

**Work Life Balance Initiatives:  
Creating Change by Changing the Culture**

by

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BBA, Trinity Western University 1999

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## **Abstract**

This study looked at three organizations that have recently introduced work life balance into their culture. What role culture plays in the implementation and continuous development and sustainability of work life balance in organizations was the reason for this study. Interviews were conducted at all three organizations with individuals from all levels of the organizations. It was discovered that culture, through the mechanisms of psychological contracting, managerial support, and effective communication plays a significant role in the implementation, development, and sustainability of work life balance. These mechanisms of change facilitate a culture that supports work life balance. Despite the support of work life balance, as with any change initiative, resistance was discovered. Resistance was looked at from the perspective of employees: 1) not knowing about the changes, 2) not being able to participate in the changes, and 3) not being willing to be involved in the changes. In these organizations resistance was best mitigated by constant and effective communication.

## Dedication

*I would like to dedicate this project to my family who have always believed in me and encouraged me to do my best. Dad and Mom you are my inspiration!*

*I would also like to dedicate this project to my loving husband who spent countless hours proofreading and wishing I were finished. I could not have done this without your support and loving encouragement through it all!*

*Finally, I would like to dedicate this project to the Lord who I know has a special plan for it all!*

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# Introduction

One of the key challenges facing organizations today is the overwhelming demand from employees for balance between their work and personal lives. Organizations have to consider that the number of families with dual incomes is on the rise; therefore men and women are being faced with blended gender roles which are consequently making their way into companies in one form or another. Organizations can choose to address these issues in a proactive and progressive manner or they can sit back and watch as the face of the workplace changes and employees demand a culture the organization is not willing to provide. The rewards or setbacks are theirs to reap depending on the culture they have chosen to create.

With 40% of the work-force being dual-earner couples and 6% single parents (Friedman, 1987) balancing work and family is becoming of increasing importance to employees and organizations. Work life balance can be considered “a process of negotiating or compromising the demands of work and family roles to avoid conflict or stress, and achieve a sense of equilibrium” (Chomiak, 1998). An employees’ ability to balance work with personal and family responsibilities is of great importance when deciding to stay with a company (Work/Family Direction, 1997; cited in Chomiak, 1998).

Work life balance is the number one issue facing women according to a survey conducted by the Women’s Bureau of the US Department of Labor (Women’s Bureau, 1994). Male

employees with children rated work life balance second only to job security (Work/Family Directions, 1997; cited in Chomiak, 1998). According to Dex and Scheibl, “people work better when they have more control over their working lives” (1999) and work life balance initiatives help provide employees with the control they are looking to achieve.

According to Hobson et al., “proponents of balance argue that serious personal and work-related problems invariably arise when individuals fail to effectively fulfill fundamental life or family responsibilities” (1999). Failing to “achieve balance can lead to a variety of serious negative consequences for both individuals and organizations, including higher stress levels, increased absenteeism, and lower productivity” (Hobson, Delunas, & Kesic, 2001). The question for organizations is ‘how to achieve work life balance within their workplace in order to mitigate the negative consequences associated with an unbalanced lifestyle.’

It is suggested, in the literature, that culture will play a significant role in the introduction of work life balance initiatives in organizations. The cultural attitude within the organization, especially of management, will influence the extent to which employees feel comfortable using work life balance policies, but many organizations experience resistance to these initiatives stemming from the culture of the organization. It is important, in order for success, that senior management is supportive and instrumental in changing the culture.

There are significant challenges facing individuals in relation to balancing their work and personal lives. As a result there are problems created for organizations when employees’

lives are not balanced. Organizations are now dealing with dual career families who value the time spent with loved ones and want to pursue fulfilling careers. Organizations are faced with attempting to create an organizational culture that supports the balance their employees demand. The aim of this paper is to determine the impact that cultural change has when adopting and attempting to sustain a culture of work life balance in an organization.

## **The Need for Work Life Balance**

There are many facets that contribute to the need for work life balance. This section will explore the two factors that have the most significant impact on today's organization in relation to this need for work life balance. The first facet is the evolution of family roles – specifically looking at women's success in the workplace and as a result of this the increased male contribution in the home. The second facet is the increasing number of individuals caring for elderly relatives.

The most significant facet is the amount of women who have entered the labour force in recent years and the increasing involvement of their male counterparts in raising a family. Men and women alike are placing value on work life balance initiatives when making decisions about their work and personal lives. Friedman and Galinsky discuss the life-cycle approach in response to work-family issues which emphasizes that all employees at some point in their lives will experience tension between work and family that can be eased by a more sensitive work environment (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992).

Organizations need to be prepared to deal with these issues in a proactive and progressive manner.

Today there are more women constituting a significant portion of the labor force (Averett, Whittington, 2001; Joesch, 1997; The Conference Board of Canada, 1990), in turn, more men are becoming involved in child care and caring for elderly relatives (The Conference Board of Canada, 1990). In an article produced by Michael S. Kimmel he states, "...in the professional ranks, a new organization man has indeed emerged, one who wants to be an involved father with no loss of income, prestige, and corporate support – and no diminished sense of manhood" (1993). In a study done by Borrill and Kidd it was determined that employers assume that role conflict is inevitable with women, but when it comes to men with young families multiple roles are seen to enrich each other with the stress of one being compensated for by the satisfaction gained from the other (1994).

Many companies still view dedication to career as the sole marker of professional success; therefore men feel the pressure to hide their involvement with the family and opt out of taking advantage of the company's formal parental-leave policies (Kimmel, 1993). It is important that men are made to feel comfortable using these policies (Kimmel, 1993) as it will benefit both the individual and the organization. Organizations need to be aware of the shift that is taking place within the family and be able to respond to the blended gender roles.

Another aspect of home life that is driving the need for work life balance is due to the many baby boomers in their mid-fifties with parents in their seventies and eighties, these employees have to deal with parents that are becoming increasingly dependent (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992). Baby boomers are becoming more responsible for their aging parents and the need for elder care is being pushed by senior managers who are experiencing elder-care problems of their own (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992). In actuality, initiatives surrounding work life balance are more likely to stem from this notion rather than the idea of dependent children needing to be cared for, as senior managers had wives who stayed home when they had small children (Friedman, 1987).

The need for work life balance is most significantly being driven by the changing face of organizations as more women make their way into the workplace and men place more importance on spending time with family. It may be surprising to some that the other key need for balance is being driven by individuals who need to care for elderly relatives not young children. The results from this will be a culture that supports employees' family needs regardless of age. Due to the needs of employees and the impacts of work life balance or lack thereof organizations are challenged to address these needs. They need to stay abreast with the competition or retaining and attracting individuals may become a problem.

## **Organizational Impacts**

There are both costs and benefits associated with introducing work life balance into an organization. The costs can take many forms and vary from one organization to another. The most significant costs associated with implementation are the monetary costs of the

programs and the negative implications associated with unsupportive managers and employees. The key benefits are aspects such as: reduced absenteeism, increased retention, as well as increased moral and company loyalty. This section will explore these and other numerous impacts work life balance has on organizations.

