

Work-Life Balance and Its Importance in Czech Companies

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Zásady pro vypracování:

**Prostudujte odbornou literaturu personálního managementu.
Shrňte nejčastější příčiny nevyváženosti mezi pracovním a osobním životem zaměstnanců
ve firemní sféře.
Provedte dotazníkový výzkum ve dvou českých firmách.
Analyzujte výsledky výzkumu a vyvodte doporučení pro praxi.
Uvedte závěrečné shrnutí výzkumu.**

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ABSTRAKT

Cílem bakalářské práce je získat přehled o oblasti lidských zdrojů, zejména o problematice vyváženosti pracovního a osobního života. Tyto znalosti poté autor uplnatí v praktické části, kde pomocí dotazníkové analýzy ve dvou českých firmách zaměřujících se na vývoj informačních technologií, vyhodnotí jejich současnou situaci s problematikou vyváženosti pracovního a osobního života. Autor následně navrhne doporučení pro zlepšení tak, aby byly tyto metody v praxi aplikovatelné.

Klíčová slova: lidské zdroje, vyváženost pracovního a osobního života, stres, práce z domu, klouzavá pracovní doba

ABSTRACT

The goal of this bachelor thesis is to gain overview about human resources, mainly about the issue of work-life balance. The author will use this knowledge in the analysis part; he will be using a questionnaire in two Czech companies which focus on the development of information technologies. The author will evaluate their current state in the area of work-life balance, and then he will recommend a proposal for improvement, so that methods mentioned in the theoretical part will be applied in the analysis.

Keywords: human resources, work-life balance, stress, home office, flexible working hours

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INTRODUCTION

“Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls-- family, health, friends, and integrity-- are made of glass. If an employee drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered.” (Gary Keller, n.d.) The aim of development of tools and activities which support our work-life balance is not to drop any of those four “balls” as family, health, friends, and integrity. If an employee reaches the state of mind when his work becomes his life and vice versa, it might result either into a total balance or an extreme misbalance. It is important for both employees and employers to discuss openly the topic of work-life balance in order to prevent from extreme misbalance.

In this bachelor thesis the author will focus mainly on the terminology of human resource area connected with work-life balance in order to gain knowledge and overview and become familiar with the appropriate terminology. The practical part will consist of analysis of two, Czech companies located in South-Moravian region; both of them are from IT sector. The author will also mention their main activities, strategies and goals. There will be also described the process of creation the questionnaire, the analysis itself, comparisons and final evaluation and recommendation to the companies. The aim is to find out what kind of approach have the IT companies to their employees and how do the employees evaluate their employers in terms of support towards more work-life balanced lives of their employees. Although both of the companies requested not being named, the questionnaire was forwarded to real employees of those companies. Therefore I will name those as “A company” and “B company”.

I. THEORY

1 MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The author will talk mainly about the importance of managing human resources in companies and what does this area consist of. Many people consider human resource departments as something useless which does not bring money into the business but only spend it and so they do not see any added value.

1.1 Purposes of Human Resource Management

The organization's approach towards human resources and its role within the organizational structure is being developed through many years in accordance with the variable situation of economics and business.

“In the 1st half of the 20th century companies were mainly focusing on ownership of the newest technologies and machines as they believed the physical merchandise or movable assets are the most valuable for them. Nowadays it is more likely the know-how which builds the company's value. In the 70's of the 20th century the economy was facing a multiple increase of oil prices and raw materials and as a result the economic recession appeared. Since then the companies began to give more attention not only to gaining and improving their current technologies and machines, but more importantly they started to deal with development of employee's potential. Without the knowledge and experience of employees the machines and technologies probably would not be used at all or even developed.” (Vodák, Kuchaříčková, 2011)

“Although buildings, equipment and financial resources are very important to every single company, its employees are even more important as they all together compose a creative element within the company. People propose and produce goods, services, control the quality of their products, divide financial resources and create strategies and goals of the company which they work for. The company itself does not have many chances to fulfill those strategies and deliver those goals without people who effectively work for the company. The main task of Human resources managers is to influence the relationship between the organization and its employees. Human resources management is a process of accepting decisions in the field of employees' relationship towards the organization, which directly influence the performance of the organization.” (Miklovich, Boudreau, 1993.)

It is very important to understand the basic terminology which is often dismissed. The author will explain the differences among the following terms: human capital, human resources and human potential.

1.1.1 Human Capital

“The human capital means a load of innate or gained in the course of life knowledge, experience, skills, invention and talent. Human capital might be understood as a dynamic value as employees are able to enrich their skills, knowledge or develop their talents.” (Vodák, Kuchaříčková, 2011)

1.1.2 Human Resources

Vodák and Kuchaříčková agree that people who are active members of labor force are the human resources. Taking into consideration the fact that people who are not members of labor force has their skills, knowledge, experience and talents as well; we can clearly state the main difference between the two terms: human capital and human resources. People who are actively trying to develop themselves, who strive for self-realization in those activities which they decide for are considered to be human resources. It is a load of humankind’s potential which can be transformed into activities which bring results to the company and society. (Vodák, Kuchaříčková, 2011)

1.1.3 Human Potential

“Human potential is a set of dispositions and assumptions of one person. These dispositions and assumptions are supposed to be a base for each individual’s tasks which should lead directly to company’s results and move its potential forward. Moreover it is an ability to produce services or products and develop you as well. Human potential is more connected to the future as it has dynamicity. On the other hand human capital shows us our current state.” (Vodák, Kuchaříčková, 2011)

1.2 Value of Human Resources within the organization

“The costs of human resources are expensive. HR managers are at disadvantage, because usually they do not have necessary information about the specific amount of profit which their activities and strategies should bring. Only costs are clearly quantifiable.” (Miklovich, Boudreau, 1993)

Therefore every HR manager should be able to negotiate and sell his strategies and plans to the executive board or general director in order to gain approval for financial investments into the department of human resources. “It is possible that other managers are focused on different type of goals and they pursue different objectives.” (Miklovich, Boudreau, 1993)

1.2.1 Influence of decisions made by departments of Human Resources

“All of us are influenced by decisions of HR department – even if we are customers, owner of the shares, employees, managers of just members of the organization. Moreover, all of us put a strain to HR managers.” (Miklovich, Boudreau, 1993)

Based on author's personal working experience in a personal agency it is obvious, that there are more groups of people influenced by decisions stated by HR department. As an example the author will describe a situation when employees were supposed to attend two days long internal training and due to this requirement from HR department our clients were not able to reach us when their recruitment specialist wanted to provide us with further details of their request. At the same time our candidates could have been approached by our competitors. Moreover our team leaders could not present 100% fulfillment of our goals to our branch manager at the end of the week.

2 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In theoretical part the author will write about the importance of Work-life balance in today's world, about causes and factors of misbalance between our "work-lives" and "personal-lives" and also about the role in human resource management. Furthermore the author will mention several tools and/ or methods which are being used nowadays in the corporate world.

2.1 Meaning of work-life balance

It is generally assumed, that most of working people or more specifically people at productive age are striving to find some system or regime when they will be fully satisfied with their investment of time and energy to their families, friends and work in order to fulfill their need of harmony in their lives. Work-life balance could be defined as a state of living when people have enough time for their work and simultaneously they have enough time to fully participate on daily activities with their family, friends or by their own. "This should directly lead to their psychological well-being, high self-esteem, satisfaction, and overall sense of harmony in life. Those are the factors which can be regarded as indicators of a successful balance between work and family roles." (Rantanen, 2011). Neither their work nor their personal life negatively influences the other part of their lives.

Having in mind the global trends, which comes from the global crisis in economics, the workload in business is being increased in the corporate world. Investors are responsible for the profit of the companies which they own; therefore they push the executive departments to create strategies with focus on activities which bring more and more money directly.

