



WORK FROM HOME AFFECTING INFOSYS EMPLOYEES WORK LIFE BALANCE?

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ABSTRACT:

Infosys, one of the biggest Information Technology (IT) company in India with more than 2 Lakh plus employees working for it faced a major backlash when national lockdown was announced in the year 2020 due to the advent of Pandemic named COVID- 19. Companies all over the world had to send their employees back home on immediate effect where the entire operations were shifted to online mode and had to be operated from home. The employees were all shocked and not even sure about their job being stable and how the companies will be treating them in the coming few months. Even for Infosys, this was a setback as well and the company took multiple initiatives to balance out its deadlines, vision, mission with the employees' personal life and responsibilities. The employers were in a dilemma of whether to abide by the deadlines totally and avoid the human element or to take care of their employee and creating a good work environment even while working from home. Not only this, the biggest question was to how to engage the employees with the company during this crucial time and ensuring their safety back at home as well. Some of the questions cropped up in the minds of the stakeholders associated with the company. Infosys took multiple initiatives to ease out it employees and make sure they work from home without disturbing their work life balance. Was the company successful enough to achieve its target without disrupting the employees' work- life balance? What initiative could have been taken more to help employees balance their work lives along with professional commitments?

KEYWORDS:

WORK LIFE BALANCE, WORK FROM HOME, PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS, LOCKDOWN.

THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

The information technology sector is an industry which comprises of two components such as the IT services and (BPO) business process outsourcing. The IT sector serves to be one of the major contributors towards economic growth of India and aims to help the nation grow in terms of technology, innovation and rapid growth. Information technology sector is gaining importance over the years and more people are attracted towards this industry for jobs, investment purposes and multiple foreign investments are being done in this industry. The government is also taking steps to develop the IT sector for the welfare of its economy so that stability and growth can be achieved by the economy at large. With this expectation, the level of competition is also increasing as more and more companies are entering this sector, thus leading to more burden on the employees in terms of the deadlines and targets. The employees of the IT sector face work- life balance issues which the IT companies try to resolve.

ABOUT INFOSYS' LTD

Established in the year 1981, Infosys is a global multinational IT organization who is now a global leader with more than 2 Lakh employees, in the upcoming generation of information technology. Infosys was founded by a team of seven engineers in Pune with an initial capital of \$250 in the year 1981. It's headquartered in Bangalore. Infosys offers a wide range of services to its clients in terms of software development, maintenance and

independent services to multiple companies in finance, insurance and manufacturing. Its key products include Infosys consulting, Platform of information by Infosys, Skava, digital marketing and multiple engineering services etc.

Infosys as a company has multiple offices spread across countries with 82 sales and marketing offices, 123 development centers and multiple acquired companies. As far as employees are concerned, Infosys have more than 2.5 lakh employees (the number though is rising drastically). The company is taking care of its employees and makes sure to reduce the rate of attrition by offering multiple benefits to employees and a good workplace to work in. The company focuses on creating value in terms of customers as well as employees and treating them as assets in real sense.

Infosys always focuses on the quality being offered and the best services to be given out to the stakeholders. This dedication to build a valued and ethical environment is what makes the company stronger day by day with more grounded values, ethical workplace and an employee friendly culture to survive in and also grow professionally.

WORK- LIFE BALANCE ISSUES FACED WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

Work- life balance refers to the situation where a balance is maintained between the work life and personal life by an employee. A situation where all the responsibilities are

interred associated with one another and harmony is maintained. Work life balance refers to the degree of satisfaction which the employees experience while their personal and professional responsibilities are fulfilled totally and nothing is being compromised (Rife and Hall, 2015). Work-life balance is the degree of engagement of employees towards their both personal as well as professional life and equal satisfaction with both (Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2003). Work life balance also means the presence of fit between the personal as well as professional roles (Kumari, 2012).

Work- life balance was earlier known as 'work family balance' but with time its scope has widened and it is important to maintain balance not only between work and family but between different quadrants of life. Now it is not only confined to family and work affairs but pays importance to personal health, mental peace, psychological satisfaction and social satisfaction as well.

Work- life balance is becoming important with the passage of time. Organisations are now more focused towards helping employees maintain balance between their work and life responsibilities and are aiming for the overall satisfaction of its employees with their mental stability and emotional well being.

The reason behind focusing fully towards work- life balance of employees is the current pandemic situation and the situation of employees working from home. All the companies are totally operational online and dependent on different online platforms and software for the completion of their targets and business goals. Therefore the employees work from home and hence the difficulty to maintain and balance out their personal and professional life comes up.

Employees are facing challenges in terms of employees missing out on their activities, leisure time with friends and family, going out for yoga classes and even dining out in restaurants, thus impacting their productivity even while working and hence not able to deliver good results. All these challenges faced by employees have forced companies to work on employee welfare more and give them an environment where they can balance out their work and family affairs

CHALLENGES FACED BY INFOSYS TO SHIFT ITS EMPLOYEES TO WORK FROM HOME

Traditionally, challenges related to work-life balance had been considered as simply the personal affair (Emslie & Hunt, 2009), and the needs of employees were responded by their employers by offering them with some perks and benefits such as crèche services, maternity leave etc. With the ever changing dynamics in environment, the needs and desires of employees for work-life balance has increased and employers have begun to offer more active support of their employees' work-life balance (Thorntwaite, 2004). Not only this, due to the current pandemic situation when employees were working from home, the employers were expecting more from the employees in terms of meeting deadlines and working effectively, due to which somehow

the employees were running out of time and were not able to give much time to their families and enjoy work- life balance. On the other hand the employers also faced problems while shifting their entire operation to work from home.