The costs and benefits of implementing work life balance policies need to be weighed carefully by an organization. According to Dex and Scheibl there are considerable benefits from adopting family-friendly policies although there are disadvantages concerned with additional administration and disruptions (1999). These costs and benefits need to be taken into consideration when introducing policies and programs.

The negative tenets that surround the introduction of family-responsive benefits in organizations are thoughts such as:

- managers wanting employees to keep their personal problems at home
- the thinking 'give [employees] an inch and they will take a mile'
- equity means the same for everyone (many managers believe that what you do for one you have to do for everyone but this is unrealistic with the level of diversity that exists)
- benefit programs are provided for long-term income security and protection (managers are not used to responding to day-to-day hassles associated with the family)
- benefit programs can only satisfy workers and make them happy; they cannot make them more productive
- presence equals performance
- hours equal output (Zedeck, ed, 1992)

The costs that are associated with introducing family-friendly policies in organizations are both financial and operational:

- the yearly cost of the policy times the number of workers benefiting per year
- disruption costs of filling absent colleagues' positions temporarily
- temporary reduction in productivity from disruptions

- employees not benefiting from the policies can have lowered morale (Dex and Scheibl, 1999)

Despite the negative concerns and costs that are associated with introducing work family policies in organizations it is hoped that these negative tenets will be dispelled by the positive aspects that can be achieved by the introduction of concern for the family needs of workers. The question that most employers are asking is, “whether there are clear business benefits from adopting such policies and, if so, what are they” (Dex and Scheibl, 1999)? Businesses want to know what the bottom line advantages are from changes in job design and/or management strategies surrounding work life balance (Dex and Scheibl, 1999).

According to Dex and Scheibl “companies that introduce family-friendly policies ... would be more likely to experience definite gains from their introduction. In six different organizational studies there have been improvements in absenteeism as a result of implementing family-friendly policies” (Dex and Scheibl, 1999). Dex and Scheibl also found a number of studies that showed organizations across a range of industry and occupation groups that report improvements in retention rates as a result of family-friendly policies (1999).

In another study done by Hobson et al. they also state that family-friendly programs directly affect the bottom-line for organizations (2001). “The business case for the expansion of family-friendly working is most concerned with bottom-line cost advantages for change” (Dex and Scheibl, 1999). In a report by Friedman on family

supportive policies she states, “[d]efining work and family issues in terms of corporate self-interest help connect the decision-making process to longer-term, broad-based corporate change and its legitimacy as a business issue is better established” (Friedman, 1987).

Nine out of ten employers in 1996 provided at least one family-friendly arrangement; the most common was flexible work schedules with a total of 71% of employers offering some sort of flexibility (Dex and Shiebl, 1999). Two thirds of employers provided two or more family-friendly working arrangements (Dex and Scheibl, 1999). According to Dex and Scheibl, “a survey of 400 human resource managers in US companies found that 50 percent thought that the introduction of flexibility in their firms had actually had a cost cutting impact through a reduction of absenteeism and job turnover or maximizing staff retention” (Hall and Parker, 1993, cited in Dex and Scheibl, 1999).

There was also perceived benefits for improved staff morale and loyalty along with improved staff retention (Dex and Scheibl, 1999). Other studies support the correlation of family-friendly policies with increased staff motivation which in the long-run enhances productivity and increased morale and motivation (Dex and, 1999).

Some additional positive aspects of introducing work life balance initiatives presented by Friedman are:

- increased recruitment capabilities
- increased productivity
- reduced absenteeism/tardiness
- organization is more people oriented and participatory



- improved image of the organization
- relieving the pyramid squeeze (competitive individuals from the baby boomer generation are compensated through family supportive benefits verses promotions which are unavailable for all baby boomers)
- pressures from women's advocacy groups are relieved
- demographics of the labor force is making previous long-standing company policies obsolete and ineffective (1987)

According to the study by Dex and Scheibl reported in the Journal of General

Management the benefits to introducing family-friendly policies are:

- "savings from reduced recruitment, absenteeism, sickness; and from increased retention, morale and productivity
- increased return on investment in training if employees stay longer [due to policies]
- improved corporate image as company who takes care of its staff
- improved quality of applicants
- preventing loss of knowledge workers to competitors" (1999).

The benefits and costs associated with work life balance are going to be unique to each organization. Not all organizations will experience all benefits or all negative aspects.

Overall, as Dex and suggest, it is worth organizations of all sizes taking a serious look at the benefits and costs of family-friendly policies for their organization and looking at the bottom-line advantages of change when introducing family-friendly policies.

## **Mechanisms of Change**

There are many aspects that contribute to introducing change in an organization. If organizations plan to introduce work life balance in their organization there are specific mechanisms for creating this change that should be considered. Theory 'O' is a soft approach to change that is often used when attempting to change the culture of an organization. Along with Theory 'O' psychological contracting plays an important role when attempting to gain the support of employees when creating change. Finally, the

most significant aspect of creating a culture of change is management involvement and support. In the following paragraphs these three aspects will be discussed in relation to the introduction of work life balance in organizations.

Conference Board of Canada states that creating change of any sort in organizations can be difficult, but creating a family-friendly culture and support programs can be even more challenging (1990). According to Kotter, “until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are subject to degradation as soon as the pressure for change is removed” (1995). This is why change needs to be anchored in the corporation’s culture (Kotter, 1995).

Beer and Nohria, in their article, *Cracking the Code of Change*, discuss ‘Theory O.’ “In this ‘soft’ approach to change, the goal is to develop corporate culture and human capability through individual and organizational learning – the process of changing, obtaining feedback, reflecting, and making further changes” (Beer & Nohria, 2000). “‘Theory O’ change strategies are geared toward building up the corporate culture: employee behaviors, attitudes, capabilities, and commitment” (Beer & Nohria, 2000) which is essential for the successful implementation of work-family initiatives. Companies that adopt ‘Theory O’ strategies typically have “strong, long-held, commitment-based psychological contracts with their employees” (Beer & Nohria, 2000).

Psychological contracting plays a significant role when looking at creating a culture of change. “Sharing and negotiating of expectations of individuals and organizations – or ‘psychological contracting’ – is the key process which binds organizations together and enables them to function effectively” (Argyris, 1960; Herriot, 1992, cited in Borrill & Kidd, 1994). Borrill and Kidd argue that if organizations and individuals take a more open view of career development that allows for work and family linkages the coping strategies can be agreed upon before negative results such as labour unrest and employee turnover occur (1994).

Brown, Ferrara, and Schley conducted a study of forty-three women who worked outside of the home prior to getting pregnant and returned to the same place of employment after their pregnancy (2002). In this study it was determined that job satisfaction had a direct correlation with organizational maternity leave policies (Brown et al., 2002). Along with these findings the women also perceived greater support from coworkers if their pregnancies were planned and well-timed (Brown et al., 2002) which reinforces the importance of negotiating with employers to have psychological contracts that are positive and supportive for everyone involved.