2.1.1 Causes of work-life misbalance

Taking into consideration the fact that each of us is an individual with his own life priorities, needs and personal goals, the causes of misbalance among work life and personal life differs, of course. Probably every single employee has his own current state of mindset, conditions, life situation, thus the why of our misbalance vary. **Usually it is not very clear whether it is employer or employee himself who is responsible for his misbalance.** "Finding a suitable balance between work and life is a challenge for all workers, especially working parents. Some couples would like to have (more) children, but do not see how they could afford to stop working. Other parents are happy with the number of children in

their family, but would like to work more. This is a challenge to governments because if parents cannot achieve their desired work/life balance, not only is their welfare lowered but so is development in the country.” (OECD, n.d.)

The author takes into account the substantial development of our working conditions in companies and so **the volume of work load increases** due to development of new technologies and its implementation into our daily work. Information technologies are continuously affecting our lives, people are using their advantages on daily basis having in mind that it helps us to deal with our routine activities – for example listening to the radio online, sharing pictures from vacation with friends, choosing the best restaurant or submitting assignments and even paying mobile phone bills. Moreover in our work we use information technologies in order to overcome long distance, to fasten the transport of information or to search for new solutions of our current issue at work. Based on the author’s experience, it happens as well that **the employer is not able to provide the proper tools** as for example trainings delivered by externals, workshops, mentoring or coaching, home-office, consultancy, performance assessments and so on.

As mentioned above, both the employer and employees are partly responsible for work-life balance of employees. Sometimes **employees do not possess the right motivation** or have a lack of will. Their **current life-situation** might be the cause of work-life misbalance, too.

2.1.2 Consequences of work-life misbalance

As the author has mentioned several causes of work-life misbalance, it is obvious that people are also facing a variety of consequences of their work-life misbalance.

Those consequences might appear on ones work place as well as in one’s home.

As an example the author provides you with a short story of James Lazarus. “James Lazarus, former senior executive at Mellon, claims that the bank failed in its duty of care after he warned that 'ridiculous' workloads were affecting his job performance, a situation which eventually led to Lazarus taking two extended periods of sick leave for stress and depression. Cases like this illustrate that managers are still not recognizing what they stand to lose in terms of talented employees.” (Spellman, 2010)

2.2 Tools and methods to avoid work-life misbalance

The author will name and explain a number of methods which people may use for the purpose of improvement of their work-life balance. The majority of the following list of

methods is supposed to be implemented in people's working places. Each method is easily recognized by its own motive, motive of one's behavior.

2.2.1 Exaggerated accessibility and availability

Motive: Be accessible all the time, otherwise you would miss something.

“You can give me a call or drop me a message anytime there would appear anything important.”, “I am here for you, anytime.” – Those are examples of often used sentences which might cause ones exhaustion.

Fritz suggests that people should create their clear rules about when you are available and when you are simply not. It should be considered what kind of advantages and disadvantages it really has to be accessible 24/7. Usually it is not necessary to answer immediately to e-mails. Colleagues, clients or customers expect your reply but probably not within thirty minutes after they have sent you the message. (Fritz, 2006)

It is also very important to clearly set what specific space in the office or at home is the one and only, where an employee can feel free. (Togliatti, n.d.)

“One of the biggest land mines to effective time management is recognizing you don't have to agree to everything and with everyone. Use your priority criteria to identify requests that simply aren't worth your time.” (Wuorio, n.d.)

Fritz recommends to readers they should switch off their mobile phones during evenings, weekends and holiday to prevent from unrealistic non-stop accessibility, which would tire almost everyone. (Fritz, 2006)

2.2.2 Exaggerated heroism

Motive: Be strong, do not show any weaknesses.

The author assumes that people who suffer from exaggerated heroism very often have hidden feelings, which prevents them from having a rest. Here are a few examples of those feelings: Boys do not cry, do not come out with your weaknesses, Indian knows no pain, etc. Those people have a tremendous need to manage everything; therefore they seem to be very strong with ability to handle anything. They might be afraid of delegate several tasks to other people. In case someone wants to give them some advice or support, they usually refuse it. (Fritz, 2006)

“Achieving the elusive “work-life balance” can often feel like an impossible goal, especially for people who strive to give everything 100%.” (Smith, 2012)

2.2.3 Exaggerated perfectionism

Motive: Be perfect, otherwise you would not reach anything.

Typical thoughts of people who fit into this category are for example: I cannot do any mistake, otherwise my colleagues, family or friends would not accept me. I check everything three times rather than facing a possibility of failure.

Perfectionists are people who can be hardly satisfied with the work they have done as there could be always something missing or something might not be accomplished appropriately. The following graph demonstrates that our performance and efficiency is variable and its state depends on several internal and external conditions. (Fritz, 2006)

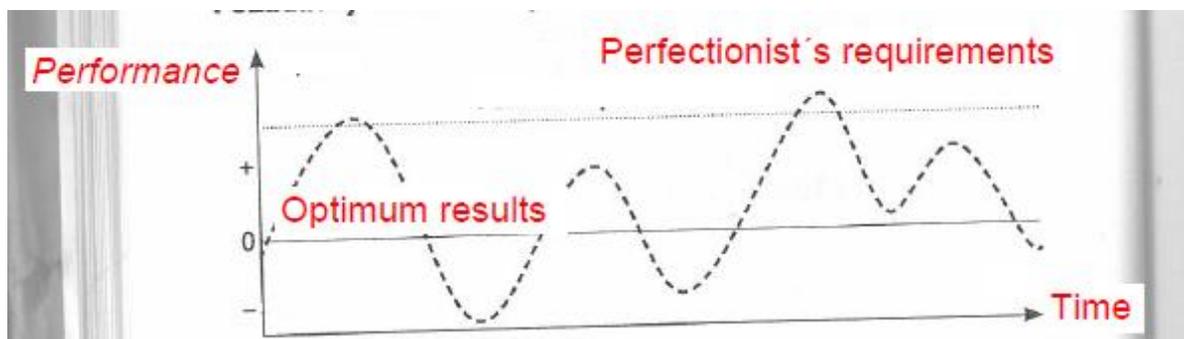


Figure 2-1 Requirements to own performance vs. reality

Source: Graph. Requirements to performance vs. reality. Fritz, 2006

2.2.4 Exaggerated velocity

Motive: Do it fast otherwise you would not reach anything

Fritz assumes that employees who are focused on speed mainly do not just go through their life, they run it as fast as they can. We can easily identify them only based on the speed level of their verbal communication, this type of employees are usually skilled in multitasking. As they are mostly focusing on the amount of tasks done in the shortest possible time limit, they can hardly see the big picture of the tasks they are responsible for. Fritz recommends practicing breath exercises in the moment when the employee realizes he is under the pressure, practice refusing tasks delegated to him and focus on a better time management. (Fritz, 2006)

2.2.5 Exaggerated diligence

Motive: No pain, no gain.

Fritz says that this type of employees needs recognition from their colleagues, family or friends very often. As they probably see just the black and white point of view, it is not

very easy to discuss with them they should slow down and suggest them not to overestimate themselves. Fritz claims they often complain about the difficulty of tasks and projects they are responsible for but in the same time it was only them who agreed he will handle it. Therefore they seem to be troubled almost every day. Fritz recommends focusing more on analysis of objectives and consultancy with trustworthy person, who should help with clarification what skills, knowledge etc. he would need to finish those several tasks, moreover try to ensure him about his self-confidence. (Fritz, 2006)

2.3 Causes of stress

Although the causes mentioned above are different and vary, they have one thing in common. All of them are manifested by stress. Bernardová stated two types of stress, where one is called “**eustress**” and the other one “**distress**”. Those two types are defined by the influence which they have on a single person. Eustress is manifested by positive feelings which one can experience during sport activities, sex or erotica, while distress is recognizable by nervousness, high temper, and lack of concentration or in the long term perspective it might lead even to eating disorders or depression. (Mayerová, 1997)

“Many authors use the concept of “stress” even to define daily routine activities and reactions which employees face every day while working. In connection with the working environment some of them define it more specifically as burdens rather than stress. According to overcoming the burdens they use a term “capacity” which indicates a range of possibilities of man during adaptation processes.” (Mayerová, 1997)

Mayerová concludes various types and levels of stress. The ability to overcome stress depends basically on his physical and psychical capacity and overall resistance. The resistance of man from stress is influenced by his physical and psychical condition as well as his life situations, which appeared in his life for short or long period of time and effects as a psychical burden or stress. (Mayerová, 1997)

Mayerová also divided effects of stress into three groups in accordance to area where stress is reflected.

