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Management Research Project

Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I Barcelona:
How can the hotel help its employees to find a
good balance between their personal and
professional lives?

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Foreword

Upon my arrival in the hotel Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I, I met all the other trainees. We were given a project by the management to investigate what we can do to make the hotel a nicer place to work at for all the employees. I immediately linked my Management Research Project to this internal project because the subject woke my interest and I wanted to investigate it more profoundly. I therefore want to start by thanking all my fellow trainees at the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I for their dedication and team work during this project.

It is a subject that lies closely to my heart as I myself often have issues to find a good balance between my personal and professional life. I have experienced that it can be challenging to have a social life when you work from 9h00 to 17h00. Also living a healthy lifestyle can be rather challenging when you have an office job.

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Introduction

Some employees find it difficult to have a good balance between their private life and their professional life. It can be a problem to combine both lifestyles. Work-life balance involves juggling workplace stress with the daily pressures of family, friends, and self. This Management research Project will investigate what the needs of employees are and what the employers can do to help them fulfill these needs.

The first part of this research paper consists out of desk research based on articles written by professionals that have done profound research regarding the work-life balance topic. All of the articles have been consulted online and have been reviewed using the so-called CRAAP test which tests an article`s currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose. This first chapter will first concentrate on why it is important for employers to help their employees to find a work-life balance. Secondly it will clarify in what ways employers can do this and finally it will discuss the fact that employers and employees don't always see eye-to-eye on the subject.

The second chapter is based on the results that were discovered after some field research. To look into what the employees of the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I believe would help them find a work-life balance a mailbox had been put at the entrance of the employee canteen. In this mailbox all employees were allowed to put suggestions.

The desk and field research results were then compared to see what the similarities, and especially the differences were between what was found in articles and what seems to be the opinion of the employees in real life.

The last part of this Management Research Project will be recommendations for the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I hotel. It describes what this hotel in particular can do to help their employees find a good work-life balance taking into account the results of both the desk and field researches.

Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I

The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I is a five star hotel located in Barcelona, Spain. Previously part of the FRHI chain, the hotel is now part of the luxury section of the French AccorHotels chain. The teams within the Fairmont chain are guided by values of respect, integrity, teamwork and empowerment; they are known to employ the highest ethical and quality standards, treating all colleagues and guests with fairness and dignity. The mission statement of Fairmont is to turn moments into memories, this for the guests as well as the employees. Moreover the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I is very involved in the community and the environment; it has a Social Value comity that organizes plenty of actions year-round.

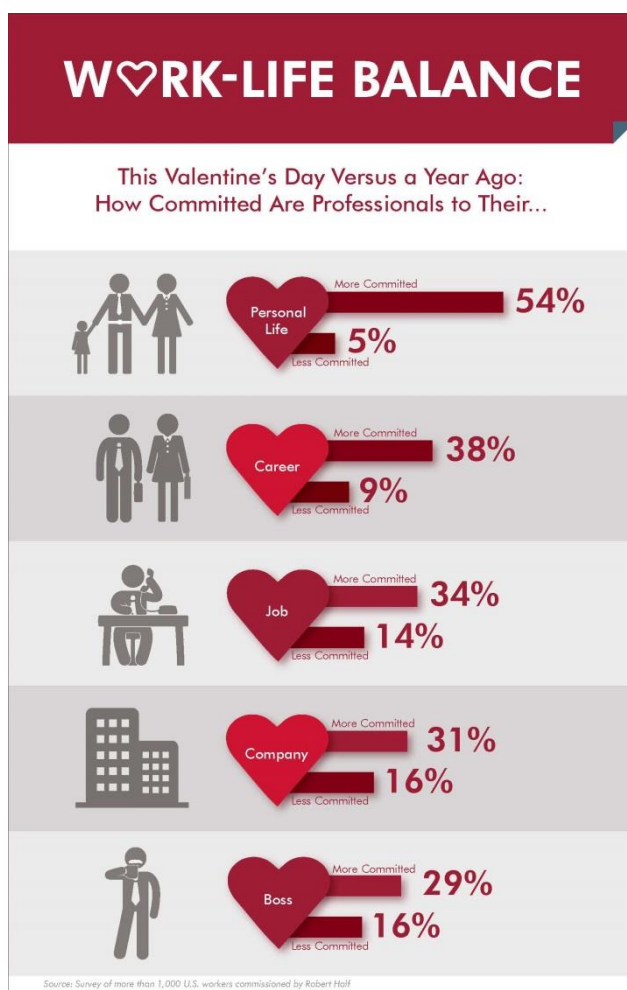
The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I is set in 25,000 square meters of breathtaking 19th century gardens, with unparalleled views of the stunning Barcelona skyline. Having such a big garden makes the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I the only resort in Barcelona. The hotel has recently been renovated and boasts 432 guest rooms and suites and has a central location on the prestigious Avenida Diagonal and excellent transport links. The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I excels as both an impressive hub for business and a memorable base for exploring Barcelona and wider Catalonia.