As stated above, “companies have come to realize that an innovative set of policies and programs cannot yield their intended effects if they exist within an unsupportive culture,” according to Friedman and Galinsky (1992). Due to this, “a number of forward-thinking companies have begun to try to change the company culture, making it more ‘family-friendly’ ...more openly acknowledging of employees’ family or personal situations”

(Friedman & Galinsky, 1992). It is important that family-friendly policies are seen as a symbol of company commitment to all employees (Conference Board of Canada, 1990).

These initiatives can be introduced in a series of mid-range steps (Reger et al., 1994) which include: 1) forming a task force or guiding coalition, 2) determining the needs and involving the employee, 3) piloting the program, and 4) management support. The most integral component related to work-family culture concerns “managerial support and sensitivity to employees’ family responsibilities” (Thompson et al., 1999). “Employees whose supervisors support their efforts to balance work and family [are] less likely to experience work-family conflict (Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Senior management support is essential in order for a family-friendly culture and programs to be put into place (Conference Board of Canada, 1990). According to Friedman and Galinsky, each work-family program should have an advocate within management (1992; Friedman, 1987). One way for organizations to establish this support and reinforce a family-friendly culture is to add a work-family manager to their list of management titles (Johnson & Rose, 1992). Several hundred firms in the United States have created a work-family manager role; their reasons for doing so are two-fold: “1) to create a focus for communication and action, and 2) to embody the company’s commitment to work-family concerns” (Johnson & Rose, 1992).

It is hoped that managerial support and sensitivity can be used to advance the corporate culture of an organization in the development and effectiveness of work family programs; not only for pregnant women, but all employees and the organization as a whole.

Thompson et al. agrees with Starrels (1992) who concluded that, “corporate culture may either advance or thwart development and effectiveness of work-family programs” (1999) and advancement begins with the support of management.

In a study of 80 US organizations with work life balance initiatives in place, less than 2% of employees participated in work-family programs (Thompson et al., 1999, paraphrased from Galinsky, Bond and Friedman, 1993). If managers are not supportive of these initiatives employees will not feel comfortable using them even though the programs may be in place. Employees’ perceptions of the work-family culture in their organization will influence the employee’s attitude about the organization and whether or not to use work-family benefits (Thompson et al., 1999; Lyness, Thompson, Francesco & Judiesch, 1999). Due to this, organizations are contributing to tension in employees’ personal lives by not fostering a supportive work life balance culture which affects employees’ ability to concentrate, and be productive and creative (Thompson et al., 1999).

Thompson et al. provides the example that, “even where formal work-family policies and programs are in place, managers may subvert them by refusing to allow their employees to participate or by applying the policies unevenly” (1999). In order to mitigate this managers should be provided with training to “sensitize them to the changing nature of the work force, to familiarize them with the company’s programs, and to guide them in managing the types of work-family problems that arise” (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992). Many managers did not grow up with the idea of work life balance and the important role it plays in today’s organizations; therefore they must be taught how to embrace and

understand these issues. Once this culture has been established it is important that an organization take the time to ensure that the next generations of top managers personify the new approach to any change effort (Kotter, 1995) if they want this culture to continue to the next generation of employees.

## **Examples of the Impact of Management on Cultural Change**

### *Marriott Hotels*

According to Munck, in his article, *Changing a Culture of Face Time*, “not only is it possible to change deep-rooted attitudes about work, but doing so can lead to improved business practices and higher efficiency” (2001). In this article Munck looked at a case study of Marriott Hotel and their cultural transformation, “Marriott’s intense work ethic was driving away talented managers. Transforming that culture wasn’t easy, but the change led to happier employees – and better results” (2001).

Most managers at Marriott expressed a desire for less stress and a better balance between home and work (Munck, 2001). The message of the new initiative at Marriott that was sent to management was, “do whatever it takes to get the job done, but be flexible in how you do it” (Munck, 2001). It was important to work hard at changing the attitudes of management – starting with them having a change in attitude about “face time” (Munck, 2001). Marriott found that, “...people could be just as productive – and sometimes even more so – when they worked fewer hours...Because when they’re working fewer hours, they’re extra motivated to get things done, and they don’t waste any time in doing what they need to do” (Munck, 2001).

According to Marriott there was no change in quality from the customer comment cards that were received – the change did not affect the bottom line and it helped to foster open dialogue (Munck, 2001). Marriott discovered that, “...people who thrive at work and in their personal lives are just as valuable – if not more so – as people who thrive only at work” (Munck, 2001). Transforming the culture at Marriott was not as difficult as they thought it would be because “people truly wanted to change” (Munck, 2001).

Making the cultural shift at Marriott was effective for several reasons. They identified the need for change and how it would affect employees. They focused on changing the attitudes and behaviors of management so that the cultural shift would begin at the top. This demonstrates to employees that using these policies are acceptable to management therefore it is suitable for them to use these policies as well. According to a Charter co-founder, “the biggest way to illustrate the importance [of balancing work and family] is to believe in it and do it yourself” (Shellenbarger, 1999).

### *Deloitte & Touche*

In another case, Deloitte & Touche was having a problem retaining women in their work place; by performing a cultural revolution Deloitte now has a radically different approach to retaining talented women (McCracken, 2000). “Working towards equality in career development was fundamental” for Deloitte (McCracken, 2000). Work life balance is important for everyone and they demonstrate this by not allowing flex-time to impact the advancement of someone’s career (McCracken, 2000). Deloitte transformed their culture into “one in which people are comfortable talking about aspects of their personal lives” (McCracken, 2000). They did this by making sure that senior management was front and

center, making an airtight business case for cultural change, they began with dialogue as the platform for change, and promoted work life balance (McCracken, 2000).

Marriott and Deloitte & Touche are examples of change initiatives focused around work life balance that were successful because the change agents involved chose to address the culture of the organization to create change and did this through strong management influence. Despite the success that these organizations had there was undoubtedly resistance experienced by various levels in the organizations.

When changes are introduced in an organization there are challenges faced by all members. The mechanisms of change that were discussed in this section can be used to help mitigate the challenges faced by organizations when introducing change. Basing change on the involvement of employees and the support of management will help to create a culture that believes in the changes.

## **Resistance to Change and Work Life Balance**

Resistance and change happen simultaneously – an organization will rarely have one without the other. It does not matter how significant or miniscule the changes are they will be met with resistance and it is important that organizations are prepared for this. If organizations are oblivious or unprepared for resistance they are missing an important part of the change process or the changes are not significant enough to make a difference. Resistance is a key factor that exists in many organizations that have introduced work life balance which will be discussed in the following paragraphs. There are also important aspects that organizations need to understand in order to address resistance. The first is



have employees been given the knowledge they need in order to change. Second, are they capable or have they been given the tools to be able to change. Third, are they willing to change? These three aspects of dealing with resistance will also be explored in the following section.

In any change process there is resistance and in the event of work life balance the effect is no different. According to Reger, Mullane, Gustafson and Demarie, “[d]iversity of beliefs about organizational identity can complicate implementation because a change that is acceptable to members in one part or level of the organization might be incomprehensible to or opposed by others (1994).