- a) Physiological disorders: blood pressure, heartbeat, breathing, muscle tension, eating disorders, digestion
- b) Emotional disorders: aggression, depression, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, lack of concentration, poor ability of decision making, nervousness, hypersensitivity, irritability, job dissatisfaction

- c) Behavioral disorders: reduction in performance, absence, higher level of fluctuation, alcohol or drug addiction, impulsive behavior, accidents at work place, difficulties in communication (Mayerová, 1997)

2.3.1 Life situations

By observation our colleagues or ourselves we might define several types of life situations and set them into specific categories.

The most notable life change is **a loss**. As there are more specific categories of a loss, Mayerová set those as follows:

- a) Impending loss
- b) Acute or urgent loss
- c) Realistic loss
- d) Imaginary loss

The loss must not be associated not only with losing a family member or a close friend; it might be a loss of a limb as well as a loss of self-confidence. (Mayerová, 1997)

As Theorell says, **the separation** from parents or other intimate person might cause a significant role when talking about somatic illnesses. (Mayerová, 1997)

Another category of life situations which usually leads to stress is **a threat**. Threat influences employee's psychical conditions, moreover when the threat is repeated very often. Threat is the causative factor in depressions. Other types of life situations connected to depressions are interpersonal conflicts, low self-confidence and self-evaluation, state of helplessness and lack of strength. (Mayerová, 1997)

As a work-life balance includes a word "balance", it is obvious there are also some positive factors which come up from one's positive life situation. "Nevertheless even those positive life situations and experiences might be a cause of employee's depression while the situation is extraordinary and unique or extreme as for example winning a jackpot or reaching a long term goal or vision. The euphoria which follows might totally exhaust a man. Those huge and sudden changes might lead to derailment from a daily routine. This kind of extreme changes could be connected with a promotion, moving, wedding, adaptation to new job or environment." (Mayerová, 1997)

2.4 Organizational Health and Culture

“The state of employee’s health is associated with organizational culture. The organizational culture includes values, standards, opinions and even patterns of behavior and actions. Outwards it is manifested as a form of social intercourse among employees. Organizational culture has influence to internal management and organization itself. It significantly affects the behavior of employees.” (Mayerová, 1997)

Organizational culture might be defined by various attributes as for example care for staff, consultancy for employees, development and implementation of programs focused both on individuals and groups or teams and their ability to overcome problems by stress reduction, leading organizational changes and support while dealing with process of adaptation. (Mayerová, 1997)

2.5 Home Office

“The development of communication technologies leads to increase amount of employees who use their homes as office in order to work.” (Martin, 2007)

Based on author’s consultancy with Recruitment Specialist with focus on the Czech market, Czech Republic is following the trends from western countries, which means the demand for home office is higher every year, especially when talking about positions of middle and high management.

Martin summarizes a list of main advantages and disadvantages of this benefit from the employee’s point of view as well as from the employer’s point of view.

2.5.1 Advantages and disadvantages for the employee

From the employee’s point of view most of the advantages and disadvantages are dependent on their freedom, ability to manage their own time and responsibility at the same time.

According to Martin the main advantage of home office is a higher amount of productive hours than a regular employee can usually achieve during his working hours in the office. The stress and the tiredness of travelling are very often eliminated. The employee can start his working hours when he wants, basically he can spend his morning with early jogging, taking care of children or having a shower, moreover the employee can save some time when skipping the travelling to work. He can easily avoid the regular noise of office as for

example ringing phones, colleague's conversations and so on. In case the employee has a special office room, the rent costs are worthwhile. (Martin, 2007)

On the other hand the lack of support from employee's team leader or boss might appear. In terms of team work and cooperation within the team the home office could be also very challenging. The attendance during team meetings is very often necessary, therefore tools and programs for communication are being used – as for example conference calls, Skype, etc. (Martin, 2007)

2.5.2 Advantages and disadvantages for the employer

Advantage and disadvantages from the employer's point of view are mainly connected directly to financial cost.

Costs for the office might be reduced after implementing the home office policy within the company, but based on author's working experience this must not be an advantage while the employer allows to have home office for one day per a week for those employees, who fulfilled their planes in the previous quarter.

If the employer covers the travel costs connected with travelling to and back from office, the implementation of home office policy can possibly reduce the travel costs. (Martin, 2007)

The supervision on employees is almost impossible as the team leader, director or team can only rely on his team member's or colleague's responsibility and time management skills. Also the costs for communication might increase as there could be a necessity to call each other immediately.

2.6 Flexible working hours

“Flextime allows an employee to select the hours he will work. There are usually specified limits set by the employer. Employees on a flexible schedule may work a condensed work week or may work a regular work week. Those working a condensed week may work four ten hour days, rather than five eight hour days. Those who work a five day week may work hours other than the typical "nine to five." (McKay) “In theory, flextime seems like an everyone-wins proposition. But one person's work-life balance can be another's work-life overload.” (Selingson, 2012)

McKay mentions as the main and obvious benefit from the employer's point of view the ability to accommodate employees who are facing troubles with balancing their jobs and

personal and family life. “In order to retain those employees it would be in the company's best interests to allow their staff to have a flexible schedule.” (McKay)

The author assumes that having ability to choose when will the employee start working may be useful for the majority of employees, mainly single-parent families probably appreciate this benefit as they can easily accommodate their family life with their jobs, for example picking up a children from kindergarten or accompanying the kid to a group hobby activities after school. Based on author's working experience a flexible working hours may be beneficial also for students who work full time as they can plan dates of exams to early afternoon or morning hours, moreover it is also possible to manage or plan driving lessons while attending a driving school.

“A less obvious benefit would be a decrease in overhead costs. Employees working flexible schedules can share expensive equipment such as computers, and even desk space, as long as their schedules don't overlap. A company, if it chooses to, can even respond to calls from customers during more hours, if some people begin work prior to 9 a.m. and others stay later than 5 p.m. This works well if the company deals with customers in different time zones.” (McKay)

2.7 Appraisal and evaluation of employees

As self-reflection is usually very subjective method to evaluate our own performance, employees should be provided with regular evaluation and appraisal from their team leaders or managers as well in order to improve skills and deliver better results.

During this “one to one” meetings team leaders or managers have a special chance to find out needs of employees or prepare them to upcoming changes within their team, department or whole company. They can easily schedule a plan of education for the next period of time and agree on appropriate trainings or workshops delivered either internally or externally. The trust among employee and team leader or manager should create the environment where employee is able to share his experience, opinions and do a self-reflective evaluation of his performance without the need of trying to hide some important information, basically the result of those evaluation meeting should provide you support according to your career path plan. (Martin, 2007)

Probably the greatest challenge from team leaders or managers is to build an open communication with their team members; otherwise the main purpose of appraisal would not be reached. (Martin, 2007)

Martin also recommends dividing the process of evaluation into two parts:

- a) **Written part:** introductory document which includes goals and administration of whole process, employees should have sufficient time to go through the process and come up with questions eventually
- b) **Meeting part:** employees can discuss their concerns, their managers should ensure them, that their wages will not be reduced (Martin, 2007)

2.8 Training

The main purpose of training is to handle employer's requests; therefore the continuous process of trainings development is very important. Most of newly hired employees need a set of training in order to be able to fulfill entitlements and demands of their employer. Permanent employees should be provided with requalification trainings due to improvements or changes within the company or its processes. (Martin, 2007)

The organization should ensure continuous development of trainings and education plans for employees as their needs are changing in accordance with development of company's strategies. (Martin, 2007)

Based on author's consultancy with HR Specialist new needs and requirements for education and trainings might appear very often and due to fast market development, especially within the IT area, whose potential for development is great.

