



## Managers and Professionals Division

– a Division of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia



# Work/life balance



**Managers & Professionals**  
DIVISION

*Professionals together*

Managers and Professionals Division of APESMA – July 2010

## Work/life balance for Managers

*“The MPD is committed to assisting industry and government implement policies in the four key areas of flexibility, appropriate leave arrangements, assistance with child and aged care, and general provision for work-life health and well-being. Such arrangements will contribute to improved social, family and work/life balance, the attraction and retention of Managers and their staff, more effective alignment of personal and organisational goals and the concomitant improvement to organisational performance, productivity and competitiveness.”*

**What is APESMA?** The Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia (APESMA) is an organisation registered under the *Fair Work Act 2009* representing over 25,000 Professional Engineers, Professional Scientists, Veterinarians, Professional Surveyors, Architects, Pharmacists, Information Technology Professionals, Managers and Transport Industry Professionals throughout Australia. APESMA is the only industrial association representing exclusively the industrial and professional interests of these groups.

**What is the MPD?** APESMA represents several thousand managers and professionals working across industry through its Managers and Professionals' Division (MPD).

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This document summaries the MPD's approach to work/life balance for Managers.

## Work/life balance for Managers

Work-life balance can be defined as an attempt to achieve a balance between time devoted to work and time available for leisure and other activities. In most countries, as recently as 20 years ago, working hours made it possible for staff to maintain a balance between work and non-work life without too much difficulty. But since working hours have increased significantly in most industrialised countries, employees of many organisations now find it difficult to maintain this balance.

### The facts

The OECD reports that in 2006, Australian full-time workers had the highest average number of total hours worked per week of all OECD countries.<sup>1</sup> Australian full-timers worked an average of 43.4 hours, followed by employees in New Zealand (43.1 hrs), the United Kingdom (42.2 hrs), Poland (42.1 hrs), and the United States (41.7 hrs).<sup>2</sup>

Many Australian employees report concern about their work/life balance. A 2007 survey of professionals and managers found that almost half (42%) of those surveyed reported high levels of work overload. 69 per cent of survey respondents reported that they extended their work day and worked from home in the evenings and on weekends. Respondents also reported that they were 3.6 times more likely to give priority to their work role than to their family role. The study also found increased levels of absenteeism due to physical, mental or emotional fatigue, decreased commitment to their job and their organisation, suggesting that a high workload culture may significantly impact productivity.<sup>3</sup>

### Productive employees

The most productive and 'desirable' employees are those who have a balance between a healthy social, family and work life. Organisations are now assisting with achieving work-life balance providing leave for a range of non-work responsibilities, including care for the aged and children, as well as flexible working hours, nine-day fortnights and other support mechanisms.

### Work/life balance policies

McBain (2001)<sup>4</sup> suggests that there are four broad areas normally covered by a work-life policy:

1. providing flexibility in the form of flexible working hours and flexible work arrangements (including compressed work weeks such as a nine-day fortnight, flexitime, part-time work, working from home, job sharing, time off in lieu and phased retirement)
2. providing special forms of leave (such as carer's leave, study/training leave, career breaks and cultural leave)
3. providing help with child care, aged care, parenting and pregnancy (such as paid/unpaid parental leave)
4. providing for work-life health and well-being.

The Sloan Foundation's Work-Family Policy Network report (2001) suggests that organisations should focus on achieving seven high-priority objectives: improved work design; paid family leave for carers; reduced and flexible hours; attracting women to leadership positions; ensuring staff are involved in shaping workplace policies; empowering the community in which the organisation operates and conducting work-family workshops.<sup>5</sup>

### Staff responsibility for work/life balance

Staff can and should also take responsibility for their work-life balance by considering their priorities, scheduling time out and seeking an organisation that aligns with their values. According to Frase-Blunt (2000)<sup>6</sup>, a US survey conducted by Andersen Consulting found that 60 per cent of office workers take some type of mobile technology on holidays. Frase-Blunt observes that this would have a deleterious effect on work-life balance. Their managers should be cognisant of such aspects of their employees' lives, providing the flexibility and work environment to help them make sensible decisions.<sup>7</sup>

### **Why is dealing with work-life balance important?**

The MPD is committed to assisting managers achieve a sound work/life balance, and to assisting business and government implement policies in the four key areas of flexibility, appropriate leave arrangements, assistance with child and aged care, and general provision for work-life health and well-being. Such

arrangements will contribute to improved social, family and work/life balance, the attraction and retention of Managers and their staff, more effective alignment of personal and organisational goals and the concomitant improvement to organisational performance, productivity and competitiveness.

This material is drawn from the APESMA Chifley Business School's Introduction to Management course notes and is reproduced here with their kind permission.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics sourced in July 2008 from OECS Stat Extracts, OECD Library, at [http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=AVE\\_HRS](http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=AVE_HRS)

<sup>2</sup> These statistics and information were sourced from Worklogic Consulting, [http://www.worklogic.com.au/news\\_0807\\_excessive-workload.html](http://www.worklogic.com.au/news_0807_excessive-workload.html), retrieved April 2010

<sup>3</sup> Duxbury, L and Higgins, C 2007 "Executive Summary to the Report: "Work-life balance in Australia in the New Millennium: rhetoric versus reality" " based on research conducted in Australia in 2007 by Beaton Consulting Pty Ltd in Melbourne, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> McBain, R. (2001) 'Work, family and life—the benefits of achieving balance', *Manager Update*, Spring, 12(3): 24

<sup>5</sup> Bailyn, L., Drago, R. & Kochan, T.A., Integrating Work and Family Life: a Holistic Approach - a Report of the Sloan Work-Family Policy Network, <http://web.mit.edu/workplacecenter/docs/WorkFamily.pdf>, retrieved April 2010

<sup>6</sup> Frase-Blunt, M.(2001) 'The busman's holiday', *HRMagazine*, June, 46(6): 76.

<sup>7</sup> 2010 APESMA Chifley Business School Introduction to Management course notes, Topic 10