According to Galpin, “possibly the most important pitfall to any change process is not understanding resistance to change” (1996). Resistance is likely to be encountered at various levels of the organization and a lack of understanding of the resistance can result in frustration and dysfunctional behavior (Galpin, 1996). This dysfunctional behavior can take the form of acting out against the change, the initiators of the change, and the organization itself (Galpin, 1996).

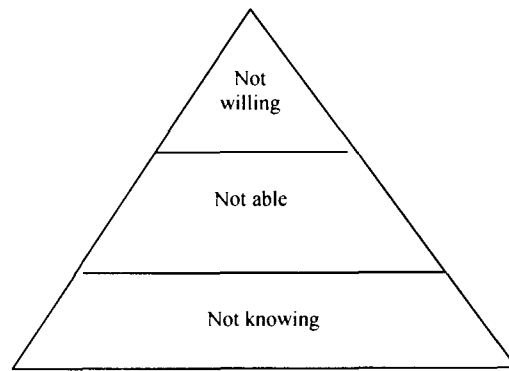
Change represented by a major decision is almost always resisted and this resistance makes decision processes inefficient (Friedman, 1987, paraphrased from a Chase Manhattan Bank VP). This is particularly true when decisions are related to family issues at the workplace, according to Friedman (1987). “Understanding the reasons for resistance and working with it rather than against it will aid greatly in creating a smooth

process of change” (Galpin, 1996). There are several issues that Friedman talks about that contribute to feelings of resistance when attempting to introduce work life balance into an organization:

- 1) resistance can be passionate due to the culture of the organization
- 2) many managers do not feel family issues are ‘appropriate’ business concerns therefore family issues in the workplace are resisted based on legitimacy and before suggestions have been made or recommendations for the change
  - a. with the blurring of traditional sex roles the line between work and family has been blurred
- 3) managers are not trained to look at non-work factors having an impact on performance
- 4) managers fear involvement in workers’ personal lives
  - a. major decision makers have not had to grapple with these ideas due to stay-at-home wives
  - b. in order for a lot of these managers to make this shift they are going to have to look at the impact on their lives of caring for aging relatives verses preschoolers (1987)

Friedman identifies that employee resistance to work family benefits does exist in rare situations with employees feeling that they do not want the company to be involved in any way in their personal lives (1987). In most cases, though, resistance comes from the lack of information about the changes (Lloyd, 2003) rather than from the introduction of work life balance into the culture of the organization.

There are three levels of resistance that Galpin discusses (1996). The three levels are “not knowing,” “not able,” and “not willing” which are successively reduced by satisfaction at each of the levels (Galpin, 1996).



**Figure 1 – Actions to Take to Overcome Resistance**

The Human Side of Change: A Practical Guide to Organizational Redesign, Timothy J. Galpin  
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What people need first is knowledge which can be provided through information about the change process (Galpin, 1996). This knowledge needs to be based on what management and employees want to know such as: “What is happening? Why are we doing this? How will it take place? When will it happen? And who will it affect?” (Galpin, 1996). By answering these questions for people at each phase of a change process it will help them move on to the next level (Galpin, 1996) because they are now informed.

“Ability” is addressed through training and education (Galpin, 1996). “Because ability has a profound impact on the willingness that people have to undertake new activities and make changes, training becomes an integral part of communication and the change process” (Galpin, 1996). This is especially true of managers who are not familiar with dealing with the people side of business when introducing work life balance into an organization. Managers need to be trained with respect to how these policies and

programs operate as well as being sensitive to the family issues and how to have a family related conversation.

“The acquisition of knowledge at the lowest level and new skills at the middle level will help people become more willing to change” (Galpin, 1996). Senior management involvement in the communication process helps to send signals to the organization about the priority to change – in this way individual benefits of change are communicated and their willingness to be open to the change is encouraged (Galpin, 1996) which addresses the top level which is “willingness” to change.

It is important that organizations, when introducing work life balance into the culture, are aware of the likelihood of resistance and how to address these issues when they arise.

Through the use of the resistance pyramid developed by Galpin and the questions pertaining to each of these levels, organizations can attempt to mitigate any resistance experienced from the introduction of work life balance.

## Research Question

It is not enough for senior managers to put parental leave and flexible schedules on the books (Kimmel, 1993). “If...involved fathers are to stay in the organization, they must feel comfortable using those policies. And they must feel their job performance is evaluated fairly” (Kimmel, 1993). This analysis can also be applied to the female employee as an increasing amount of families are dual income. As Kimmel states, “in the 1990s, companies can no longer take for granted that family life is the exclusive domain for women” (1996) and this will carry into the coming decades. Kimmel also argues that, in changing the larger framework, culture, managers can have the largest impact (1996).

Kotter states that, “change sticks when it becomes ‘the way we do things around here,’ when it seeps into the bloodstream of the corporate body” (1995). According to Galpin, “effective implementation [of change] mandates that all changes be clearly connected to an organization’s culture. Making this connection not only enables effective implementation but also embeds change into the daily life of an organization” (1996), this is essential for a culture of work life balance to form. Continued management of all components of the culture during a change effort will reinforce and embed the change into the daily operations of the organization (Galpin, 1996).

Companies need to recognize that the organization, as a whole, needs to develop a culture that supports family-friendly policies. It is not enough that the policies are simply in

place, but a culture of acceptance and encouragement needs to surround employees and the use of these policies. It is only through thorough and thought out creation and implementation of these policies that they will result in the bottom-line benefits that organizations are seeking despite the costs tied to their implementation.

Creating this change is difficult as it involves changing the attitude toward work life balance which involves changing the culture. Organizations such as Marriott and Deloitte & Touche have used cultural change to aid them in introducing work life balance within their organizations with considerable success. Having said that, companies need to realize that no matter how innovative the work life balance policies and programs are they cannot yield their intended effects if they exist within an unsupportive culture (Friedman and Galinsky, 1992). It is one thing to have family-supportive policies, but it is another to make sure that employees know that they exist and trust that it will not negatively affect their careers – they need to know that supervisors are behind the use of these policies and programs.

Thus, the aim of this study is to answer the following question: What role does culture play in the implementation and continuous development and sustainability of work life balance in organizations?

# **Methodology**

In order to answer the research question described above, a qualitative study was conducted on the introduction of work-life balance programs in three organizations. In this section is the description of the research methodology, including the participants, how the data was collected, and the manner in which the data was analyzed.

## **Participants**

Three organizations were looked at in this study and interviews were conducted with three to four individuals at each organization. The first of these organizations is a national company in the communications sector with approximately 23,400 employees. The second is a high-end recruiting firm that employs 5000 people around the world. The third organization is a post-secondary education institution with approximately 20,000 employees. The level of employees interviewed range from the COO and president to middle management, trainers, Human Resource personnel, employees, and faculty members.