This management project applies to all departments of the hotel, as its goal is to help all employees find a balance between their social, private lives and their professional lives within the hotel. The execution of what the hotel can do to help them find this balance will be managed mainly by the Human Resources department, where my internship was conducted.

Desk Research

Why helping employees find a balance between their personal and professional lives is important

Illustration 3: Work life balance



Although employers are not responsible for providing a work-life balance for their employees, there are a few reasons why they should help their employees to seek and maintain this balance. A stable work-life balance is increasingly important for employees. As shown in Illustration 1 employees are 54% more committed to their personal lives in 2017 as they were in 2016. Luckily for the employers they also show an increased commitment to their careers, job, companies and to their bosses. Seeing as both the commitment to their personal lives and to their professional lives seem to have grown it becomes even more important for employees to find a good balance between both. Pingboard stated that studies have shown that employees who have a good work-life balance do a better job at work, so promoting this balance is beneficial to both the individuals and the company.²

Source: The best employee benefits for achieving work-life balance, Robert Half, 2017, internet, 24 May 2017¹

¹ The best employee benefits for achieving work-life balance, Robert Half, 2017, internet, 24 May 2017 <https://www.roberthalf.com/job-seekers/career-center/understanding-employee-benefits/the-best-employee-benefits-for-achieving-work-life-balance>

² 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017 <https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>

Employees that have a good balance between their professional and personal lives aren't just beneficial for them, it's beneficial for the companies they work for as well. Studies have proven that employees that feel in control over their lives usually have better relationship with their managers and have a higher capability of leaving their home issues at home and their work issues at work. An article from Pingboard states that "balanced employees tend to feel more motivated and less stressed at work". More motivated employees will be more productive, which of course is beneficial for the company they work for. But not only are they more productive, well-balanced employees have proven to do a better job in general. It's thus very beneficial for employers to help their employees find a good balance if this will result in faster and better work.³

Pingboard also mentions that companies that have a good reputation when it comes to helping employees to be balanced will attract more and better candidates when there are job openings. Of course it's not only good for the future employees, the current ones will be happier at work too. Robert Half even states that in addition to the salary, work environment is an important factor for employees when they are deciding whether or not to stay in a firm. If they feel like they can work in an environment that allows them to have a better work-life balance they will have a higher loyalty. This will result in a lower turnover, which is always profitable for employers as they won't have to spend as much money on hiring, training and the many other costs that are involved with recruitment.⁴

Brandi Britton from OfficeTeam stated that today's employees have a much higher need to be able to juggle their personal and professional life than they did a few decades ago. She added that "They have higher expectations when it comes to employers promoting their wellbeing in and out of the office".⁵

³ 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>

⁴ Ídem

Work-life balance as a part of an employee retention strategy, Robert Half, 2017, internet, 20 May 2017
<https://www.roberthalf.com/employers/hiring-advice/employee-retention/corporate-culture/work-life-balance>

⁵ Got work-life balance? Workers and bosses don't see eye to eye, Chad Brooks, Business News Daily, 18 November 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7745-work-life-balance-disconnect.html>

How the employer can help to find the balance

As previously mentioned, today's employees have higher expectations when it comes to acquiring a good balance. As previously mentioned, today's employees have higher expectations and have a higher need to find a good balance between their personal and professional lives. Although this is true, AllBusiness states that even the smallest efforts made by employers will be appreciated by their employees. It's all about showing them that the company cares about their personal time and wants to help them feel as good as possible within the company.⁶

In the hospitality sector that runs a 24/7 business it can be particularly difficult for employees to find a balance as they might have to work weekend, evenings, nights and during public holidays. This is especially challenging for parents as they can't always be there for their children.

There are quite some things that companies can do to help. From the results found in article these actions can be divided in different categories: childcare services, schedules, exercise access, employee events and teambuilding, and help to get everyday things done.

Childcare Services

Finding a good balance while working in the hospitality sector is hard for everyone, but especially parents seem to have a particularly hard time. Parents that work during weekend, evenings or during holidays have to find people to look after their children. Some don't have partners and can't always count on family members or friends to look after their children. Daycares and other childcare services can get very expensive.

There are a few ways in which companies can help their employees with this matter. Bridget Miller suggests offering childcare facilities onsite. If this isn't possible she advises companies to provide discounts at local childcare centers.⁷

Employers can also grant parents some flexibility regarding the schedules. They could allow them to start a later so that they could drop their children off at school/daycare and let them leave earlier in the evening to pick them up again; this is quite popular when the children are very young. They can also allow employees to work from home or take a day off when their children are ill.⁸ These options are of course more challenging in the hospitality sector. It's a good option for Back of the House positions that have 9 to 5 jobs, but it's almost unachievable to allow this for Front of the House employees. This is a good

⁶ Helping employees maintain work/life balance, AllBusinessEditors, internet, 4 May 2017
<https://www.allbusiness.com/helping-employees-maintain-worklife-balance-1242-1.html>

⁷ How to improve work/life balance for employees, Bridget Miller, 10 February 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<http://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com/2016/02/10/how-to-improve-worklife-balance-for-employees/#sthash.X5wxfMX9.dpuf>

⁸ 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>

option for regular companies, but it might seem unfair to allow this for some positions and not for others in hotels.

