11). An uninspiring staff meeting (12) followed by late arrival duties soon begin to deplete her (13). She goes to bed at a low, normal resource level. After six hours sleep, she awakens to begin her day within her normal resource range (14).

To demonstrate the potential impact of strategic task sequencing on an individual worker's resources, note the negative impact of changing the sequence of two mandatory work tasks. If management moved the Sun Dance (3) from before lunch to after dinner and changed the staff meeting (11) from night to the end of the service day, Jane would reach burnout levels by dinnertime. Given the substantial amount of resources necessary to retrieve someone from below the resilience threshold, the subsequent restorative events imbedded in Jane's work-

day alone would be insufficient to return her ability to perform effectively.

Teams can also facilitate strategic sequencing to help their members. Exemplary GO teams utilized knowledge of the depleting service tasks to create individual staffing schedules aimed at restoration. GOs who worked in more isolated or sedentary services that operated both day and night broke up their schedules with interactions that were dynamic, physical, and socially interactive. For example, boutique workers often rotated shifts to take advantage of daytime breaks that enabled them to participate in sporting or artistic activities. Aware of her particular restoration needs, one successful manager agreed to be ''sent jogging'' by her direct reports when she became noticeably ineffective.

Beyond the Club Med context, organizations can include strategic sequencing among their work assignment decision criteria. When determining which demands to make on employees at a given time, an estimation of both their APRLs and the impact that the new demands will have on their ability to perform should be made. Similarly, teams can collectively assess the likely sources and impact of various impending events to maximize resulting team members' APRLs.

In most occupations, individuals can strategically sequence effectively. A resource-taxed administrative staff person whose key sources of depletion include constant interruptions to run errands, inadequate exposure to sunlight and emotional exhaustion from managing interpersonal conflict, can organize her day to better enhance her resources. She could choose to only run outdoor errands twice a day—midmorning and mid-afternoon. She could then take her lunch outside away from her colleagues. This strategy exposes her to restorative sunlight and provides respite from depleting interpersonal conflict. It provides revitalization well before her resources have dropped to reserve or burnout levels.

Similarly, an engineer whose key sources of depletion are long periods of time spent alone working on creative tasks, a sedentary lifestyle, and demanding supervisory responsibilities might use sequencing to improve his APRL. Strategically scheduling managerial interactions in between long periods of lone research time could offset potential depletion from working in isolation. Having some managerial conversations while taking a walk could restore resources. Emotional depletion from difficult conversations could be limited by strategically scheduling them in between research activities. Finally, the home-based pharmaceutical salesperson whose 15-hour workday demands include both soliciting orders from new clients and doing housework can offset the depleting effects of successive failed closings by placing a quickly completed household chore midway in the workday. The cumulatively depleting effects of washing, ironing and folding nine loads of laundry can be reduced when strategically separated by intermittent work on a cognitively challenging marketing plan.

Individuals on their own and with the help of enlightened managers and organizational policies can use strategic sequencing of work tasks to increase personal resource levels. In these examples, the role of the team is to create and manage norms that encourage members to discover and use this strategy.

Frequently, workers become unnecessarily depleted during the workday because critical activities, mistakenly viewed as optional, are omitted from the work schedule. Many corporate cultures consider skipping breaks a sign of commitment and a predictor of productivity. This norm is counterproductive to optimizing personal resources. A short call from home, a joke shared in the hall, and a fully taken lunch break are mistakenly viewed as foregone work time—a resource loss. In many cases, depleted personal resources are restored during these activities and therefore time spent on them can actually increase productivity.

Some companies, among them high-technology firms in Silicon Valley, have designed organizational cultures that

support ongoing resource enhancement by creating cultures tolerant of particular restoration needs. Pets, children, and adult toys in the work place are intended to enable individuals to strategically insert restorative activities in their workday as needed. For many, there is an excellent ''fit'' between their needs and the type of work conditions these policies foster. For those people, the conditions and behaviors enabled by these nontraditional work climates helps them optimize their personal resource levels through strategic sequencing. However, even those who remain satisfied in these cultures often find themselves becoming depleted over time because they become susceptible to *overdose effects*.