## **Data Collection**

Interviews were conducted and questions were asked pertaining to work life balance and the changes that each of the organizations has undergone in this area. The questions pertained to the communication processes that were used, the impact that work life balance is having on the organization, and any resistance that the organization may have

encountered (See Appendix B for Questions used in the interview process). Interviewees were asked these questions in order to obtain the desired information but were also asked probing questions in order to fill any gaps in their stories. All interviews were tape recorded in order to most accurately collect the information.

## **Method of Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed and then analyzed for themes relevant to work life balance and change, specifically looking at psychological contracting and the influence of management and individuals on the success of the initiatives. Resistance was explored as it was determined to have a significant impact on the culture and change. Data was categorized according to frequency and relevance.

Upon completion of the interview process each interview was transcribed onto a computer. The interviews were then printed. I analyzed the data by reading through the interviews, highlighting sections of information, and then cutting the pieces of paper at each of the highlighted sections. Once each individual piece of data was on a separate piece of paper I was able to look for themes. I did this by spreading the pieces of paper the floor of my living room searching for themes and putting them into similar piles.

Once I had detected a couple of themes and gone through all of the available data I wrote about it in my analysis. I then put of the data back into one pile and started over again, looking for new themes until I was satisfied that I had uncovered all relevant information.



# **Work Life Balance in Three Organizations**

## **Case Description – National Communications Company**

The national communications company that was used in this study was created in February 1999. This company was formed from the merger of two Canadian provincial communications companies. For the past four years this company has undergone a significant amount of challenges merging two companies with different cultures and ways of doing business. For two years after the merger there were a lot of acquisitions and almost all of the employees have been affected by these changes. With the pressures involved with merging these two companies and the resulting reduction in the labour force, the challenges have been enormous for both employees and management.

Traditionally, the idea of wellness or balance within this company has been associated with fitness. They had a nurse at every location that closely worked with all employees, now these nurses are available mainly for return to work programs. They have always had onsite fitness facilities which have been fairly successful with 25% of employees using these facilities. A lot of the fitness pursuits were dropped when the merger took place, but recently they have included personal trainers, nutritionists, Pilate's classes, etc. into their fitness programs. Employee assistance programs have been around for some time as well – they used to have counselors on site but they now use an outside agency to take care of these issues.

The position of Corporate Wellness Manager was created only fourteen months ago to start looking at the whole picture of a healthy organization and to aid in alleviating some of the stress employees are experiencing. The need for work and life balance was introduced to address the problem of absenteeism in the organization and discover the underlying reasons for employees' absence. Currently there is a 6000 person deficit within this company which may explain why there are so many people stressed and absent from work as the current number of employees is unable to address all the demands placed on them. The company wants to establish if the reason for absenteeism is because of the stress caused from employees' jobs having changed so dramatically due to the significant employee deficit.

In the two months prior to interviews with this company a pilot program was established within one of the business units involving the VP, managers, directors, and employees. The organization will use the pilot to look at absenteeism, why their people are absent, and how effective the work life balance initiatives introduced are at reducing stress and absenteeism. As this report is being completed the company will be completing their pilot program. It would be interesting to return to the company and determine the level of success that they had with their pilot.

It is the feeling, from those interviewed, that the majority of stress and pressure through the past four years has been born by the employees. The expectation is that everyone will continue to push the envelope and work harder and longer despite the negative implications the organization is facing. With all interviews conducted there was an

overwhelming feeling that employees cannot sustain the momentum they are working at and provide the best service possible to their customers. The company has reached a critical state and has discovered that without some significant changes to the culture of their organization they will not be able to move forward. It is their hope that with the establishment of work life balance into their culture absenteeism will be reduced. Unfortunately with over 20,000 employees across Canada it will take time for the changes to be felt throughout and the organization to begin to reap the rewards.

### **Case Description – International Executive Recruiting Firm**

This international recruiting firm has been in business for twenty plus years with the COO and President being the number one and believer in balance between work and personal life. For twenty years she has made sure that her employees understand that balance is important for the success of their work and personal lives and the success of the organization.

Of the three companies that were looked at in this study, this recruiting firm has been the most successful at establishing work life balance as a significant part of their culture. For this organization, leading by example is the primary mode of communicating the culture of work life balance in their lives. The president and other leaders in the organization take time to explain to employees their own personal philosophy on work life balance and how they achieve balance. Some of the tactics that the company uses to aid balance are: 1) the office is locked in the evenings and does not re-open until the morning – most employees do not have keys to access the office at will, 2) the office is not open on weekends, 3) they encourage healthy nutrition, 4) they encourage taking time to pursue

personal interests and community initiatives, 5) they encourage career development beyond their own organization, and 6) balance is talked about at orientation and training.

The culture of balance has been created because it is an important facet of life according to the leadership team, but also because they understand the business benefits from establishing a balanced culture. This organization would prefer to have a high level of retention by allowing their employees to pursue family and life goals outside of the organization, rather than have trained and dedicated employees leave because their personal lives and life pursuits do not fit with the culture of the organization.

The recruiting business has unique challenges where at times living an unbalanced lifestyle is necessary. Employees are willing to make this sacrifice because the majority of their working lives are balanced. Employees feel supported and able to take time for personal and career pursuits outside of the organization which makes them more dedicated employees. This dedication and loyalty was prevalent in all interviews that were conducted with this organization.

### **Case Description – Post Secondary Education Institution**

This education institution was established in 1965. It was designed to attract older students; the majority of students attending this school were two years older than the average students attending university in Canada at the time. This posed unique challenges that other universities did not have to face. Because they were dealing with older students they had to face the fact that many of their students had children. Early on in its existence, the university established a day care which was a concept relatively

unheard of in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Even from its inception, this university was progressive in its work life balance initiatives.

Despite this progressiveness, as a faculty member, one of the interviewees discovered that maternity leave was not a part of the benefits package when she became pregnant and wanted to take time off to have a baby. At that time the faculty members were predominantly male and the culture was such that there was very little need for benefits such as maternity leave. This interviewee became directly involved with the development of the university's first maternity leave policies in the late 1970s. When she began exploring the possibility of maternity leave she was faced with very little resistance. She was able to take maternity leave with her first pregnancy without any extenuating setbacks. Although the university did not have a formal maternity leave policy in place at the time it was important that they remain progressive in their policies which led to a relatively easy introduction to maternity leave at the university. It is important that the university maintain its progressive nature in regards to work life balance if it wants to stay ahead of the competition when attracting and retaining individuals.

Today, the majority of communication regarding changes to work life balance policies is communicated via email. Before the rampant use of email the majority of policies were communicated via word of mouth and through written memos. People relied heavily on their supervisors in order to have information passed on to them about any changes to the policies.

For this type of an environment, balance is something that is left up to the individual to achieve, especially for faculty members, because their working lives are so unstructured. They are able to determine their preferred level of balance. For employees at the university their working lives are much more structured and they must balance their lives within these parameters. There are unique challenges that the university faces as it attempts to create a lifestyle of balance for all members because they are dealing with three very different sets of individuals – employees, faculty, and students.