Schedules

Although there are endless possibilities to help employees regarding their schedules, some employees don't agree which option might be most helpful for them. Some employees would like to have more flexible schedules, while others prefer more consistency. It's a challenge for employers to find the ideal middle ground that would make everyone happy.

Pingboard states that most employees will be less stressed when they know what to expect on a daily basis. Meaning that if employers are able to maintain a structural consistency in schedules employees will experience less anxiety and stress, which will automatically lead to happier employees, who will most likely be more productive.⁹

In contrast to this a lot of employees actually want more flexible schedules. There are several options for more flexible scheduling, which may help those struggling to find a work-life balance. Andre Lavoie states that "A 2015 survey from FlexJobs found that 30 percent of respondents said they would take a 10 or even 20 percent cut in pay in return for flexible work options. In addition, fully 97 percent said a job with flexibility would have a positive impact on their overall quality of life." Thus proving that offering flexibilities regarding the schedules will definitely have a positive impact on the employees.¹⁰

Robert Half explains the Flextime phenomenon which allows employees to choose their own start and stop times. Susan M. Heathfield states that flexible starting and ending times are quite easily implementable, but that it shouldn't mean that the employees can come and go as they please. Robert Half agrees with this and observed that in most companies that allow flextime, the employees are required to be present during core hours or to make sure they work a fixed number of hours per day. In the hospitality sector it wouldn't be possible to implement this for all job categories. For Front of the House jobs like the ones at receptions or restaurants, this would be impossible. For Back of the House jobs, that are usually administrative, on the other hand it is easier. It doesn't really matter when they come and when they go as long as they have worked their respective amount of hours.¹¹

⁹ 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>

¹⁰ What's Happened to Work-Life Balance? Here's How to Help Employees Find It, Andre Lavoie, Entrepreneur, 30 August 2016, internet, 26 May 2017.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/281531>

¹¹ Ways to encourage employee work balance, Susan M. Heathfield, 02 August 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://www.thebalance.com/top-ways-to-encourage-employee-work-balance-1919353>

Work-life balance as a part of an employee retention strategy, Robert Half, 2017, internet, 20 May 2017
<https://www.roberthalf.com/employers/hiring-advice/employee-retention/corporate-culture/work-life-balance>

What can also be useful for administrative positions is restricting the hours worked. Bridget Miller explains that “this means having a culture in which employees are not expected to work after they leave the worksite.”¹²

In the electronically connected world we currently live in it’s very important to help employees to disconnect from their work when they get home. Susan M. Heathfield adds this constant connection to the workplace forms a great challenge in finding a good work and life balance. There are many ways in which companies can help their employees disconnect: for example they can stop the e-mail servers from forwarding messages after a certain hour or restrict log-ins to the system after a certain hour.¹³

According to Bridget Miller companies should encourage their employees to take short breaks during the day. Taking breaks allows them to decompress during a few minutes and clear their head. Miller explains that “taking breaks has been shown to actually increase productivity levels. Higher productivity means less need to work late.” Working less late allows the employees to spend more time on their personal life, which will result in a better balance between their work and social life.¹⁴

Another increasingly popular solution is telecommuting. Telecommuting doesn’t only allow employees to work from home, it also allows them to have flexible schedules. They can stay home and take care of their household while still being able to finish all their work. Andre Lavoie explains that this is a convenient option for employees that have young children. This is also interesting for parents during holidays when their children stay at home. Again, this is only an option suitable for Administrative positions.¹⁵

Another possibility is flexibility regarding days off. Susan M. Heathfield and Pingboard both suggest allowing employees to take unpaid time off for important life event or life cycle needs. This can include weddings, important anniversaries, and birthdays.¹⁶

There are also other ways to allow employees to have more days off so that they can improve their work-life balance. Robert Half explains that allowing employees to work compressed workweeks offers them this opportunity. He explains that “under this arrangement, employees work the normal number of hours but complete those hours in fewer than five days.” The most common arrangement of this compressed workweek is

¹² How to improve work/life balance for employees, Bridget Miller, 10 February 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<http://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com/2016/02/10/how-to-improve-worklife-balance-for-employees/#sthash.X5wxfMX9.dpuf>

¹³ Ways to encourage employee work balance, Susan M. Heathfield, 02 August 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://www.thebalance.com/top-ways-to-encourage-employee-work-balance-1919353>

¹⁴ How to improve work/life balance for employees, Bridget Miller, 10 February 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<http://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com/2016/02/10/how-to-improve-worklife-balance-for-employees/#sthash.X5wxfMX9.dpuf>

¹⁵ What's Happened to Work-Life Balance? Here's How to Help Employees Find It, Andre Lavoie, Entrepreneur, 30 August 2016, internet, 26 May 2017.
<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/281531>