Avoiding Resource Losses from Overdose Effects

The second indirect approach to maximizing personal resources is to avoid resource losses due to overdose effects. Workers are very often selected for their affinity for various tasks and environments. For example, many like to hire programmers who spend their free time writing code. Likewise, HR directors often prefer to hire pediatric intensive care nurses who are nurturing sorts. Surprisingly, it appears that those passionately focused on one type of work are especially susceptible to burnout from overdosing. Overdose effects occurred among certain GOs. Club Med typically employs outgoing, social people. In the GO study, those suffering most from the social demands of GO work/life were those who spent most of their discretionary hours socializing with friends and acquaintances. Likewise, ideal sports team recruits are passionate about their sports. Many are drawn to Club Med because it provides an opportunity to immerse themselves in their art. The GO study revealed that, of those who taught recreational sports like flying trapeze and SCUBA diving, the GOs who reported the most extensive participation in these activities in their free time, also reported higher levels of depletion and lower job satisfaction than those who participated in other recreational activities.

Some experienced managers were aware of overdose effects and helped their GOs learn about and avoid overdosing on activities that in ''normal life'' were always restorative. In my study, a 7-year veteran GO, passionate about her work with children at Club Med, explained how her supervisor helped her avoid burnout from overdose.

> My Chief (manager) . . . knows that after a couple weeks of nonstop screaming babies and overprotective yuppie parents I'm ready to take one out. So the team works it out so once in a while I get time off for a sushi and sake lunch and a movie in town. I'm back by dinner and the babies are all adorable again and the parents, now they're safe again, too. We kinda take turns like that when it's not too busy.

The manager referred to had created conditions that enabled her staff to participate in activities that complemented rather than compounded the depleting features of their primary work. By understanding their occupation's characteristic sources of depletion, the individual depletion sensitivities of their members and the ever-present likelihood of overdosing on otherwise restorative activities, teams, and their leaders can choreograph schedules and work assignments in ways that minimize unnecessary resource losses.

Returning to our three non-GO examples, one can see how strategically sequencing their own work tasks not only results in directly increasing each person's APRL, but also, how those same strategies also reduce the likelihood of overdosing. The administrative staff person's strategy to take her lunch break away from her colleagues prevents overdosing on the social interactions that, in moderation, make her job rewarding. Our engineer who strategically scheduled meetings into his research day prevents overdosing on the ''alone time'' he cannot work

without. Our home-based salesperson thrives on creative challenges, whether it is converting the doubtful into satisfied customers or converting raw ingredients into cuisine. Her strategic interspersing of tasks demanding emotional labor with those demanding physical labor prevent her from overdosing on either.

Returning to GOs David and Angelique, how did PRM account for their distinctively different experiences of work/life balance? First, David understood both his needs for restoration and the depleting features of his work. On his own, David carefully managed his free time and his personal boundaries to insure that he obtained adequate sleep, time alone, aerobic exercise and opportunities to study computer programming. He carefully minimized his exposure to emotionally fragile guests who, he knew, had a particularly negative effect on his psychological resources. With his service team and GO friends, he traded general GO tasks such that each had strategically sequenced his week to optimize APRLs. To prevent overdosing, his team worked out a schedule that minimized each member's exposure to the sun and difficult physical labor. In addition, they matched the ratio of public and private tasks to suit team members' varying tolerance for time ''on display.'' In this way, David and GOs like him were able to deliver high quality service season after season.

In contrast, Angelique's PRM skills and her team's ability to enhance them were inadequate. Angelique believed that village life would restore her just as it restored the guests and so she paid little attention to managing her own resources. In short, she did not understand what really restored and depleted her at work. As a result, she did not manage her personal boundaries, nor did she strategically schedule restorative activities for her limited time off. Angelique's team members were mostly novice GOs who did not understand the need to help each other thrive. Schedule coordination was a matter of personal trades instead of the result of compromises that benefited everyone. Angelique had remained a GO as long as she had because every few years, after becoming deeply depleted, she would take 6 months off from Club Med, recover, and then return to begin the cycle once again.