There was an overwhelming lack of knowledge in regards to the work life balance policies from the individuals that were talked to in this study. It is believed that this lack of knowledge is due to the fact that the university leaves individuals to balance their own lives without a lot of interjection or emphasis on balance. There are certain individuals within the university that feel balance is extremely important and something that should not be ignored – one of these individuals was interviewed in this study. It is unfortunate that the efforts that have been made to this point to effectively communicate the message of balance have not been successful. None of the individuals interviewed knew the benefits available to them as an employee of the university in relation to balance. For example, none of the interviewees know what the employee assistance program is or that it is available for them to use.

Despite the lack of knowledge from individuals in regards to balance, the feeling among all interviewees was that there is little to no resistance from anyone when it comes to the importance of balance at the university. They were also not concerned about their lack of

knowledge because they feel that the information is available to them if they want to access it via the internet.

There was a strong emphasis with almost all interviewees that having work life balance as a part of university life is an important selling point for students, as well as a selling tool for future employees of the university. People value balance in their lives and for many it could be a determining factor when accepting a position with this university verses another university. The history behind the progressive nature of this university is an important asset to have when making decisions about balance and the future of the university in regards to work life balance.

The university is putting together a fair in the spring to begin to promote the importance of balance which will be the beginning a wellness initiative for the university. At the time of completing this report the fair has not taken place, but it would be interesting to explore the successes that the university will experience from events such as this

## **Analysis**

The following paragraphs will provide an analysis of the data collected. It will look at the relevance of culture on work life balance and the impact culture has on change from the perspective of psychological contracting and the influence of leadership and management on the success of the initiatives. Resistance to cultural change will also be discussed in relation to work life balance. It will also look at modes of communication used and their effectiveness.

### **Cultural Impact**

#### *Psychological Contracting*

In all three organizations, culture played a significant role in the decisions that were made in relation to work life balance and how the changes were and continue to be communicated in these organizations. The culture also helped to determine the level of work life balance that is present in the organization. Psychological contracting was a key component in each of the organizations when determining the impact of culture on work life balance. For two of the organizations, psychological contracting appeared to have a positive influence on the culture and, in turn, on work life balance.

According to Friedman and Galinsky, in order for policies and programs to have their intended effects they must exist within a supportive culture (1992). The expectations of leadership and employees must be in line; there is no longer the expectation of having an



exclusive commitment to work. There is an understanding that people have a life beyond work. In one organization the individual is able to impose their own boundaries on work verses their personal life. In order to have this kind of relationship there must be a psychological contract that supports this understanding.

People are looking to be educated, move forward, and drive their own careers.

Organizations and individuals need to take a more open view of career development that allows for work and family linkages; this way, coping strategies can be agreed upon before negative results such as labour unrest and employee turnover occur (Borril and Kidd, 1994). Two of the organizations focus on the individual needs of their employees because it is understood that the employees are all individuals and are able to make their own decisions about what is important in their lives.

It is important that the needs of the employee and the employer are married. The investment of time and money in people is significant, therefore, psychological contracting allows for the “continuation of the relationship” despite other things in their lives for which they may want to make room. Both parties benefit because of the continuation of this relationship, as one interviewee stated, “the organization does not exist without people.” In one of the organizations an interviewee felt that, “people never have to leave because they are happy and can move forward with the company...people are here because they want to be here.”

It was also found that psychological contracting can play a negative role on the culture as a manager in one of the organizations indicated that employees take advantage of the benefits packages by not returning to work for months and months. One interviewee stated that, “people will be unbelievably unhappy and will not leave” due to the benefits that are associated with keeping their job. Psychological contracting will determine the level of participation that is expected of employees and the support of their supervisors for these initiatives.

### *Management and Leadership Impact*

In all three organizations it was found that the influence of management and leadership on work life balance has a vast impact on its success. According to the Conference Board of Canada there must be senior management support in order for a family-friendly culture and programs to be put into place (1990). It was found among all organizations that there is support, in one form or another, from the top when discussing work life balance initiatives. In one organization it is written directly into their mission statement and vision.

In all organizations the people interviewed felt that they were supported by their supervisors, mentors, and in one organization even by the COO. One of the interviewees believes that, “people need to understand that the organization is committed to this” and what better way of accomplishing this is if the COO and president is open about her own exercise program and talks about the importance of exercise and a focus on balance. One interviewee felt that they are encouraged by management to use the programs.

As stated earlier, increasingly, executives are supportive of work-family policies as they are, “acutely aware of the shrinking labor pool and the increasing employee diversity predicted for their work force; thus, attracting and retaining their employees becomes an even greater priority” (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992). Two of the organizations interviewed discussed the importance of work life balance initiatives as a selling tool for retaining and attracting new employees and how important this is going to be for their organizations in the next five plus years.

### *Cultural Summary*

In summary, the changing face of organizations will be explored and its impact of work life balance in organizations. It will also look at how this translates into organizational commitment to work life balance.

The response from all three organizations was that work life balance has to be a part of the culture. The face of many organizations is changing as more women are a part of the full time workforce. One of the organizations has shifted from having almost no women in the workplace thirty years ago to more than 1/3 being female. Another of the organizations is 70% female. As stated previously, employees’ perceptions of the work-family culture in their organization will influence the employee’s attitude about the organization and whether or not to use work-family benefits (Thompson et al., 1999; Lyness, Thompson, Francesco & Judiesch, 1999).

These organizations understand that changing the culture to include work life balance is time consuming and there needs to be constant embracing of work life balance by all

individuals in order to keep the momentum. Work life balance needs to go beyond a committee and management in order for it to be a part of the culture. People need to understand that the organization is committed to this and the best way to communicate this is through the culture. If successes are communicated from the top and the leaders have a balanced life people will begin to see what the benefits are and they will begin to embrace the changes. One interviewee stated that, communication is key and you have to keep communicating in order to attack any resistance.

## **Resistance**

Resistance was experienced by all organizations in this study. All interviewees in this study did not believe that there was a lot of resistance to work life balance but on closer analysis it was determined that resistance does exist in one form or another in each of the organizations. According to Galpin, resistance exists in three forms: 1) the individual does not know about the initiatives, 2) the individual is not able to perform the initiatives or take part in them, and 3) the individual is not willing to take part in the initiatives. All three of these forms of resistance were present in these organizations.

It was found that not knowing about the initiatives was a key reason for resistance with two organizations. The fact that the majority of individuals who were interviewed did not recognize that there is resistance is a form of not knowing. There were only two people interviewed who identified that there might be resistance at some level but they were unaware of it and did not know in what forms it existed. Two individuals do not know what is available to them in the way of parental leave or what policies exist and one individual does not know where the gym is despite the fact that she has worked for the

organization for ten years. In one organization there is a feeling that programs are not being communicated properly to employees and that is why they are not using them.

There is a belief in one of the organizations that longer term employees have assumptions about what programs are available to them. The organization needs to break through the barriers of assumption in order for individuals to understand the culture. In one of the organizations the employer and management is unaware of the barriers to people using work life balance programs. They do not know why their employees are not using the program which is putting the employer in a difficult position because they cannot put together strategies for attacking this problem. The organization is planning on gathering this information in the near future but this is a form of not knowing that is causing resistance.