¹⁶ 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>

Ways to encourage employee work balance, Susan M. Heathfield, 02 August 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://www.thebalance.com/top-ways-to-encourage-employee-work-balance-1919353>

what is called the 4/10 workweek. In this arrangement employees work 10 hours a day during 4 days instead of 8 hours a day during 5 days.¹⁷

Susan M. Heathfield believes that companies should offer employees the opportunity to work part-time or even job share. She states that every job might be full-time, but therefore doesn't necessarily need full-time employees. Companies could consider hiring two part-time employees for one full-time job. Susan M. Heathfield adds that "job sharing can also work effectively for employees who you want to retain while they start families or home school, for example." Andre Lavoie agrees that if several employees want more flexibility, job-sharing can be a good solution.¹⁸

Of course there are even more ways in which employers can manipulate the schedules in order to help their workforce find a better balance between their professional and personal lives, but the previously mentioned are the most recommendable.

Exercise access – Health improvement

Pingboard stated that "one of the most positive ways to reduce stress is exercise. Employees who eat healthy and exercise are less at risk of getting sick and missing days from work, which could ultimately detract from your company's productivity." The most obvious way to offer employees exercise access would be having a gym onsite. Most hotels boast a gym, but it's usually not possible to allow employees to use it when there are guests around. An easier way to offer exercise access would be offering a reduced price at a local gym.¹⁹

Another way to offer exercise would be to organize sports activities for employees. This would also be a good way for them to get to know each other and build up stronger relationships with their colleagues. This again would contribute to their well-being at work.

Employee events and teambuilding

Teambuilding and employee events are things that everyone knows about, but not everyone feels the same way about them. Some people really enjoy these events and like spending time with their colleagues outside of work, other think it's a waste of time and rather spend time with their friends and families outside of their working hours. One way to make sure that all employees attend the activities is to make them mandatory, but this of course gives them a bad image. Susan M. Heathfield believes that a good way to make employees more eager to attend these events is to make them family friendly. If employees are allowed to bring their children, they will be more likely to come to the activities. At the same time, she

¹⁷ Work-life balance as a part of an employee retention strategy, Robert Half, 2017, internet, 20 May 2017
<https://www.roberthalf.com/employers/hiring-advice/employee-retention/corporate-culture/work-life-balance>

¹⁸ Ways to encourage employee work balance, Susan M. Heathfield, 02 August 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://www.thebalance.com/top-ways-to-encourage-employee-work-balance-1919353>

What's Happened to Work-Life Balance? Here's How to Help Employees Find It, Andre Lavoie, Entrepreneur, 30 August 2016, internet, 26 May 2017.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/281531>

¹⁹ 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>

suggests also organizing events that are only for adults, this will force all employees to get in contact with their colleagues instead of only spending time with their families. When companies offer babysitting services near or at the event employee attendance will be encouraged.²⁰

There are a lot of events that companies can organize: parties, movie nights,... Pingboard suggest organizing breakfast clubs, during which employees would share breakfast before starting the day at work. This is a great way for them to get to know each other better and to get to know each other`s cultures. Some employees that have foreign backgrounds can bring their local breakfast to share it with their colleagues. The breakfast club also wouldn`t ask employees to go out of their way, they would just come to work a little bit earlier and have breakfast there.²¹

Help to get everyday things done

Helping employees getting everyday things done can also help them to find a better work-life balance. Those can be small things like offering laundry services, free lunches or even something as small as giving them access to free drinking water. All of these things will first of all save them some money, but it will also save them time as doing the laundry and preparing lunches can take quite some time. As mentioned previously companies should try to give employees as many healthy options as possible when offering lunches.²²

Management must be the example

Bridget Miller, Susan M. Heathfield and Pingboard all agree that the management should give the good example to their employees. Susan M. Heathfield explains that ““the actions of senior leaders are heard and observed by employees” More than just being an example they should promote their lifestyle and even give the employees helpful tips and valuable information.²³

²⁰ Ways to encourage employee work balance, Susan M. Heathfield, 02 August 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<https://www.thebalance.com/top-ways-to-encourage-employee-work-balance-1919353>

²¹ 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017
(<https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>)

²² idem

²³ 10 Ways Employers Can Encourage a Healthy Work-Life Balance for Employees, Pingboard, internet, 03 May 2017
(<https://pingboard.com/work-life-balance/>)

Ways to encourage employee work balance, Susan M. Heathfield, 02 August 2016, internet, 03 May 2017