In terms of financial coverage, Martin recommends setting the educational requirements with taking into consideration the long term perspective, the main reason is ensuring funds and adequate financial support. The educational plan should be regularly discussed among managers and employees so that it is possible to fulfill the organizational needs appropriately. (Martin, 2007)

2.8.1 Advantages and disadvantages of external and internal education

Oudová compares advantages and disadvantages between internal and external education for employees, moreover Oudová also comments on the situation when companies reduce education radically. "Within the effort to push the costs to the lowest possible level, a lot of companies which were struggling with the economic recession, decided to begin with cost cutting in programs of education and staff development." (Oudová, 2010)

From the human resource department perspective Oudová also assumes that limiting the costs leads to significant demotivation of employees, a quality staff that is fully aware of

his value within the company would probably not appreciate a reduction of trainings which may help him in delivering expected results, moreover while he is not indifferent to his career development. “This type of employee may conclude that when his employer does not invest money into him and does not support his development, it may be time to move forward and search for new job opportunities.” (Oudová, 2010)

Based on Oudová assumption, it is necessary to take into consideration the fact, that development of employees directly influences the success rate, competitiveness and prosperity. As Oudová mentioned, achieving a higher performance, enforcement in the context of competitive environment is possible only under the condition of employing qualified specialists who are aware of opportunities, know the market conditions, moreover who are not afraid of taking the responsibility for the decisions they make. (Oudová, 2010) Oudová assumes, that the most balanced way to ensure and deliver proper education to employees is to work with different sources – internal and external as both of those have undoubted benefits. (Oudová, 2010)

In terms of internal education the concepts usually vary as the company’s HR department is responsible for planning the time line, logistics and so on. Oudová also says the biggest potential to cost cutting have those departments which have their own highly qualified specialists, who are willing and able to share their know-how with other colleagues within the department. Based on author’s working experience this should not have the desired effect as the specialists may not have adequate facilitating and presentation skills. (Oudová, 2010)

Based on Oudová assumption, external sources for education may be more interesting and attractive for the majority of employees as the sessions are sometimes held out of the company itself. (Oudová, 2010)

3 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL PART

The theoretical part includes mainly information borrowed from experts as Hannelore Fritz, Marie Mayerová, David Martin, Alžběta Kuchaříčková, Josef Vodák, George T.Milkowich or Alena Oudová each of them specializes on different areas within HR. Those information are even supported by author's own working experience.

The theoretical part of this bachelor thesis covers the explanation of meaning of Human Resources within organizations, which basically includes the main purposes of this department as a whole and its role in the organizations. The author has mentioned also the values of decisions made by any Human Resources departments.

In the second part the author focused mainly on the basic meaning of term "work-life balance" and its role in employee's personal life, performance in the company, causes of work-life misbalance are discussed as well. This part is followed by explanation of the most often tools and methods of protection from work-life misbalance, which usually leads to stress. The author also mentioned possible causes of stress and life situations which appear while employees are working under the pressure.

In the end the author chose favorite benefits which companies are using in order to support work-life balance situation of their employees, moreover the author explained and compared its main advantages and disadvantages both from employer's and employee's point of view.

The information covered in the theoretical part will be basically corresponding to issues discussed in the analysis part, which follows.

II. ANALYSIS

4 INTRODUCTION OF ANALYTICAL PART

At the beginning of analytical part the author describes history, vision and basic facts about these companies in order to introduce the background; moreover goals and aims of those companies will be presented as well as their main products. The second part will contain the analysis itself including the description of methodologies applied. The author will present the methodology of the analysis, which will be followed by the results; those will include specific commentaries and recommendations based on information gained from the theoretical part.

4.1 Introduction of “A Company” and “B Company”

As both of the companies requested to keep its anonymity, the author would like to fulfill this expectation; therefore their real names will be substituted by “A Company” and “B Company”, in order to be clear about the final results and all other information. The information, numbers and facts are based on real evidence. During the last year the author was working in the Human Resources with the focus on Recruitment for IT companies in the South Moravia region, therefore both of these companies are entirely focused on Information Technologies sector, so their results would be comparable.

4.1.1 “A Company”

The A Company was established in the Czech Republic in 2001, with the vision of being a Czech company which specializes on the Czech market only. This company basically provides network solutions for other corporations and organizations. As they are focusing only on the Czech market, they have spent many years with getting to know the Czech IT environment. The A Company’s vision is based on their belief that in the IT world risks are more and more focusing on specific goals, thus the bigger amount of real specialist is necessary. Today’s hackers are increasingly using the local aspects, in accordance with this fact the A Company decided to become a specialist based on the geographical location; therefore their products are really unique. The A Company claims, that security is not an issue of a current state, but it is about long term process. They are not responsible for the development of their products only, but they also implement their products into the company’s networks, moreover they do the maintenance as well. Their services are adaptable to any network structure within the Czech market. A Company’s portfolio consists of firewalls, anti-spam, antiviruses and other security devices. They provide these services through outsourcing of IT technologies and appropriate services. (“A Company website”, n.d.)

The A Company consists of 22 employees with management included; it fits into the cluster of small companies with the scale up to 50 employees.

4.1.2 “B Company”

The B Company was founded in 1990 and nowadays in one of reputable companies within the IT sector on the Czech market. The B Company specializes in development of large information systems in accordance with client’s needs or business conditions. These information systems are used by the biggest financial and bank institutions in the Czech Republic.

As the B Company is active on the market for more than 20 years, at the beginning their focuses were slightly different from the current ones. Their key product were libraries (IT terminology), usage of those libraries directly influenced a whole generation of IT programmers in Czech and Slovak Republic.

Currently they have also international clients within the Europe. The B Company has 60employees, thus it may belong to the cluster of medium-sized companies with the scale from 50 to 100 employees.

The most common services which they offer to their clients are system integration, operating information systems, electronic banking services, and support for information systems operations, consultancy, analytic and advisory services and project management as well. The B Company mainly builds relationships with clients based on long term cooperation. (“B Company website”, n.d.)

5 ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE'S WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The author has used several sources of information in order to prevent from unilateralism. The main source was answers collected from employees. The author acquired them by using well-known on-line tool which allows to create own questionnaire with various types of questions depending on the needs and purpose of the analysis. The author justifies the usage of several types of questions included in the questionnaire in order to outline the logic behind the questionnaire itself. Furthermore in this capture the author describes the results for each company and in some cases will compare these as well. There will be also provided commentaries and recommendations to those companies. These recommendations consist of information covered in the theoretical part; moreover it contains recommendations based on consultancy with human resources specialist.

5.1 Ethics of the analysis

All respondents were informed about the ethics of this analysis; the author informed them about the main aim of this bachelor thesis and its survey. Each respondent was familiar with the topic of the bachelor thesis as well. Employees were also aware of the anonymity of their responses as the author needed to work with the data provided. As for the A Company the theme of work-life balance was a serious one in this current period of time, the author also offered them the opportunity of providing them the gained data including author's recommendations and advices.

5.2 Aim of the analysis

The aim of the analyses is to define the current state of employee's work-life balance and come up with appropriate recommendation in order to improve current conditions both for employees and employers.

The author comments on and evaluates each company separately; during some specific parts the company's results are compared.

The author has consulted the aim of this bachelor thesis with several human resources specialist and recruitment specialist who are working in those companies.

5.3 Methodology of the analysis

In the purpose of this survey, the author has created an on-line questionnaire, which was virtually distributed among employees of A Company and B Company. During the preparation of the questionnaire the author had a consultation with external human resource specialist in order to gain a relevant feedback before passing the questionnaire to employees.

5.4 Quantitative questionnaire

The quantitative method of questionnaire is probably the most common one as its biggest advantage is elaboration which is not time consuming as much as a qualitative method of research. The author assumes that also for employees this was the most comfortable way to participate in the research in comparison with having individual interviews with every single employee. By applying the anonymous method of questionnaires the employees were not shy when answering given questions, the author assumes the anonymity gave them a space of comfort zone.

Although there is few identification data as for example group of age, sexes and marital status expected to fill in, the author has guaranteed to employees not providing this identification data back to directors or managers of that company. The author can only provide final analysis.

5.5 Response rate

The response rate differs within the companies. At first, the companies are not the same size while talking about the number of employees working there. At second, their motivation to answer the questions given in the questionnaire was widely different as explained below.

