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The Impact Of Family Relationships On The Workplace
Dr James R Wright, Soterio

This talk could equally well have been entitled "The Impact of Workplace Relationships on the Family". Both are inter-related. I intend to address the subject from both directions.

I will review the current state, put forward some thoughts on the desired state and make suggestions on how to bridge the gap between the current and the desired state.

1. CURRENT STATE.
I have heard it argued that employees should separate their home life and their work life.

- Employees should shut out their family situations when they enter the workplace.
- And a company should not concern itself with an employee's home situation – that would be unwarranted interference in an employee's privacy.

You may have heard similar views expressed?

However, Sue Tuckwell, a Senior Practice Consultant at Relate, which, in addition to its marriage guidance services also helps to sort out workplace disputes said[1],

> *"People who use our services often talk about the impact that a relationship difficulty is having on their work. Employers need to understand the pace of change within relationships. People are still thinking about family and personal relationships as they used to be,but these are changing as fast as the workplace is changing. Understanding that is likely to produce people who are happier at work and who contribute more to the effort."*

In other words:

- Relationships at home affect people in the workplace
- Relationships in the workplace affect people at home

When relationships are going well at home, we feel good and are more effective at work
When relationships are good at work - for example, if the boss says thank you for some work we have put a lot of effort into, - we feel good and then we bring this back to home.

The alternatives are also true. If relationships are poor at work, for example, with divisive competition from our peers or an inconsiderate boss, then it would be a saint who did not in some way let these feelings influence how they feel back into the home situation.

So in different situations we can have
- Either a virtuous upward spiral of good relationships in work and family reinforcing each other,
- Or a vicious circle of poor relationships in either situation building on each other and aggravating problems further.

What can be done to ensure that we have a virtuous spiral between work and family relationships rather than a vicious circle?

It could be argued that employees, as responsible adults, should take responsibility for their home and work situations, rather than expecting their manager or their company to sort out problems and difficulties?

That might be true if the current work situations were not so demanding that they often exercise undue influence on employees' home lives.

If the company – either explicitly or implicitly - requires sacrifice of family relations, then
- Performance at work suffers
- Relationships at work suffer
- Organisational performance suffers

Well, this is all fine as a statement of belief. But we are addressing this because we believe there is a problem.

What is the evidence that there is a problem?
What is the evidence that pressures of work life are having an impact on people's family relationships?
What is the evidence that pressures on family relationships are affecting people at work?

Roffey Park Annual Survey
The recently published Roffey Park annual survey[2] into the state of the workplace shows that a period of unprecedented change has created new concerns for managers and a downturn in commitment.

It highlights the following (numbers in parenthesis refer to the percentage of managers surveyed who cited the problem):

- The long hours culture is affecting managers personally (82%)
- Managers are suffering from work related stress (78%)
- Commitment to their organisation is waning (67%)
    - Discretionary effort is decreasing
    - Managers are unwilling "to go the extra mile"
- Conflict in their organisation is increasing (56%)
- Managers are searching for "meaning" in their working life (65%)
- Work-life balance is a problem (68%)
    - BUT their senior managers do not support balance (66%)
- Managers are experiencing increasing bullying

London Institute of Contemporary Christianity Research
Another survey by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC)[3] into the issues people are facing reveals that many of the issues people are facing centre around the challenges of their relationships - as parents, spouses, carers, and employees.
HOME
- How to be a good parent
- How to maintain an appropriate home/work balance
- How to support family and friends
- How to develop and maintain a loving marriage
- How to cope with loneliness and isolation

HEALTH AND SECURITY
- How to deal with ill health and disability
- How to cope with the death or sickness of a close family member
- How to support ageing relatives
- Problems with debt

WORKPLACE
- How to deal with pressure at work
- How to deal with stress and burnout

I have cited only two surveys. There are numerous other surveys that indicate similar patterns. Namely, that
- Many of the issues that challenge people at home and at work involve relationships
- People are feeling under increasing pressure at work.
    - This pressure is affecting people's home life.
- People are feeling pressure on their family relationships
    - This pressure is affecting their work
- Stress related diseases are on the increase – depression; intestinal disorders; cardiovascular disease, alcohol-related problems.
- People do not have coping mechanisms or the relational skills to manage these issues

What are companies doing to enable their people to manage relationships at home and at work?

> ***Organisations are networks of relationships among people who come together for a common purpose.***

But the importance of relationships is not, in general, recognised IN PRACTICE in the workplace. Two recent research studies give evidence of this:

Gallup Research
The Gallup organisation carried out research into what makes great managers[4]. In other words what are the characteristics of managers that make people want to work for them and that enables them to be more effective (measured by their achievement of better productivity, profitability, employee retention, and customer satisfaction)

They identified six questions on which the employees of great managers scored them highly

- Do I know what is expected of me at work?
- Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
- Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best each day?
- In the last seven days have I received recognition or praise for good work?
- Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
- Is there someone at work who cares about my development?

Two points to note:
- It is clear that at least four of these questions involve the relationships between these managers and their employees.
- The managers who scored highly on these questions were in the minority.