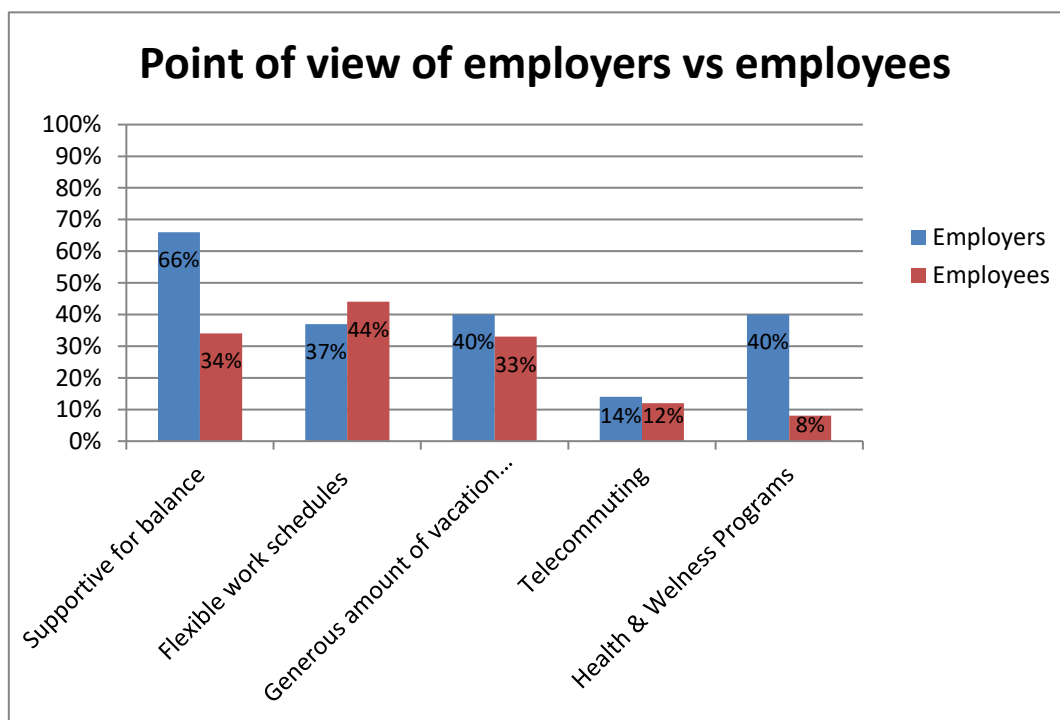
<https://www.thebalance.com/top-ways-to-encourage-employee-work-balance-1919353>

How to improve work/life balance for employees, Bridget Miller, 10 February 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<http://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com/2016/02/10/how-to-improve-worklife-balance-for-employees/#sthash.X5wxfMX9.dpuf>

Employers and employees don't always have the same point of view

There are a lot of ways in which a company can help their employees to find a balance between their personal and professional lives. A big obstacle in acquiring this balance is that employers and employees often have very different opinions when it comes to what really works and what actually doesn't.

Table 1: Point of view of employers vs employees²



Source: Got work-life balance? Workers and bosses don't see eye to eye, Chad Brooks, Business News Daily, 18 November 2016, internet, 03 May 2017

The fact that employees and employers don't always agree is clearly visible in the graph above that shows the results of a study described by Chad Brooks. 60% of all employers seem to believe that they offer a lot of support to help employees find a good balance, but only 34% of the employees agree with this. This is a very clear sign that employers and employees don't always have the same point of view. Employees see a lack of support from the companies while the companies believe they are being very supportive. There is an especially big gap when it comes to health and wellness programs. 40% of the employers seem to believe that these programs help to find a better work-life balance and thus offer them to their employees, where actually only 8% of employees agree with this. Employers and employees do see eye to eye when it comes to telecommuting as neither seem to believe that it is really useful. This contrary to other sources that claimed that telecommuting helps employees to find a good balance between their personal and professional lives.²⁴

²⁴ Got work-life balance? Workers and bosses don't see eye to eye, Chad Brooks, Business News Daily, 18 November 2016, internet, 03 May 2017
<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7745-work-life-balance-disconnect.html>

As we can see on the graph, not a lot of employers like the idea of telecommunicating. Brigid Schulte explains that in many cases the bosses are older and that they are used to having their employees physically present in the office. They are often afraid that telecommuting will lead to empty cubicles and that their employees won't work as hard if they don't come to the office. And while the graph, based on a study investigated by Chad Brooks, shows that employees don't believe in telecommuting either, Brigid Schulte disagrees with this. She stated that especially younger workers feel that technology allows them to work productively anywhere and that telecommuting is thus a good option for them.²⁵

²⁵ Millennials want a work-life balance. Their bosses just don't get why, Brigid Schulte, The Washington Post, 5 May 2015, internet, 24 May 2017.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/millennials-want-a-work-life-balance-their-bosses-just-dont-get-why/2015/05/05/1859369e-f376-11e4-84a6-6d7c67c50db0_story.html?utm_term=.5d03f7362e69

Field Research

A mailbox was set up outside of the employee canteen where all the employees could leave anonymous notes with their opinions and ideas about what the company could do to help them find a good balance between their private and professional lives. The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I counts over 450 employees in 28 departments. When the mailbox was opened after about a month 50 notes were found inside.

Illustration 4: Mailbox for suggestions



I was able to divide the notes into 5 main subjects: Food & Canteen, Schedules, Activities at work, Children & Family, and Miscellaneous. Half of the ideas were concerning the schedules, more specifically the flexibility and the reliability of them seemed to be an issue for most employees. Some notes were to be discarded because they mentioned crazy or inappropriate ideas.