The A Company has 22employees approximately. The A Company did not use any processes of the human resource management as they are still quite small. During autumn 2013 the A Company was under the process of analyzing what specific human resource processes should they apply in the first two quarters of 2014, this analysis was delivered by two human resource specialists; both of them are author's colleagues. As a result of this analysis they found out their employees are interested in the topic of work-life balance as a majority of them is working under the pressure most of the working time. Furthermore they were asked to fill in the author's questionnaire during their winter conference where there

was a special time devoted to filling the survey of the bachelor thesis. Their attendance there was 22 of 22. Therefore their response rate was the highest possible, which means 100%.

On the other hand the response rate of the questionnaire in the B Company was much lower. The amount of employees who were approached to fill in the survey was 50 as the highest management decided to pass the survey only to the middle management and team members. This company has implemented several human resource processes already and their current system of benefits is wider in comparison with the A Company. The on-line questionnaire was distributed to employees via internal e-mail communication. The author has received 14 responses from 50 approached employees, which is 28% of response rate. The author approached 72 employees among two companies in total; the planned amount of completed answer was 57 while the reality of amount of answers received was 36. The total response rate is 63%.

The following table 5.1 concludes all the information written above.

Table 5.1 Response Rate of the Questionnaire

<i>Companies</i>	<i>n.of people approached</i>	<i>n. of planned/completed answers</i>	<i>RESPONSE RATE %</i>
A Company	22	22/22	100%
B Company	50	35/14	28%
Total	72	57/36	63%

Source: Data from author's questionnaire, 2014.

The majority of questions were built so that there is a possibility of a multiple choice of answer. There are approximately 2 questions where respondents may answer by their own words. Those questions are only to the purpose of gaining detailed specifications and getting a better overview of the situation. Employee's answers will be used as a form of feedback to companies.

5.6 Targets of the analysis

The author has planned **4 main targets of research**. Those results will be evaluated and discussed in following subchapters; graphs will be included as well in order to easily

compare the data acquired. Additional information obtained from additional questions will be provided as well, thus the logic behind will be easily understandable.

The 4 main targets are listed below:

- ❖ Find out **the current state of work-life balance** in two approached companies (working over-time shifts, doing some sports actively, travelling to/back from work)
- ❖ Find out **what age category have the best/the worst situation and why**
- ❖ Find out **how they expect their employers to support their work-life balance**
- ❖ Find out **who should be responsible for employee's work-life balance** from their point of view

5.7 Final evaluation of questionnaires

The author stated the total amount of questions to 14 as this amount of questions mainly with a multiple choice based answers and it is not very time consuming for the approached respondents and at the same time it is clear for the author to evaluate and conclude the results.

5.7.1 Target: Find out the current state of work-life balance

The first question was basically focused on their feeling, especially how do the employees themselves see their current situation.

At A Company 5 employees (22%) answered that they are satisfied with their current work-life balance. The majority of employees are rather satisfied, approximately 10 of them (42%). Then 4 of them (28%) stated they are rather dissatisfied with their current situation of work-life balance, and only 3 respondents (8%) answered they are completely not satisfied.

On the other hand in the B Company the biggest percentage of employees chose the answer "Rather No", it was 6 respondents, which is 43%. 5 employees (36%) are rather satisfied with the level of balancing personal and professional lives. Only 3 people (21%) are fully satisfied and none of the respondents is totally dissatisfied.

The author has concluded that the amount of employees who stated they are absolutely satisfied with the way of how they balance between personal and professional lives is basically the same – about 20%. In the figure below the author concluded overall employee's satisfaction with their work-life balance.

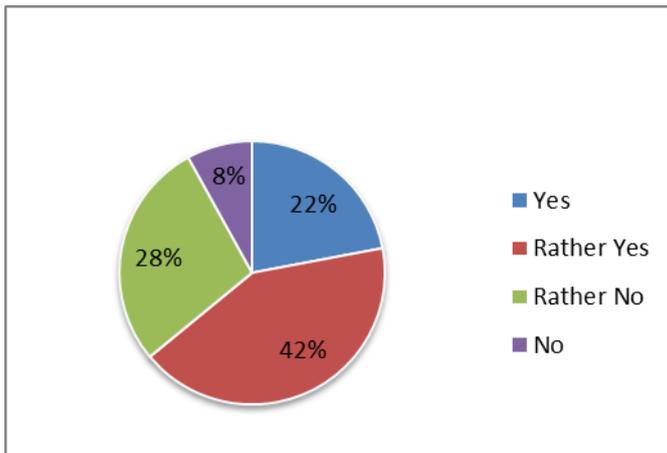


Figure 5-1 Level of satisfaction with employees current work-life balance

Source: Data from Author’s Survey 2014

In order to specify this information, respondents were also supposed to state the amount of average amount of hours they usually stay at work over time. The author set four scales so the employees had a multiple choice of answers. The scale was set as followed:

- 0-3 hours per a week
- 3-5 hours per a week
- 5-10 hours per a week
- +10 hours per a week

At the graphs below it is visible that most of respondents usually spend from zero up to three hours over time at work per a week. In A Company it is approximately 41% of respondents which is quite similar in comparison to B Company where it is 50%.

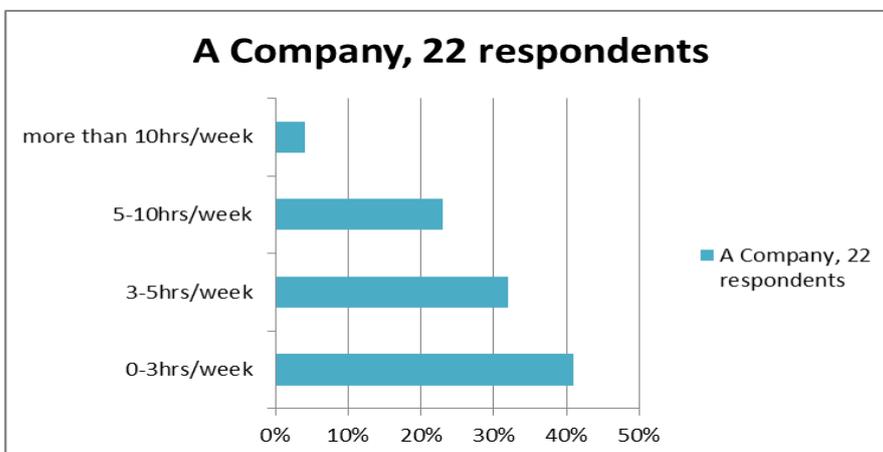


Figure 5-2 Average amount of hours spent over time at work per a week

Source: Data from Author's Survey 2014

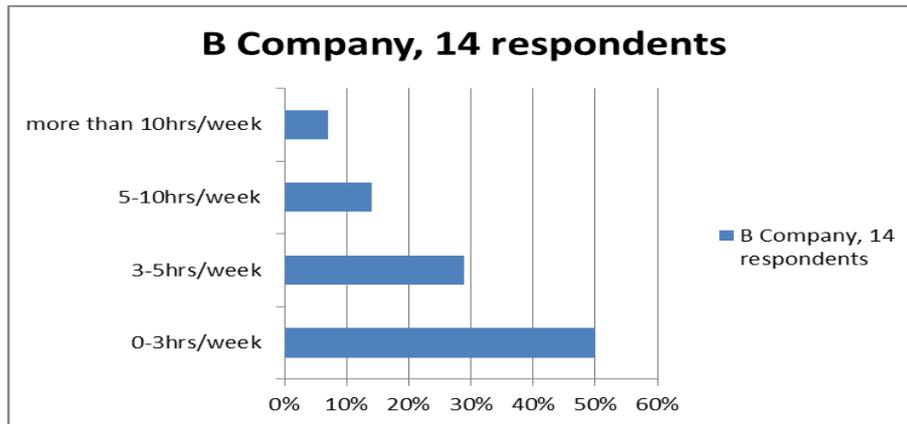


Figure 5-3 Average amount of hours spent over time at work per a week

Source: Data from Author's Survey 2014

Describing respondent's expectations towards their employers in terms of benefits which directly support employee's work-life balance, **the two most desired benefits are possibility of home-office and flexible working hours**. Those benefits were discussed in chapters 2.6 and 2.7 in the theoretical part. Respondents could vote for more than one of proposed answers and/or suggest another opportunity. The majority of respondents (82%) from the A Company agreed that the most interesting benefit which they would appreciate the most is having an opportunity of flexible working hours. In B Company the percentage was little bit higher, 86%. As the figure 5-4 clearly shows, respondents from both A and B companies mostly agree, the desire of having home office and flexible working hours is almost the same. 73% of respondents representing A Company voted for home office while in B Company it was 86%.

