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A Case Study on Work-Life Balance and Stress Management

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Case Abstract

IndiNova Digital Solutions Pvt. Ltd. is a fast-growing Indian technology and business-services that has grown quickly over the past three years. To meet demanding client expectations management introduced aggressive targets and shorter project timelines. Although employees initially welcomed the growth because it created opportunities for promotions, better pay and career development but the increase in workload gradually extended working hours and weakened the boundary between personal and professional life.

Managers increasingly contacted employees after office hours as they were expected to remain available through evenings and weekends. Later on HR observed rising absenteeism, frequent leave requests, reduced engagement and signs of burnout among employees with childcare and eldercare responsibilities. The situation created a HR dilemma: how could Zenith maintain client responsiveness and productivity without damaging employee well-being?

The case presents five possible responses like flexible working hours, remote or hybrid work, a right to disconnect policy, employee assistance and stress-management programmes which improved workload and deadline management. The company ultimately considers a comprehensive) strategy rather than relying on a just one intervention.

The Organization

IndiNova Digital Solutions Pvt. Ltd. is an Indian technology and business-services company with approximately 500 employees. The company was growing fast and was becoming more customer delivery-centric with tougher targets and faster schedules throughout project delivery. At first, the reforms were received warmly by employees as growth was associated with quicker promotions, better salary and clearer career paths.

But the growth came at a price of more work. Managers began to call staff after hours to handle matters considered critical. Emails, instant messaging, calls went on into evenings, weekends. While there was no official policy mandating staff to be available, the culture of being always accessible became an informal badge of honor.

When the Problem Surfaced

Over the coming months, the Human Resources department started to see a pattern that could not be viewed as an isolated incident. Absenteeism rose, leave requests multiplied and supervisors noted an obvious drop in enthusiasm. Employees who had been extremely engaged appeared to be physically and emotionally drained.

Many employees acknowledged in informal chats that they had trouble switching off from business life to home life. It was common practice to check email when out of the office, and to respond to messages on holidays. But the worry was not merely the quantity of hours worked. “Increasingly, employees felt they had lost control of) their schedules and workloads.”

The major stressors identified in the situation included are:

- high workload and long working hours
- tight deadlines and time pressure
- limited employee control over when and how work was performed
- pressure to remain constantly available through technology
- Weakening boundaries between professional and personal life,
- poorer morale and workplace relationships
- additional pressure from family, financial and personal responsibilities

The Human Impact

Physical Impact

Employees reported continuous fatigue and had less time for exercise, proper rest and normal personal routines.

Psychological Impact

Continued pressure contributed to anxiety, irritability and emotional exhaustion which increased the risk of, burnout when left unaddressed.

Family and Social Impact

Long, working, hours and the inability to mentally disconnect from work which reduced time with family and friends and created friction between professional and, personal responsibilities.

Professional Impact

The pressure, to increase output began producing the opposite effect. Stressed employees became less productive, less satisfied and less motivated. Therefore, absenteeism increased, morale weakened and job satisfaction declined.

The HR Dilemma: A Decision Point

The situation placed Zenith's HR function at a difficult decision point. Senior management argued that client-facing work required flexibility and that competitors were also working under demanding deadlines.
Employees, however argued that constant availability was damaging their health and personal lives.

The HR team therefore had to decide whether Zenith should continue prioritizing maximum availability and short-term output or redesign the way work was organized. A simple reduction in working hours would not solve the problem if workloads remained unrealistic and managers continued expecting responses after hours.

The HR team considered five possible courses of action.

Option 1 — Flexible Working Hours

Employees could be allowed to choose their start and finish times within organizational limits. This could provide greater autonomy, assist employees in handling their family responsibilities and reduce commuting pressure.

Option 2 — Remote or Hybrid Work

As the, nature, of, the role permitted it, employees could work remotely on selected days. However, the arrangement would require clear boundaries because remote work could otherwise become an expectation of being reachable throughout the day.

Option 3 — Right to Disconnect Policy

The company could establish guidelines discouraging non-urgent communication outside working hours. Core hours could be defined as 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with employees expected not to respond immediately after those hours unless a matter was urgent.

Option 4 — Employee Assistance and Stress Management

The company could introduce counselling, stress-management workshops and structured wellness initiatives including support for mindfulness, exercise and social connection.

Option 5 — Better Workload and Deadline Management

Managers could prioritize tasks according to actual capacity, distribute work more realistically, set achievable deadlines, reduce unnecessary meetings and monitor staffing and workload distribution.

A Change in Approach

After reviewing the alternatives, HR recognized that no single initiative would address the problem. Flexible hours would have limited value if workload remained excessive. Remote work could simply move the office into employees' homes. Wellness programmes could help employees cope but they would not remove, the organizational causes of stress.

Zenith therefore decided to move toward a comprehensive work-life balance programme. This approach combined flexibility, clearer communication boundaries, workload review, employee support and changes in managerial behaviour.

The proposed programme included:

- Flexible working arrangements wherever the role allowed them
- Clear expectations that employees were, not required to remain continuously reachable after working hours
- Regular and realistic reassessment of workloads by managers
- Counselling, mindfulness, exercise and stress-management support
- Manager training to recognize employee stress and reduce unnecessary after-hours pressure
- Periodic employee surveys to measure stress and perceived work-life balance
- Performance evaluation based on outcomes and quality of work rather than time spent online

Expected Outcomes

This integrated approach was expected to reduce employee stress while protecting business performance. The company anticipated stronger employee well-being, higher job satisfaction, improved morale, lower absenteeism, better retention and more sustainable productivity.

The principle was that productivity and employee well-being should not be treated as competing objectives. A healthier work environment could support more sustainable performance over time.

Conclusion

The IndiNova Digital Solutions case demonstrates that work-life balance is not merely an employee benefit but an organizational and HR issue. Heavy workloads, long working hours, limited autonomy and technology-driven availability can increase stress and eventually affect productivity, morale, satisfaction and retention.

The case also shows that responsibility is shared. Employees can use time management practices, exercise mindfulness and social support while the organization must create realistic workloads, supportive management practices, flexibility and access to stress management resources. For IndiNova Digital Solutions, the challenge is not simply to reduce working hours but to build a culture in which employees can perform effectively without sacrificing their well-being.