What became clear from the notes left by the employees is that finding a work-life balance seems very important to them. One note stated that having a better balance means that they will have less pressure and stress and that this will result in them being calmer at home and more pleasurable at work.

Food & Canteen

A healthy lifestyle seems to become more and more important to a lot of people all over the world, it's thus no surprise to see that some employees need to be able to keep up their healthy lifestyle at work. The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I offers a possibility to its employees to have one meal per shift at the employee canteen. In this canteen the employees can find a section with warm food where they can find soup, meat, fish and a vegetarian option; apart from the warm food there is a section for cold food, which includes salads, cold vegetables, yoghurts and fruits. The food is displayed buffet style, but is served by the canteen servers.

Some employees complained that the food served in the canteen is not healthy enough and that they do not have enough information about what is being served. Another idea was self-service at the canteen so that the employees have a better say about how much food they are being served. Some employees complain that the servers of the canteen put too much food on their plates when serving and they then tend to overeat or waste a lot of food when throwing away the surplus.

There were a few notes suggesting more options when it came to the variety of the food. Often the given options are seen as too boring or unhealthy. Some employees asked for more variety when it comes to the cold food section especially so that they can make tastier salads.

The hotel boasts a multicultural workforce, with employees coming from all over the world like Peru, The Netherlands, France, India and many more. One note came with an original idea to have themed days at the canteen on certain festive days, like independence days. On these themed days there would be food typical from the concerned country and the canteen would be decorated, making the experience more festive and memorable. This note also mentioned that the canteen can be made cozier in general so that it would be a nicer place to spend your break.

Schedules

About half of the suggestions were concerning the schedules; there were a lot of different ideas to adjust the schedules in certain ways so that the employees could manage their time in such ways that they could spend more time with friends and family.

Quite a lot of employees seem to want their schedules to be more fixed so that they can organize their time in a more effective way. They would like to have their schedules well in advance and that the given schedules are respected in a better way than they are now. Some of these employees also mentioned that they don't want to work overtime or that they want to be paid way more for them than they are now.

Regarding the hours worked, employees that have office jobs want more flexible hours, meaning they would like to start or end whenever they want as long as they work eight hours. Some of these employees also suggested allowing telecommuting, thus working from home instead of coming to the office. This seems to be especially in demand when employees' children are sick.

Front of the house employees plea for more weekends off. A good way to ensure that each employee has the same amount of weekends, a fixed number of weekends per employee could be implemented. The same employees often ask to be off during New Year's, Christmas and other festive days.

Another suggestion from the box included rotating schedules. Front of the house employees sometimes feel like they work more morning shifts and vice versa. This can be dealt with in the same way as the weekend issue: each employee gets a fixed amount of morning and afternoon shifts.

The last suggestion regarding schedules is in relation to holiday times. Foreign employees would like to group all their vacation time so that get to go abroad for a longer period of time to visit their family. Some employees also suggested exchanging vacations days: when one doesn't necessarily want or need time off they can give their days to another employee.

Activities

Some suggestions concerned the activities proposed by the hotel to the employees. The hotel already offers quite some training. It also organizes events for the employees which are called CLIC events where the employees can spend time together and get updated about what is going on in the hotel. Encountered in the mailbox was a note suggesting more of these CLIC events, or other events that can be organized for the employees.

Another suggestion was to give more training. Specifically asked were language trainings, trainings about protocols and more possibilities for cross trainings to get to know the workings of other departments. Although the hotel already offers quite some opportunities for cross trainings, employees seem to not be aware of this. The hotel could therefore promote cross training. Basic English classes are organized for the Laundry department only; these classes should be available to all employees. In the past French was taught as well, these trainings should be re-implemented. Some trainees that are not native Spanish ask for Spanish classes, these could easily be organized within the hotel.

Except for trainings and parties the employees seemed to be interested in working out with their colleagues as well. The hotel has just implemented a new project called Fairmont Salud which will organize Zumba classes, Yoga classes, hikes, doctor visits and more.

Employees seem to find it important to connect with their colleagues, they suggested having a place where they can share interests and get to know each other out of the office. A good suggestion was having a little lounge section in the employee canteen where people could relax during their breaks.

Children & Family

A lot of the propositions within the Children and Family theme were regarding the schedules. The employees would like to have more weekends and more reliable time schedules to be able to spend as much time as possible with their close ones. A lot of employees request more days off during weekends and holidays, this especially in operational departments, to be able to spend time with their children when they are off from school. They also want to spend more time with their children when it is their birthday, some requested being able to leave work at least an hour earlier when it is their child's birthday.

Most of the employees that have children believe that having a kindergarten in the hotel would be beneficial for their families. They especially need help during the holidays when the children don't go to school.

Some employees seem to have had problems in the past when their partner got sick or hospitalized. They are requesting to be able to have days off when this happens even if they are not married or legally living together.

In 2016 the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I organized a "Family Day". This was a great success and a lot of employees want to have this organized at least every year.