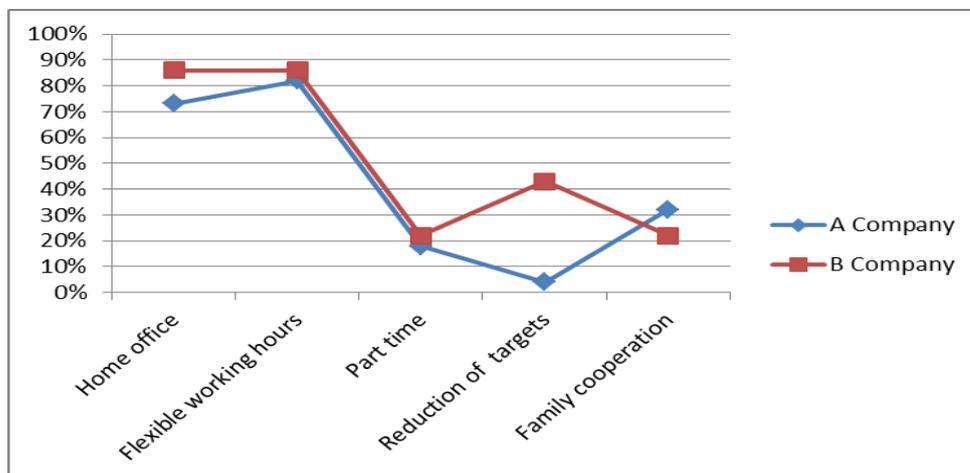


Figure 5-4 Comparison of desired benefits

Source: Data from Author’s Survey 2014

According to the results the author also assumes that at certain point of view the employees of B Company may have higher targets and goals to reach. Those employees of B Company who had answered they would appreciate the reduction of targets have one main similarity: 5 out of 6 have wife or husband, only 1 of them live single. Therefore the author assumes that having a commitment as for example marriage and living in common house with partner may negatively influence employee’s ability to be focused at work and deliver expected results.

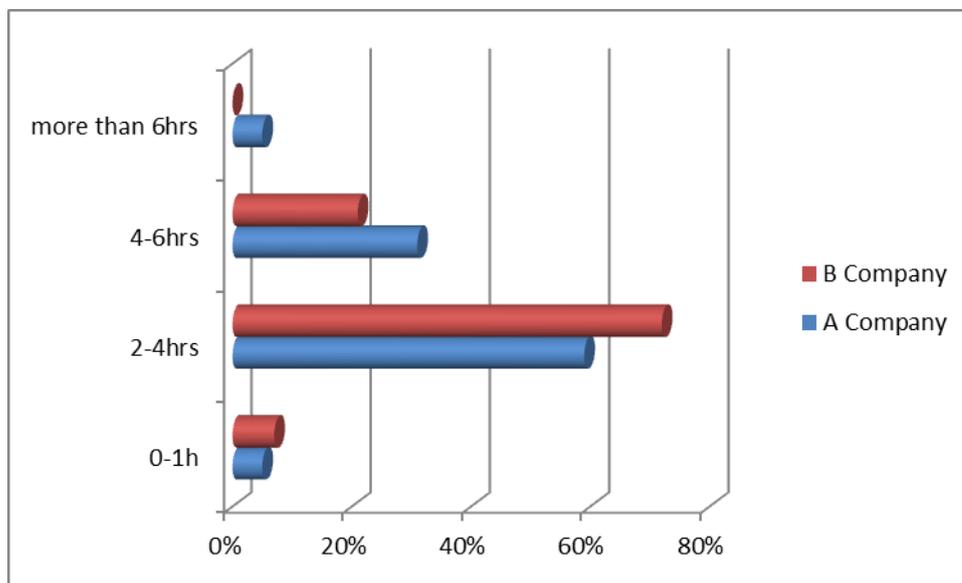


Figure 5-5 How many hours employees do sports per a week

Source: Data from Author’s Survey 2014

5.7.2 Target: Find out what age category have the worst/ the best situation

In terms of respondent’s ability to manage their work load, the author found out that in both A and B Companies **more than half of respondents feel guilty** for not achieving their daily goals on regular basis: sometimes, often and even very often. In A Company it is approximately **90%** while in B Company it was **79%**. In the figure below it is also visible, that in the A Company 6 people out of 22 (26%) feel guilty very often. Even alarming is the fact, that 5 out of those 6 people are men at the scale **of age 31 years up to 50**; moreover all of them are living in household with their wives and children. Therefore the A Company should focus mainly on doing proper analysis of their working conditions and try to seek for the main causes of their low level of work-life balance. Both companies should avoid “ageism” – this term was coined by Robert Butler. “Ageism can be seen as a process

of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin color and gender.” (Paludi, 2011)

On the other hand it is also important to mention, that **people at age +30 years are mainly working at senior level positions of IT**, thus the high volume of work load should be expected and so the way of balancing personal and professional life might be more difficult as well.

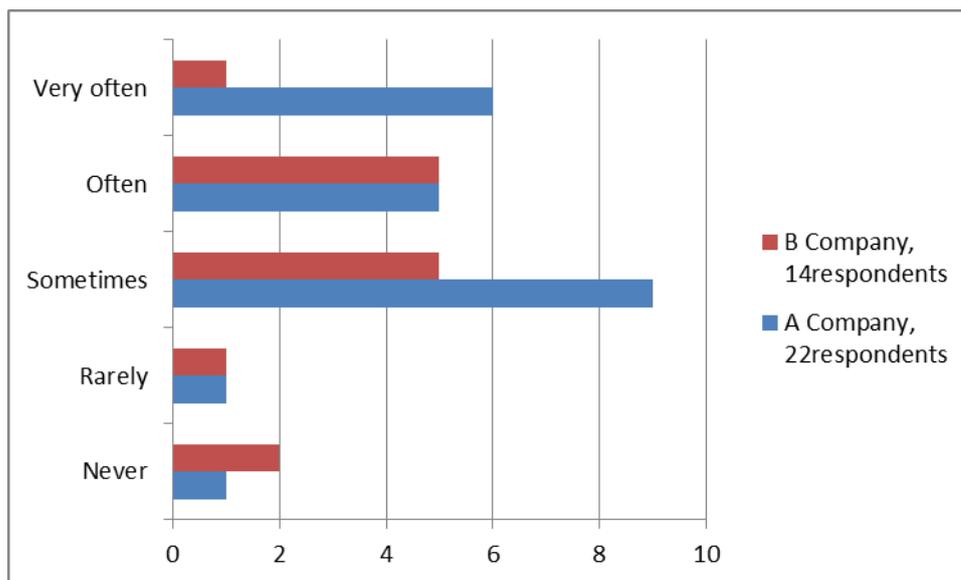


Figure 5-6 How often do employees feel guilty after leaving their office while not finishing all given tasks

Source: Data from Author's Survey 2014

In terms of employees expectations about being responsible of their work life balance, 4 out of 6 had agreed, it should be mainly themselves and in the same time their employer should provide them with adequate conditions and services as for example having individual meetings with their team leaders or managers, offer them external workshops where they can gain new knowledge and so on. The author will discuss those opportunities in following subchapter.

The author assumes that a positive sign or trend is, that all of those 6 people, who feel guiltiness very often while leaving their office in the evening are very aware of that fact as they evaluated themselves on level 1-2 with their work-life balance situation.