In sum, the GO study revealed that at the organizational, team and individual levels, PRM enables sustained high performance in a relentless 24/7 service profession. Individuals in other occupations can also enhance their ability to perform by using those same direct and indirect strategies to optimize their APRLs. With greater physical, psychological, cognitive, and social resources available to them, these employees can better meet demands at work and have more resources available to deploy in the service of home, self, and community. This can reduce work/life conflicts and so improve work/life balance while simultaneously enhancing organizational performance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Research has taught us that individuals can influence and sometimes directly control their personal resource levels. By enabling effective PRM, organizational and team level actions can also enhance workers' capacity to optimize their own performance. Organizational policies and leadership that facilitate successful PRM can potentially improve overall organizational performance by increasing attraction and retention of talent committed to work/life balance. The following are recommended ways to choreograph work to optimize personal resources.

Know the Depleting and Restorative Characteristics of Work

- Individuals and managers should accurately assess the depleting and restorative conditions and behaviors characteristic of their industry, organization, and job. This can be done by engaging in discussions with

experienced workers, or by using an assessment device that estimates the relative personal resource costs of various conditions and behaviors.

• Managers can help workers carefully identify what kinds of restoration they really need instead of having them rely on personal history or misleading terms such as ''hobby, vacation, recreation, socializing, perks, and personality.'' Managers can formally and informally gather information to better understand their own and their reports' individual resource needs and sensitivities. That information can be used to structure work. Individuals can use that same information to select discretionary activities that enhance their APRLs.

• Individuals should avoid behaviors and policies born from a culture of relentless enthusiasm—one that favors quantity and visible participation over quality and effectiveness. This is a crucial management concern in occupations in which people who tend to behave with relentless enthusiasm are selected (overachievers from top-tier schools) and professions in which at the highest levels, the quantity of work done appears to be associated with success. These are the same industries in which unnecessary burnout is endemic and most costly. Top managers need to assess if they are contributing to this type of dysfunctional culture, and if so, reexamine the wisdom in its continued support.

Minimize Burnout Risk Through Strategic Sequencing

• Beyond strategic sequencing for personal gain, leaders in organizations who can anticipate controllable sources of depletion and replenishment can optimally distribute those events to maximize average resource levels. For example, in cyclical industries, certain time periods are more depleting than others. Strategically coordinating these cycles with the schedulable resource changing events can increase average resources and reduce burnout rates. For example, if six depleting events and six equally restorative ones characterize the annual cycle, managers who strategically intersperse these events can prevent burnout and maximize ability to perform.

Help Avoid Overdosing

• Remain vigilant about the dynamic nature of personal resources and the potential for an activity's impact to change from restorative to depleting. When using individual differences to assign tasks, managers must also remember that their most talented, social sales person sometimes needs some time alone.

• Align rewards to avoid overdosing. The weeklong, all-Europe bus tour is a bad sales incentive for the star salesperson returning from a 3-week, 13-city marketing blitz. An all-company picnic may not be restorative for those who regularly do breakfast meetings, power lunches, and client-centered evenings out.

Be sure to review sequencing and overdose assumptions a few times a year to verify that they remain relevant to your current needs and the needs of those whose resource levels you influence.

CONCLUSION

Research shows that successful PRM can improve individual effectiveness and satisfaction with work/life balance. While much discretion remains in the hands of individuals, a worker's ability to manage his personal resources remains constrained and potentially enhanced by organizational culture, structure, and policy. The ideas presented here allow individuals and organizations to begin using successful work/life balance strategies as a source of competitive advantage. Further research will create the specific knowledge necessary to calculate the return on investment of specific work/life balance policies that optimize personal resource levels.

With competition increasing, budget constraints tightening and the labor force contracting, the ability to attract and retain employees as well as enable them to perform well is a key to success. By understanding and enabling PRM, firms can have better employees without suffering staffing changes or incurring extensive development costs. PRM used in conjunction with other work/life balance strategies can help organizations transform their work/life balance programs from sources of resource hemorrhage to value generation centers that enhance the organization's ability to achieve its strategic goals. Effective personal resource management can ultimately enhance productivity and organizational effectiveness while answering the wise workforce's call for greater work/life balance.

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