Miscellaneous

In this section a wide variety of suggestions can be found. Some employees suggested increasing the salaries. They also suggest a raise for overtime; this was especially a popular opinion for operational positions in F&B.

A more attainable suggestion was to have more respect between colleagues. Respect towards the guests often goes without saying, but some feel that there is a lack of respect between colleagues. The hotel could organize trainings to teach all employees how to treat their colleagues respectfully or have some events where all colleagues could get to know and understand each other better and thus create a more respectful atmosphere in general.

Parking places seem to be an issue for the employees as well. Although many people come to work by public transport or scooter, a lot still come by car. Sadly enough the parking lot is too small to satisfy the demand and parking on the street can be a hassle and your car can end up being parked quite far from the hotel. Besides all this, looking for a parking spot can make one late for work.

Some employees suggested receiving a day off on ones birthday. This could be a good idea for operational departments that don't work on fixed days. The schedules can be made in such way that one of their days off would be on their birthday.

One person would appreciate having an infirmary within the hotel. There is already a doctor that comes to the hotel every Thursday for consultations. These doctor visits are free. Perhaps a permanent infirmary with a nurse or doctor could be implemented. The room is already there, but the hotel would need to hire a full time nurse or doctor.

Desk research compared to field research

When comparing the information retrieved from the articles and the suggestions received by the employees, one notices that there are a lot of similarities. All sources showed that the solutions to a work-life balance can clearly be divided in a few main subjects like schedules, child care services and activities. What is remarkable is that the employees of the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I seem to find the food that is offered by the company an important asset when it comes to finding a work-life balance, whereas the external sources don't emphasize it that much. The employees of the hotel ask for more healthy choices and to have more information about what exactly the dishes in the canteen are made of. The hotel has already partly responded to this by offering healthier dishes and more choices in the salad bar. The hotel could improve this even more and give details about allergies and ingredients. This is especially useful for employees that have special diets, like vegetarians and vegans, and for people that have allergies.

What also catches one's eye is that exercise access is very useful in order to find a healthy work-life balance. The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I already does a lot to help employees in this area. Employees of the hotel get a discount in a local gym and a "*Fairmont Salud*" comity has been put into place. This comity organizes free hikes and Zumba classes to help the employees exercise more. This comity also makes it possible for all employees to get free doctor visits every Thursday within the hotel premises. The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I is thus doing a very good job to help their employees when it comes to having a healthy lifestyle.

The subject that everyone seems to agree on is that schedules are a very important part of finding a good work-life balance. The employees of the hotel agree with the consulted sources that they want to have a consistent schedule that they can always rely on. What they also clearly want is more time off during moments that their children are not in school like weekends and public holidays, which can be an issue for employee working an operational position.

What is noticeably important in the consulted sources as well as in the field research is that employees want more flexibility in their schedules. In some departments of the hotel employees are giving some flextime already. They can for example work 30 minutes more from Monday to Thursday in order to leave 2 hours earlier on Friday. The company does not lose any productivity with this as the employees have already made up for the lost hours on Friday during their workweek.

Another popular option is telecommuting, which is a privilege that is usually not offered by the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I. This is rather understandable as in most hotels you need to be present in the hotels to take care of certain things. Especially managers should be physically present in order to supervise and assist their teams efficiently.

A subject that is just as, or maybe even more important than the schedules is the one regarding children and family. Most of the suggestions regarding the schedules are related to the employees wanting to spend more time with their children and their families in general. The responses received from the employees of the hotel are in line with the information retrieved from the sources during the desk research. Everyone agrees that spending as much time as possible with family will improve one's work-life balance. Spending time with family can be challenging for employees that work in the 24/7 hospitality sector. It's thus vital for employees with children to be with their children during the moments that are not in school or to find someone that can look after them. All sources of information agree that there are two things employers can do to make either happen: give more days off during holidays or providing childcare services. Giving employees with children that have operational positions, days off can be done rather easily in most teams. Employees who do not have children usually like to go on holiday outside the holiday season, because it is cheaper. They can thus cover the shifts of the employees with children during this period of time and vice versa. As for the childcare services: employers can either find a way to provide it themselves or they can provide their employees with a discount at a local childcare center.

Helping employees improve their social lives shouldn't always mean that this social life needs to be had with people outside of work. Having good relationships with colleagues is a very important factor when discussing employee happiness. Organizing activities where colleagues can spend time together and to get to know each other outside of work can be very beneficial. If they have better relationships they won't only be happier at work, but they will also be able to cooperate better. The Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I organizes employee events that are called "CLIC". As Susan M. Heathfield mentioned, organizing family-friendly events will attract more employees. The Fairmont RJC I organized a Family Day in 2016 that allowed all employees to bring their families to their workplace for a day. Employees really loved this and would like to have it organized more often.

Pingboard mentioned that helping employees get everyday things done will help them find a better work-life balance, however this was not mentioned by the employees of the hotel. This is most probably because the hotel already offers quite some help with everyday things. They offer free laundry services for uniforms, they offer free water in the offices and they offer meals in the canteen.