Time is a major constraint when it comes to work life balance and resistance. It was determined from the interviews that people do not have time to read emails, attend meetings, and look at memos pertaining to work life balance never mind wanting to participate in some of the programs. In one of the organizations they only get one half hour for lunch which is not enough time to use the gym. It is felt that there needs to be more options available. People want be able to alleviate the stress that comes with their work and hope that a shift will happen soon so that they will have time to participate in the programs. Management in one organization knows that their employees are stressed and they continue to pile the work on them.

It was discovered in all three organizations that people are a contributor to the success or failure of work life balance in an organization. Presently in all three organizations there are not enough people to go around ensuring that this is happening. It is impossible to fill all the roles. One manager interviewed stated that she wished there was one of her for every department to ensure that people maintained a balanced life.

Not being able to participate in some of the programs because there is not the right fit, or a feeling of being inhibited, or special arrangements being made for certain individuals means that people may push back; this is happening in each of the organizations in one form or another. One organization is inhibited by the bargaining unit as to what they are able to provide for their employees.

In one of the organizations there is resistance due to certain directors and managers not seeing the benefits and having a different agenda for their work teams. They are being told that they have to do this. Some people are afraid of the changes and are not willing to change because they simply do not want to. People do not understand why the change is necessary and are not excited about it. Some people are not willing to participate because they fear that there will be consequences associated with participating.

#### *Modes of Communication*

There were many modes of communication used when sharing new information with the organization in relation to work life balance. The organizations all used email as a primary means of communicating changes to employees. Team meetings were also used to communicate changes or new initiatives that were brought into play. Orientation week

was an important week for all three organizations when communicating the culture of work life balance to new employees. Two of the organizations are going to be using a pilot to introduce new initiatives in a small part of the organization in order to gauge the response of employees and the effectiveness of the programs. One of the organizations is using a task force to collect information about further work life balance needs in the organization.

One interviewee stated that exposure was extremely important for progress of the organization in relation to work life balance – the more one encounters it, the easier it is to define and deal with. Despite the various types of communication used within each organization there were significant aspects of the work life balance initiative in each organization that the interviewees were not aware of – from not knowing where the athletic facilities were to not knowing what the parental leave policy was or whether or not one existed.

## Discussion

Work life balance and the impact that culture plays on this initiative are important facets that organizations are looking to capitalize on in today's workplace. The need for work life balance is being fueled by employees who are no longer satisfied with lives that are solely focused on work with little or no consideration for other pursuits. Most organizations are dealing with change in one form or another. The introduction of work life balance presents the challenge of changing the culture for organizations that want to develop work life balance initiatives that are effective and long lasting. Cultural change is becoming prevalent when addressing change initiatives as it allows organizations to address the changes in a holistic manner. In the following paragraphs the relationship between work life balance, culture, and change will be discussed as well as why these facets are important in today's organizations.

The most significant impact on individuals in today's workplace is the desire for a balanced life despite their responsibilities at work and in their personal lives. The blended gender roles which have come into play for many families have a significant impact on life beyond work and the demand that has been created by employees for work life balance. Many couples are being faced with the reality that they are involved in a dual income family and that both desire successful careers. Some individuals are experiencing raising children in a single parent situation. Because of these role transformations, men are taking on more responsibilities in the home and women are



pursuing successful careers that focus much of their time and attention away from the home.

Many individuals desire a well rounded lifestyle that encompasses not only a successful career but also a healthy life, travel opportunities, family pursuits, humanitarian efforts, and religion. Much of society, in the last two decades, has been provided with opportunities that were not available to past generations which have broadened their pursuits outside of their own backyard. It is important that employees' are able to take time for pursuits outside of work in order to maximize their impact on society and the workplace. In many cases in order for this to happen they need the support of their workplace. There are an increasing number of organizations willing to support the life pursuits of their employees because they understand the benefits to the organization when employees are fulfilled.

Organizations that see the benefits of a culture that supports work life balance have the challenge of determining the best way to introduce these changes into their organization. Organizations need to be able to be profitable and flourish despite helping employees to create balance in their lives. How does an organization that sees the benefits of work life balance introduce this change into their organization?

Change is prevalent in any organization that is attempting to compete with the top organizations in its industry. The drive to be number one and attract the best people is driven by change initiatives. When implementing work life balance, organizations need

to determine the best way to introduce these changes into their organizations making it as smooth a transition as possible while maximizing the impact of the change. Work life balance initiatives that are introduced into organizations using cultural change will have a greater impact and be more effective than those who attempt to lay out the change initiative with no transformation to the beliefs and values of the organization.

When change is made by adjusting the culture of an organization it enables the organization to be changed from the inside out. The norms and values of the organization are adjusted to support the new culture which supports work life balance. All members of the organization need to support the values surrounding work life balance in order for it to become a part of the culture. With cultural change the changes need to be viewed as important to employees and employees should have involvement in the development of the changes. Management involvement is also extremely important for its effectiveness. Employees need to feel supported when seeking to use work life balance initiatives. When the culture supports work life balance, the employees feel supported and believe in the initiatives. If the culture does not support work life balance then the changes that were introduced will not come to fruition.

Cultural change is a long process that takes a significant amount of time to accomplish fully but it has long lasting effects. Cultural change is not a tangible element of change which makes it difficult to introduce but if accomplished is the longest lasting, most sustainable, and highly effective changes in an organization; it can also have the greatest

impact. Therefore, cultural change is the most effective way of introducing work life balance into organizations.

It is important that the needs of employees and employers are married in order for success in personal and career life which is why cultural change plays such a significant role in work life balance initiatives. This has put pressure on organizations to support these initiatives and be leaders when contributing to the pursuits of their employees. People want to work in a culture that fits their lifestyle and even supports it. Because of this demand many traditional organizations need to take a close look at their culture and make significant changes if they wish to support work life balance.

It is important for organizations to recognize that the need for balance is not going to disappear. With the transformation of gender roles and the pursuit of a well rounded balanced lifestyle many employees are seeking organizations that will facilitate them in fulfilling these pursuits. People are a constantly evolving and important part of the organization; their expectations should not be shied away from or ignored. Cultural change is the best way to introduce work life balance ensuring that employees' needs are taken into consideration and the characteristics of this initiative are supportive for all members of the organization.

As organizations begin the process of changing their culture to one that supports work life balance, they will begin to experience the benefits. Employees that would otherwise choose to leave their careers to raise a family or seek employment elsewhere will remain

with an organization that positively assists life outside of work and supports the career development of its people. Cultural change is the only way to ensure that employees feel supported and comfortable using work life balance initiatives. It is also the only way to ensure the sustainability of work life balance in an organization.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the following paragraphs will provide a summary of the main findings from this study; they will discuss the limitations of the study, what the implications are for further research conducted in the area of work life balance and change, and the implications for managers of work life balance and change in the future.