- A value of 1 was specified as follows: I am staying at work until the late evening very often, my friends have not seen me for a long time, wife or husband is angry, I do not know what to do and how to improve my current situation.
- A value 2 meant: I am aware that my personal and professional life is not balanced, I am trying to find an effective solution, but so far I am not doing well.
- A value 3 stand for: I know my work-life balance could be better, but in the moment it is fine, it does not have any negative influence to my personal or professional life.
- A value 4 meant: My situation with work-life balance is getting better; I am working on it actively.
- A value 5 was described as: I have strictly fixed boundaries between my personal and professional life, my family and friends do not feel any significant changes.

In the graph below there are employee’s results and it is obvious, that respondents from B Company have better work-life balance situation currently. It may be caused by the fact that this company exists already since 1990, thus its managers have more experience with working on employees work-life balance. On the other hand the author assumes there is a great potential for both companies to improve their employee’s situation.

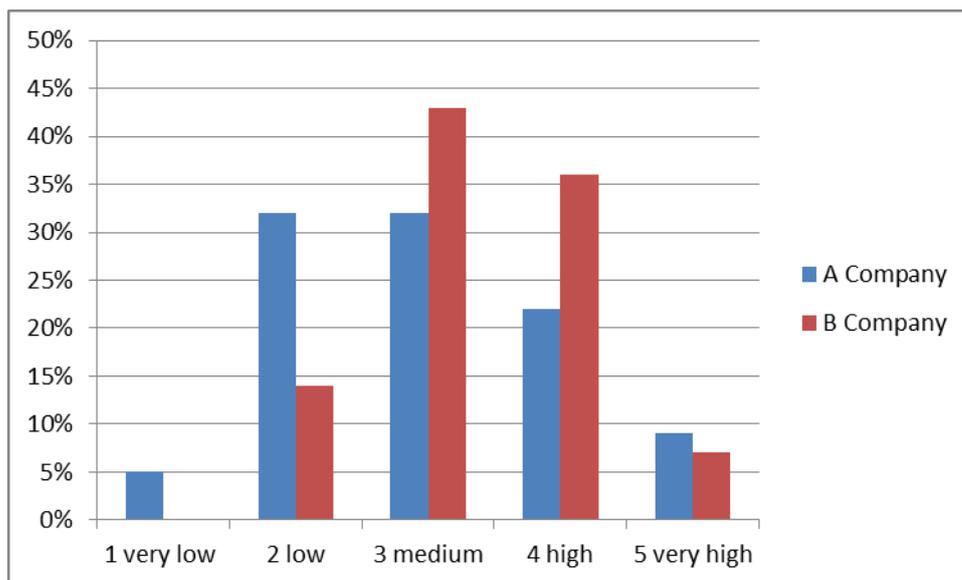


Figure 5-7 Evaluate your work-life balance on scale 1-5

Source: Data from Author’s Survey

Based on a consultancy with HR specialist, the author would also recommend considering which benefits mentioned above in chapter 2 and its subchapters could these companies apply or improve and boost its implementation.

Interesting fact is that employees with the two highest evaluations (values 4, 5) are very similar people. In the A Company those 7 people (31%) are people who have families and share with them common household. Majority (5) of them is at age of 36-40 years and the two of them are under 30. While in the B Company all of respondents who evaluated their work-life balance at the scale 4 or 5 are at the age of 26-30 and only one of them is married and the rest of them (5 employees) live single. The author would strongly recommend holding a similar analysis internally for the purpose of proper evaluation of current trends within a whole company.

5.7.3 Target: How should employers support work-life balance of their employees

Respondents were also asked about their expectations and wishes towards their employer in terms of supporting directly employee’s ability to manage work-life balance better. They were offered 5 opportunities and they had a chance to choose more than one of them or suggest a new method which they would like to be applied. The author shows their answers in the following graph.

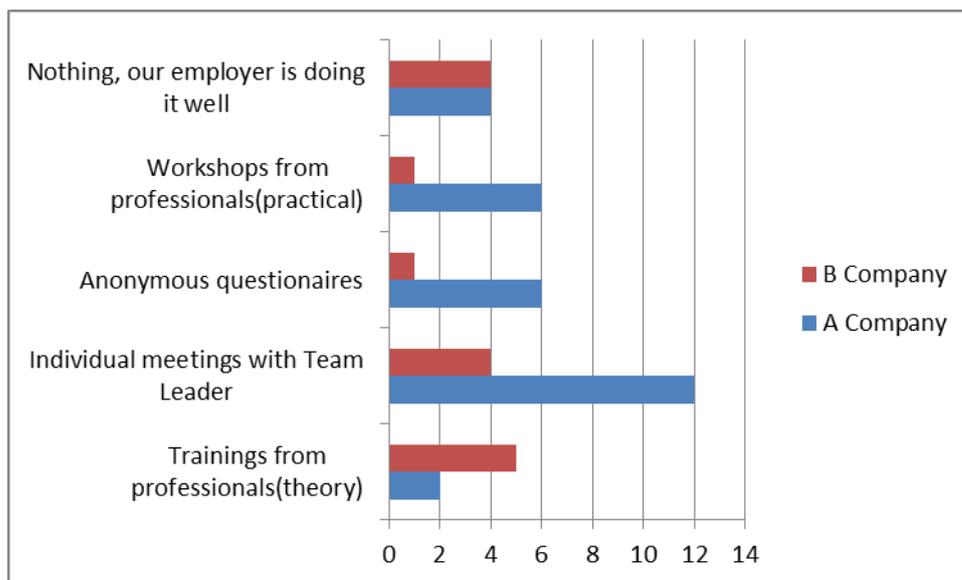


Figure 5-8 How should employer support work-life balance of its employees

Source: Data from Author’s Survey 2014

On the vertical axis there are choices that employees were supposed to choose from. On the first sight it is obvious that more than a half of employees working in the A Company (55%) would greatly appreciate if their team leaders have individual meetings on regular basis, where they can discuss their current situation which may lead to building a trust among them.

As the author mentioned in subchapter 2.7 it is effective to divide those meetings on written and personal part.

Any type of external education does not seem to be interesting enough for majority employees; therefore the author would recommend choosing only few employees who are interested in their further development through external trainings or workshops so they can see and feel employer's interest and care of their personal development within their field of interest. Based on author's working experience the external education is very important for junior employees as well as for senior ones. It is also necessary to think and discuss with employees what type of education they would be interested in the most, because when employee find it useless after, it is too late to discuss why it was not successful as it may be mainly waste of time, money and energy for employees, employer and for the specialist as well.

5.7.4 Responsibility for employee's work-life balance

As the results for each company were quite similar, the author put the results of both into one graph rather than comparing differences. The respondents admit it should be more like themselves who take care of balancing their personal and professional lives and as the graph clearly shows it is more than a half (56%) out of 36 respondents. In the same time this fact does not mean, that employers should stop being interested in supporting their employees in terms of work-life balance.

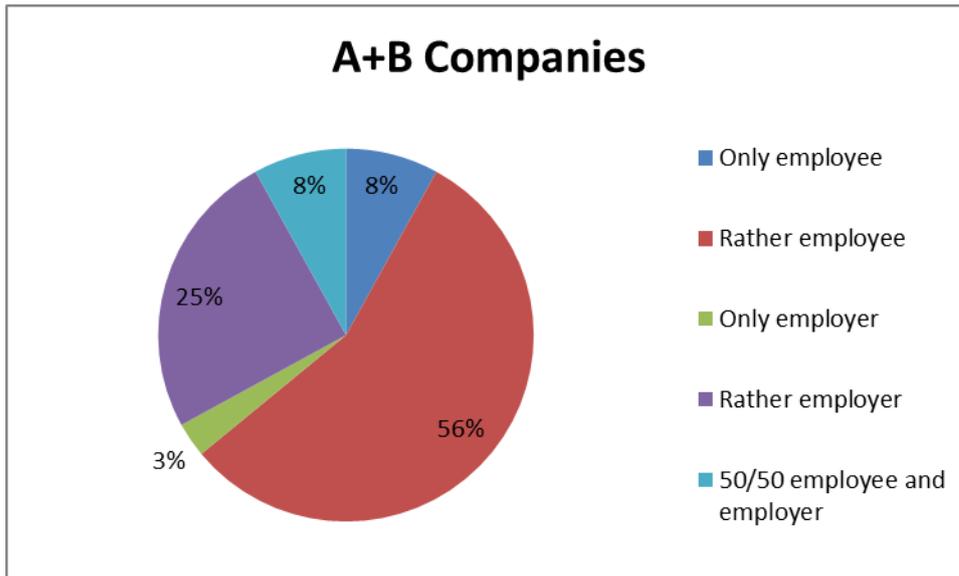


Figure 5-9 who should be responsible for employee's work life balance

Source: Data from Author's Survey

Exactly $\frac{1}{4}$ of respondents think that mainly their employer should be responsible for their work-life balance. Those employees supported their opinion by the fact, that their employer should be more aware of their qualities and values; they are the ones who bring money to the employer and no one else. Some of them also mentioned the benefits which would help them to gain better balance; those benefits were mentioned above already.