The most important to achieve a good work-life balance is having support and a good example. It's here that the managers need to step in. They need to make the employees feel comfortable enough to take certain steps that they believe could benefit them. For example: when employees are allowed to have flextime; the managers should make them feel comfortable to come in later or earlier. They can easily do this by using the flextime as well, by being an example for their teams.

Conclusion

Whether the goal is to improve retention, avoid employee burnout, improve employee health, reduce absenteeism, or increase productivity, there are many reasons employers want to help their employees achieve a good work-life balance.

The way to find a good balance between your personal and professional lives is no exact science. This research paper has clearly shown that everyone has different opinions when it comes to finding good solutions that will help employees achieve this balance. Many employees have different lifestyles or are in a different stage of their life, meaning that they will have different needs when it comes to finding a balance as well. As mentioned beforehand, employees with children will have different needs than an employee in his mid-fifties.

It's now up to the employers to listen to their employees and decide what would be the best solutions for them. Having done this exact thing in the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I has been very useful and has been a great help for all managers to make a change. Some changes are of course easier to implement than others, but the hotel needs to put all of its effort make sure that the employees find some kind of a healthy balance.

What can certainly be concluded is that all employers need to support their employees in their efforts to fully participate in all the aspects of their professional and personal lives. Moreover the employers and the managers should be a kind of a role model that can give valuable information to the teams and that provides a good example for all.

To finish this Management Research Project I have listed some recommendations that can be found on the next two pages, that the Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I could implement to help their employees find the perfect work-life balance.

Recommendations

For the hotel Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I, I would give following recommendations regarding changes that can be made to help employees to find a better balance.

1) Flexitime for office jobs

As mentioned previously, flexitime is quite easily implementable for office jobs, but it shouldn't mean that employees can come and go as they please.

I would recommend offering limited flexitime in the starting and ending hours: giving the employees the choice to start anytime between 8h00 and 11h00 as long as they work 8 hours a day, or 40 hours a week. A flexible day can for example be: Starting at 11h00 and finishing at 19h00.

I would also recommend giving all the concerned employees the possibility of working 30 minutes longer from Monday to Thursday in order to leave 2 hours earlier on Friday. This idea is again based on the fact that the employees should work 40 hours per week.

This flexibility would be implemented in the following departments:

- Administration
- Human Resources
- F&B Back office
- Communications & PR
- Revenue
- Purchasing

The managers and especially the Human Resources department will be in charge of controlling whether all employees are truly completing their 40 hours per week.

2) Fixed amount of weekends off for Front of the House employees

Every Front of the House employee should have a fixed amount of weekends off per trimester. This amount should be decided by the manager and should be equal for all the employees in the department.

To be implemented in the following departments:

- Front Office/Reception
- Concierge
- F&B Front of the house

Giving these employees more weekends off will allow them to spend more time with their friends and family which will result in them being happier as well outside as inside the work sphere.

It is the responsibility of the manager (who makes the schedules) to ensure that every employee of their department gets the same amount of weekends. This however should be controlled by Human Resources to make sure that it is respected.

3) Fixed amount of morning and afternoon shifts for Front of the House employees

Every Front of the House employee should have the same amount of morning and afternoon shifts per month.

To be implemented in the following departments:

- Front Office/Reception
- Concierge
- F&B Front of the house

It is the responsibility of the manager (who makes the schedules) to ensure that every employee of their department gets the same amount of morning and afternoon shifts. This however should be controlled by Human Resources to make sure that it is respected.

Giving these employees more consistency in their shifts will help them balance their professional and personal lives in a better way, resulting in happier and thus often more productive and loyal employees.

4) Discount at nearby kindergarten

The hotel should contact nearby kindergarten in order to make a deal with them so that employees can get discounts. The nearest kindergarten is "Guardería Santa Elena", this kindergarten be contacted first. The aim for the discount should be at least 15%.

This discount should be offered to all employees that have children. The discount will make all parents feel supported by the company, this will most likely make them more loyal and more eager to work.

It's the Human Resources Department's responsibility to contact the kindergartens and negotiate with them. The employees should then be properly informed about the acquired discount and how their children can become a member of the kindergarten.

5) Information about the food served in the canteen

I recommend placing information in the employee canteen explaining what each dish that is being offered contains. Each dish should have a clear explanation of the ingredients, the possible allergies and the number of calories.

This effort will be very appreciated by all employees that have special diets or that suffer from allergies. This will make them feel more respected and represented which will make them more satisfied with their place of work.

This will be the responsibility of the kitchen team and can be implemented immediately.

6) Remodeling of the employee canteen

The employee canteen needs an urgent rejuvenation. It currently looks rather old and it doesn't make employees want to relax and disconnect from work during their breaks. I recommend buying some nice decorations and even putting table cloths on the tables to give the room more color. This will make the employees feel happier, which will result in them being more productive after their break.

The remodeling of the canteen should be coordinated by Human Resources with the involvement of the kitchen staff, especially the canteen staff.

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