### **Summary of Main Findings**

In this study it was revealed that: 1) work life balance is an important part of evolving organizations, 2) organizations are searching to implement work life balance in the most effective way positive that will benefit the organization and its employees, and 3) culture is the most effective way of implementing change, especially that of work life balance. These three aspects will be reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Blended gender roles and transforming non-traditional families have become a part of all organizations including those explored in this study, which is why work life balance has become a prevalent point of discussion for many organizations. For the organizations involved in this study, work life balance has become a reality that is being addressed.

In order for the implementation of work life balance to be effective all individuals in the organization should be involved in the development of the programs – their ideas should be heard.

With all three organizations communication was a key aspect that was discussed when implementing work life balance. Communication between employer and employee is a key aspect of cultural change. When discussing work life balance, the relationship between employer and employee has an enormous impact on the success of these programs and the benefit to both the organization and the individual.

Psychological contracting is a significant contributor to the relationship between employer and employee. It plays a key role in the culture of an organization as it allows the employer and employee to be open and honest. Psychological contracting takes into consideration the needs of both the organization and the individual. Even though the people interviewed did not use the term psychological contracting it was inferred to be an important aspect in all three organizations. In addition to the impact of psychological contracting, management and leadership within these organizations had an impact on the culture of work life balance. The level of support that they provide for these changes has determined the level of success that the programs have had to this point.

It was found that a lack of resources and time were significant barriers to people not being able to use work life balance programs which provides another reason why individuals should be able to contribute to the design of these programs. Ultimately in some cases there was just not the right fit in order for people to be able to use these programs.

It is important for organizations to understand that with any change there will be resistance to those changes. It was discovered that resistance was present with the introduction of work life balance into the culture of these organizations. Communication should be used to mitigate the level of resistance. People need to know why work life balance is being introduced, what programs are going to be available, how they can use them, and what the benefits are to them. This was not being communicated to its fullest in any of the organizations.

Some of the individuals were not willing to participate in the programs because they did not feel supported in using them. They felt that there would be negative consequences due to participation. This shows how important it is that work life balance is supported by management and that this support is communicated through the culture of the organization. Fear should not be a contributing factor to the use of these programs.

From the above findings it is determined that culture is the most effective mode of introducing work life balance into organizations. Cultural change maximizes the level of success and sustainability for the organization and its employees. Employees are able to realize the impact on themselves and the organization if culture is utilized to create the changes; organizations are able to experience the benefits.

## **Limitations of the Study**

There are five limitations that should be mentioned in regards to this study.

The first limitation is that all participants were female. There were no males that were interviewed in this study. It would have been interesting to have a male perspective on work life balance and change within organizations. There was no particular reason for the study involving strictly females. The reality, though, is that within human resources, the majority of professionals are female and human resources, in turn, are the foundation for work life balance.

The second limitation is that all three organizations looked at in this study were very large with the smallest company having 5000 employees. It would be interesting to get the perspective of small to medium sized organizations in regards to work life balance as they would most likely experience different challenges when introducing work life balance.

The third limitation is that in each of the organizations there were only three or four individuals interviewed. With such large organizations looked at in this study the low number of interviews conducted at each location may not be representative of the entire population at each organization.

The fourth limitation is that there was only one individual who conducted the interviews for all three organizations which may skew the responses.

The fifth limitation is that two of the organizations involved in the study were just beginning their journey of developing work life balance in their organization. It would



be interesting to conduct another study looking at these organizations in a year's time to determine what did and did not work for them once they have more of their culture established.

## **Implications for Research on Work Life Balance and Change**

Work life balance is going to become more of a focus for organizations as employees demand a workplace that facilitates a well rounded life for them and their families. As organizations are faced with the challenges of developing a culture of work life balance for their employees, the search for how to introduce a culture that maximizes the benefits of work life balance for the organization will increase.

From this study, it has been determined that the use of culture plays a key role in the introduction and development of work life balance. Cultural change is a slow process; therefore, a longer term study may be of interest to determine whether organizations can sustain this culture and what some of the long term challenges of having work life balance as a part of their culture may be. One of the participants in this study stated that it would be three to five years before they would truly see a shift within their culture.

It would be beneficial to explore the challenges of introducing a culture of work life balance in smaller and medium size companies. The needs and demands of employees may be very different as there are different pressures depending on the size and make up of the company. There are also going to be different programs that work depending on the size of the organization.

It would be extremely important for the development of culture change to take a closer look at communication and the role that it plays in change. Different modes of communication are more effective at implementing work life balance and creating cultural change. What those modes of communication are and how that communication should be facilitated was only briefly discussed in this study and is worth a closer look both from the perspective of cultural change and work life balance.

### **Implications for the Management of Work Life Balance and Change**

There is an overwhelming demand for work life balance among employees today. The demand and need for work life balance is not going to disappear, therefore, managers need to understand how it is going to impact them, their organization, and their people. Training is important for managers of work life balance so that they understand how to respond to their employees when discussing their personal lives. They will then be able to use communication strategies such as psychological contracting to meld the interests of the organization and employee.

Work life balance is new territory for many organizations. It is important that proponents of these changes talk to their people and understand the needs of these individuals in order to create change that is supported by all individuals. This is necessary for all change initiatives, not just work life balance. As a manager of change, you need to help employees understand why the changes are being made and what the benefits are to them and the organization.

Organizations are constantly impacted by the world around them. The people that work for a company have one of the largest impacts on the success or failure of the organization. It is important that organizations take into consideration the needs of their employees. As the demands of employees evolve to include a well balanced lifestyle, organizations are faced with the challenge of helping facilitate work life balance for their employees. The most effective way for organizations to create work life balance for their employees is to create a culture that supports work life balance. Creating change by changing the culture of an organization results in long lasting benefits for both the employee and the organization.

# Appendix A – Ethics Approval

## SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS



BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6  
Telephone: 604-291-3447  
FAX: 604-268-6785

October 8, 2003

Ms. Sunshine Willms  
Graduate Student  
Faculty of Business Administration  
Simon Fraser University

Dear Ms. Willms:

**Re: Work life balance initiatives: creating change  
by changing the culture**

The above-titled ethics application has been granted approval by the Simon Fraser Research Ethics Board, at its meeting on September 8, 2003 in accordance with Policy R 20.01, "Ethics Review of Research Involving Human Subjects".

Sincerely,

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director  
Office of Research Ethics

## Appendix B – Interview Questions

### 1) Communication:

- a) When you began to communicate with employees about the changes, how did you communicate the changes? /When the organization began to communicate with you about the changes how were the changes communicated?
- b) What aspects were emphasized?
- c) What was not mentioned originally in the communication process that was communicated later or you feel should be communicated now?

### 2) Impacts:

- a) What are the impacts you/your organization have experienced from the introduction of work life balance?
- b) As an organization/employee, what are the benefits/costs you've experienced?

### 3) Resistance:

- a) Was there resistance to the introduction of family-supportive programs and policies?
- b) If so, in what way and/or from whom?
- c) Were there specific strategies used to change managers and employees behaviors, capabilities, and commitment in relation to work life balance?

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