5.8 Summary of analytical part

The author has introduced and described the two companies who were part of this analysis, their basic facts, history and the field of their main activities within the IT industry. Further the author concluded and explained the ethics of this analysis in order to set the appropriate expectations and provide information about the background of this survey. This part also described the methodology of the analysis, its aim. The response rate was evaluated as well in connection to the background of both companies and their internal motivation to become a part of this analysis. Mainly there were set and explained targets of the survey, further the author have divided the final evaluation of analysis according to those targets. There were discussions about current state of work-life balance of employees in both companies with commentaries to each graph provided. Then the author focused on relations between employee's answers and their marital status, age and the type of house hold they are currently living in. The next part included information about respondent's expectations

towards their employers, specifically it was about what additional benefits or type of further development should employers provide to their employees. The last part covered conclusion about the topic of responsibility for employee's work-life balance. All of last 4 subchapters included also partial recommendations to each single target and observations within the subchapter, those recommendations are based on information gained from the theoretical part and it includes commentaries based on author's own experience and also consultations with HR specialist and IT recruitment specialists.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The author has done the analysis and based on the results there will be recommendations to both A and B Companies provided. The author is aware of the fact that in the B Company the response rate was not high due to low motivation of its employees and the B Company itself. On the other hand the analysis of the A Company is considered to be applicable and the author will pass the results and recommendations to its director.

The author would recommend to both companies re-considering their current system of benefits as during the analysis it was obvious that employees would highly appreciate a change in terms of working hours. Especially while talking about the A Company where 59% (13 respondents) live with husband/wife and children and another 22% (5 respondents) share their house hold with their partner, the probability of a need of having a flexible working hours or home office is high for 81% of employees, moreover if it is IT job where employee need mostly only his laptop in order to be able to work. Taking into consideration the scale of respondent's age of the B Company, 50% of them are living single in their households and the majority of them (6 respondents) are at age 26-30 and one is 18-25, the B Company may expect in the near future its employees will be in the similar situation as respondents from the A Company. The level of low work-life balance was mainly connected to the amount of working hours and low flexibility.

Another recommendation would be to realize further discussions with employees about their expectation in terms of employer's support of their work-life balance, so that the employer is aware of his role as well as employees are aware of financial opportunities of their employer. Also the author recommends to begin with individual interviews within team leaders and team members. Based on author's working experience the middle management has very often the biggest and direct influence to other employees, moreover the analysis proved employee's interest in implementation of individual meetings with team leaders on regular basis.

CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis consists of two main parts: theoretical and analysis part. These parts are interconnected by the topics discussed in the theoretical part and analyzed in the practical part.

The aim of the theoretical part was to gain information about work-life balance, its most often causes and ways how its consequences may be prevented in the future. The theoretical part covers also benefits which any employer may implement in order to support work-life balance of its employees, moreover the advantages and disadvantages are compared as well, because the point of employee's/employer's view differs.

In the practical part the author introduced the IT companies who are part of the research, their history; vision and field of activities were mentioned. The author than covered the methodology of this research which included the ethics of analysis, its aim and setting the targets of the analysis. The questionnaire was evaluated by conducting the answers according to set targets.

1. Find out the current state of work-life balance

The respondents are mainly facing a work-life misbalance rather than balance. Although that 64% of them answered "Yes" or "Rather Yes" to the question if they are satisfied with their current state of work-life balance, the majority of them still have high expectations towards their employers and agreed that both employees and employers should actively participate on balancing their personal and professional life, for example by implementing the most desired benefits as home office and flexible working hours. This topic is discussed in subchapter 5.7.1.

2. Find out what age category have the worst/best work-life balance

As discussed in subchapter 5.7.2. the analysis showed, that the state of current work-life balance depends on employees age as well as on the type of household the employee is living in and if he already has a family or not. The most successful was group of people at age 26-40, the lowest level of work life balance have respondents older than 40years old.

3. Find out how should employers support work-life balance of their employees

Respondents would appreciate if their employers implement individual meetings with team leaders, so they can easily share their needs on regular basis. A certain group of respondents, mainly the older ones, would prefer anonymous questionnaires. The employees have also a tendency and will to educate further, thus the discussion should be opened within the companies.

4. Find out who should be responsible for employee's work-life balance

More than a half (56%) of respondents agreed, that it should be rather themselves who is responsible for their work-life balance. On the other hand more than a quarter (28%) assumes this is mainly or only employer's responsibility. The author assumes this proves, that in both companies there should be led discussions on those topics no matter what, those discussions will help them identify their needs and roles even better.

The author has proved the given statement, that in order to prevent from extreme misbalance between employee's personal and professional life it is important to discuss this topic openly with an employer.

The author believes that results of this thesis will be useful for both companies.

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APPENDICES

P I Work-life balance questionnaire

P II List of figures

APPENDIX P I: QUESTIONNAIRE: WORK-LIFE BALANCE

1. Are you satisfied with the amount of time you spend with your closest (family, friends)?
 - Yes
 - Rather Yes
 - Rather No
 - No
2. How many hours do you usually work over time? (average, by week – 40hrs)
 - 0-3hrs
 - 3-5hrs
 - 5-10hrs
 - 10 or more hrs
3. How do you solve a situation when you need to decide between your personal and professional life?

4. Which of following conditions should be fulfilled so that you can say your work-life balance is at very good level?
 - Home Office
 - Flexible Working Hours
 - Part-time
 - Reduction of employer's demands
 - Family Cooperation
 - Others: _____
5. How many hours per a week do you usually do some sport activities? (tennis, volleyball, walking a dog, swimming...)
 - 0-1hr
 - 2-4hrs
 - 4-6hrs
 - More than 6hrs
6. It happens to me that: when I do not finish my work in the office, than I think of it during my free time:
 - Never

- Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Very often
7. Who should be mainly responsible for employee's work-life balance?
- Only employee
 - Rather employee
 - Rather employer
 - Only employer
8. Please reason your previous answer.
-
9. How should your employer support your work-life balance?
- Trainings delivered by professionals (mainly theory)
 - Individual and regular meetings with team leaders/managers
 - Anonymous questionnaires
 - Workshops delivered by professionals (practical)
 - Any, current support is enough
 - Others: _____
10. How many minutes/hours do you usually spend by going to and back from work?
- Up to 30 minutes
 - 31-60 minutes
 - 61-120 minutes
 - More than 120 minutes
11. What is your current state of work-life balance? Please, choose one of following levels.
- 1: very low (I stay at work until the late evening very often, I have not seen my friends for a long time, my family is not satisfied, I do not know what to do)
 - 2: low (I know my work-life balance is not good, I am trying to do something about it, but so far I am not successful)
 - 3: medium (I am aware of it, but it does not have a direct and negative influence on my life)

- 4: high (My situation is getting better, I am working on it actively)
- 5: very high (My boundaries are strict, not me nor my friends or family feels any negatives)

12. What is your gender?

- Man
- Woman

13. What is your age group?

- 18-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 55+

14. What type of household do you live in?

- Single
- Single with children
- With wife/ husband, without children
- With family

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