Career Innovation Research
Career Innovation, an organisation that works with Companies to develop inspiring leaders, carried out research in a number of international corporations[5]. They surveyed middle and senior managers **who were regarded as their top talent** to identify their views on trust, performance, development and success at work. The research identified what they called **"The Conversation Gap".**

- 40% of these talented managers had important issues they wished to discuss with their manager, but felt unable to do so.
- These managers were three times more likely to be leaving their organisations than their colleagues.

- The topics they wished to discuss mainly related to current work or future career opportunities
- The reasons they gave for not having the discussion were either that their manager did not have the time, or that they did not trust their manager.

It is clear from the Gallup and Career Innovation surveys that relationships between managers and their people are of key importance in building effective, motivated, committed employees. Obvious, you might say. But if it is obvious, why are companies not doing more to build these relationships.

Summary

So we have a clear picture of the current situation. People are under pressure both at work and in their family relationships. Pressures at work feed into the home and exacerbate some of their family issues. Pressures at home feed into their work situation and exacerbate their work problems. Relationships are key to both situations. And the situation is spiralling downwards. It is not improving.

2. DESIRED STATE

If this is the current state of affairs, what is the desired state?

- People able to manage their lives so that work and family life are in balance?
- People finding " meaning in their working lives?
- Less pressure and stress at work?
- Happy family lives?
- Fewer divorces?
- Fewer teenagers in courts
- Less binge drinking?
- Reduction in under-age pregnancies?
- Reduction in drug taking and drug-related crime?

Is this Nirvana achievable? Perhaps not.

But someone has to start somewhere.

I believe some of the issues are spiritual – the major faiths need to play a greater part in helping people to cope with the changing pressures of life in their family and work situations.

But companies and organisations also need to start to address some of these issues. The organisations that are successful in addressing the factors that are causing people pressure at work will have a strong competitive advantage. And anyone who has given even a cursory glance at demographics over the next 20 years knows that the current competition for talent will increase. Companies that are attractive to their employees – that enable them to have fulfilling lives at home and at work will have the advantage in attracting and retaining talent

So there is a strong business case, as well as a social and moral case for addressing these issues.

3. BRIDGING THE GAP – what can be done?

How can organisations enable people to achieve better satisfaction and improve relationships at home and at work so that people's work and their family relationships have a positive influence on each other?

Work-Family programmes
Many organisations have introduced family friendly policies or work-family programmes to help people to achieve better work-life balance.
- Flexible working,
- Child and elder support policies,
- Paternity leave
- Job-sharing, part-time working,
- Homeworking
- Community involvement
- Employee Assistance programmes - Telephone counselling services
- Etc

But these initiatives have only been, at best partially successful or, indeed have failed to meet the needs of the workforce. Why is this?

Work-life balance
I believe the concept of "work-life balance" is a misconception. The idea that there is a magic fulcrum where the demands of our work and our family life can be in perfect balance is a fallacy A more practicable aim is to aim to achieve integration, rather than balance, of all the spheres of our life in each area of our life – work, family, leisure, and spiritual,
- Happiness
- Achievement
- Significance
- Legacy

Additionally, any initiatives introduced to achieve work-life balance are never going to address the core issues. Let me explain.

Hierarchy of change – Dilts[6]

Vision/Spiritual
|
Identity
|
Values and beliefs
|
Capabilities
|
Behaviour
|
Environment
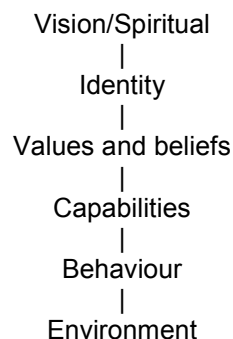
There are natural hierarchies or levels at which you can address organisational or personal change. Changing something on a lower level may, but will not necessarily, affect the upper levels. But changing something in the upper levels will change things in the lower levels.

To achieve organisational or personal change we need to address the change at the appropriate level

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The needs that I identified earlier in this talk are at the levels of values and beliefs, identity and at the spirituality level. If we do not address change at these levels, any change is likely to be superficial and short lasting. For example, many managers, professionals and knowledge workers are driven to achieve mastery in their work roles; to be successful; to gain advancement and power. They pay more attention to this than to their family needs. People grumble about the amount of time they spend at work, but they also get a lot of satisfaction from the success and the rewards that this produces. Providing family friendly programmes, such as childcare, does not overcome this drive for mastery to enable them to focus on the other areas of their life. It only frees them to devote even more time to their job.

This mastery orientation has had many advantages to organisations. And companies reinforce this through their policies and practices, such as reward and recognition programmes.

However, the influences on organisations are changing. The intensity and rate of change in organisations is increasing, which is increasing pressures on people at all levels. They cannot continue to absorb this pressure indefinitely. To survive and thrive, organisations need the creativity and discretionary effort of their people. They will not get this if people are tired, jaded or feeling burnt out. More and more jobs require knowledge workers who are engaged and involved in setting direction of their work. They do not respond well to a culture of control and being driven. The costs of the mastery orientation are beginning to outweigh the benefits. Organisations need to find an alternative to the mastery orientation[7].