At Infosys, where all the financial team was already shifted to online modes of preparing the books and consolidating all the finances as required by Indian Accounting Standards and the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), the HR team also shifted its operations to online mode, fingerprint scanners were disabled and all employees started working from home, the company started facing issues in managing their stakeholders, the team members found it difficult to confirm to efforts and achieve milestones, convincing clients came out to be a difficult task and managing more than 400 core finance employees along with 600 business process management employees was a challenge in front of Infosys.

Moreover, a basic computer access was a big problem. At Infosys, almost 90% of the employees did not had laptops to work on, as most of them worked in the office on desktops as a data security precaution. Within few days the company had to revisit their policies and reframe them in order to meet the business expectations while making the employees work from home, without compromising on the level of productivity.

Within next few months, the employees started facing issues which resulted into their poor performance at work. Employees lacked connectivity with workplace, colleagues, clients and wanted equipments to work on from their homes, moreover the ones being newly hired also needed laptops to work on (with proper VPN access). Maintaining privacy and security was another challenge faced. With more than 2 Lakh employees carrying out operations from home it became really difficult to avoid cybercrimes and protect the company sensitive data from cyber criminals.

Not only this, Infosys had to deal with the new spectrum of challenges where the employees' mental health was adversely affected while working from home and had to face lots of psychological problems during the entire pandemic. The employees were seen to show less motivation to work, burnout due to excessive workload, more pressure to complete tasks on time and decreased level of motivation to work and achieve organizational goals. Above all the vacuum of isolation at home, poor connectivity with colleagues, no proper work stations/ place to work from, excessive electricity and Wi-Fi bills, online operations going on with unlimited zoom meetings and lots of training sessions and webinars all added on to the frustration level among employees and created burden on them and ultimately forcing them to sacrifice their personal responsibilities for their work. The employees gave less time to their families and ignored their duties just because of excessive pressure from the workplace. This work life imbalance while working from home was a challenge which needed to be addressed by the company in no time, before the employees start to detach themselves from the company.

INITIATIVES BY INFOSYS FOR MAINTAINING EMPLOYEES' WORK- LIFE BALANCE

During the pandemic, the employees faced difficulties while managing their work life balance and the responsibilities of both ends seemed to be blurred. Employees work life imbalance need to be addressed by the company to ensure its employee wellbeing and happiness. This crises was difficult to handle but not impossible for the company. The COO of Infosys, Mr U.B. Pravin Rao in an interview addressed that the company had always worked on making policies for employee welfare and safety, even in crisis situations and this is what have taught us important lessons to succeed.

The top management at Infosys also tried to frame policies for the welfare of the employees so that they can maintain their work life balance so that employees enjoy working from home and do not feel over burdened due to workload. At Infosys more that 90% of the employees were working from home without stepping once in their offices, as a result loss of connectivity happened and hence employees felt more stressed out due to work thus leading to poor productivity and effectiveness. At Infosys, employee safety is of utmost importance and the company ensures that employees remain engaged even while working from home. Not only this, the team leaders were connecting themselves on daily basis with their teams to ensure proper flow of work, the HR department at Infosys was running all kinds of celebrations online and engaging employees in various health awareness camps, yoga sessions, talks with doctors, webinars for mental stability and seminars for achieving work life balance. Not only this, the company also launched initiatives where the employees were given some time period spare for themselves where they can relax without any phone calls or online meetings.

Not only this, in order to bring ease to its employees and ensure smooth flow of work even from their homes, Infosys distributed laptops to the employees who were having no access to laptops and also sent chairs and desks at their homes, so that employees can create a similar work area for themselves even at their homes. This initiative by Infosys added on to the motivation level of the employees and gave them a much more focused environment to work in.

Safety was another concern for the employees which was resolved by closely monitoring the mis configurations in the systems and offering a password protected VPN access which will work only on one divide at a time. All this helped the employees work with more confidence and complete all the confidential work with ease.

Work- life balance does not mean balancing the work and family affairs it also includes the mental stability of the employees working with the organization and how well they perceive their work and home responsibilities. For this Infosys worked on the employees psychological health by helping employees connect with doctors as and when required. Also arranging health talks with doctors and

psychologists so that employees can clarify their concerns and fetch some help. All this showed the concern of the organization towards their employees, their emotional well being, their work life balance and productivity while working from home.

At Infosys, steps were taken to educate their employees about cyber crimes, safety while working from home, how to maintain their work life balance, how to stay mentally as well as physically fit while working from home, how to become emotionally strong and handle the work pressure and deadlines, how to remain motivated throughout the work from home practice and not losing out on their effectiveness and productivity. But the question here is, do all these initiatives and attempts at Infosys for the welfare of their employees had actually helped employees maintain their work life balance or is the work from home and work life balance still out of tune?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the likely impact of work from home facility on the company's performance?
2. How work from home impacted work- life balance of all the employees working at Infosys?
3. What were the initiatives taken up by company to help employees achieve work life balance while working from home?

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