If we want to achieve a significant change in the current long hours culture in organisations, then we need to address this at the vision, identity and values levels. This will require a total revolution in the philosophy and organisation of work. It will fly in the face of the, often unarticulated, values and beliefs of leaders. It is not something that will be achieved overnight.

So what can be done?

The first essential is to recognise that any initiatives to improve work and family relationships MUST be integrated into the overall business strategy of the organisation. There needs to be a systemic programme of change which is integrated with the overall people practices and policies of the organisation. Piecemeal change initiatives will not result in sustained change. In the following I suggest some elements that could be considered as part of an overall change programme. In the time available, I can do little more than highlight some of the options.

1. Recognise the need for change
The first requirement is for leaders at all levels in an organisation to accept that it is counter-productive to keep stretching the elastic and to expect people to work at constantly increasing levels of intensity and pace. They need to accept the requirement for fundamental change.
How do you start this process? Someone in the organisation needs to have a vision of a better future – The HR Director? The CEO?
- Rob Parsons of Care for the Family has written a very challenging book called "The Heart of Success"[8]. He is also a motivational speaker who has addressed the senior management of many organisations. Invite him to speak to the Executive Committee of the organisation to raise awareness about the issues and the consequences. Give his book to managers at all levels in the organisation and use it for discussion forums in work groups – to start discussion and stimulate thinking. Get them to read it with their spouses or partners and talk about the implications for their families

Once the organisation is mobilised there are a number of things that can be done. I can only sketch these out briefly in the time available.

2. Values and purpose
- Engage everyone in the organisation in discussion about the desired values and beliefs in the organisations – over a period of time.

- o What part does "wholeness" and integration of people's life goals have in these values?
- o What is the purpose of the organisation? What is the "meaning" that people are looking for in work?
- Identify the practices and behaviours that would exemplify those values and beliefs and build them into the competency models.
- Build these competencies into the reward processes

3. Accountability

Why is that that the Conversation Gap developed in the organisations covered in the Career Innovation survey? Managers in those organisations said that they were committed to developing their people. But they did not deliver. They did not hold themselves accountable, nor did their managers, when they did not deliver what they were required to do.

To achieve the type of change we are considering, it is essential to build an accountability ethos in the organisation so that people hold themselves and others accountable for what they say that will do. This needs to permeate all the management decision-making processes and people practices. It is especially important, as difficulties and problems and resistance will inevitably arise in such a demanding programme to change the culture of the organisation. In order to sustain the momentum for change, managers and employees need to be accountable for the change. Otherwise the organisation will revert to type when the problems of implementing the new behaviours arise.

4. Address the "busyness" culture – hurry sickness.

This hurry culture is to be distinguished from the pressure of work that will exist in any high-performance organisation. It is more of a mindset where people feel over-pressurised all the time and do not make time to plan and organise their priorities effectively.

People do not want to make choices and tradeoffs. They want both career success and a rewarding family life – but they do not address the choices that need to be made to achieve this i.e. the costs

Ultimately hurry sickness is one of the causes of stress-related illness that are on the increase in the western world.

It also results in damage to the quality of relationships. People become too busy to help each other, to listen to each other.

Carl Jung is quoted as saying: 'Hurry is not of the devil, it is the devil.'

5. Relationships and trust

Address the issues of relationships and trust in the organisation. Do you know what the quality of relationships is in your organisation? The Relationships Foundation has developed a Relational Health Audit[9] to identify areas of strength and weaknesses in working relationships in organisations. The outcomes of the audit can form the basis of engaging working groups to understand the issues and to agree steps to improve them.

6. Conversation Gap

Does your organisation have a conversation gap where people have issues they are unable to discuss with their managers. How does this fit with the organisation's stated values about its people?

Consider providing coaching skills for managers

7. Career counselling

Provide career counselling for managers – not for advancement – but for understanding their gifts, talents and motivational drives-
- System for Identifying Motivated Abilities – SIMA[10]
- Identifying their personal values – what drives them

- Supporting people in making choices and trade-offs about their work and family relationships and ambitions.
- Emotional intelligence. Provide managers with training in Emotional Intelligence to improve their relational competencies.

8. A different model for reward and recognition

If an organisation is serious about changing the quality of working relationships and supporting family relationships, they will need a different model of reward and recognition.

- Rewarding outputs (achievements) rather than inputs (length of time at work)
- Rewarding relational behaviours that build trust
- Rewarding managers who coach and develop their people
- Rewarding managers who take a long-term approach investing in people rather than a short-term results based approach

Conclusion

In summary, there is a problem with the vicious circle of pressure on work relationships affecting the family and vice versa. There is no "quick fix" for this.

Organisations need to decide whether to address the long hours/busyness culture and to invest the appropriate time and resources, in order to develop a more holistic approach to employment. In part this is a decision about values and beliefs. But it is also about good commercial sense. Those that are successful in addressing the issue will reap the rewards of a more creative, effective workforce and achieve competitive advantage

Individuals (that's you and me!) need to decide whether to invest our energy in integrating the goals in the various areas and spheres of our lives and then to make the trade offs and count the costs of investing in our family relationships as well as our career success.

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