**Ways to Encourage Balance in the Office**

Project managers have a [unique role](http://eprints.qut.edu.au/8128/) in helping companies and employees work together to accomplish a reasonable work-life balance. These professionals are often tasked with the responsibility of supporting team development and challenging industry working condition standards. Ultimately, these are tasks that are crucial to individual and organizational productivity in the workplace.

[Learn more in this related guide: *4 Ways to Find Out If Modern Org Chart Software Makes Sense*.](https://pages.pingboard.com/cs/c/?cta_guid=11d9bc8b-0f65-4cff-88ef-6b85911cfedb&placement_guid=d2213d74-cdc4-44ce-8294-98c49fcdc146&portal_id=2495271&canon=https%3A%2F%2Fpingboard.com%2Fblog%2Fwork-life-balance%2F&redirect_url=APefjpEPq_lXhj3sZU3TgLCq6kX-WV2PkIUJaAPOI7EF7RrFMql5F2EUeclrM80PvdZOqSm-BZvmHwXBIWi5Wls0GBDW_zVYf_DBitMsGp-YrjrwnvErYd0iZB851jM1251RS9Gs6ikkgeplXv89CR4_69Yb7GmL5hy4_auysVDpEhR8U6Bi8LX6mMmSmFxCcHNvkKZhCmTh&click=8ca7db10-5eee-46f7-b4c4-e1e49c0ad56c&hsutk=9335d1adced98686f59135797ffd1062&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F&__hstc=27855779.9335d1adced98686f59135797ffd1062.1564626116861.1564626116861.1564626116861.1&__hssc=27855779.1.1564626116862&__hsfp=2800646760)

To help you begin fostering a culture of balance in the workplace, here are 10 ways to encourage work-life balance among your employees.

**Maintain Structural Consistency**

It is important to maintain a sense of consistency and organization in your company structure because employees generally feel less anxiety if they know what to expect day-to-day as often as possible. Don’t be afraid to shake things up from time to time, but a steady and [reliable work environment](http://jom.sagepub.com/content/28/6/787.short) can counteract stresses that employees feel at home.

**Offer Community Engagement Opportunities**

Another great way to connect the dots between work time and out-of-work time is to offer community engagement activities that are meaningful and beneficial. For example, you could consider offering eight hours per year of paid volunteer time to your employees as an incentive to get involved in important community causes.

**Create a Designated “Quiet Space”**

Every employee has a bad day from time to time, so it’s nice to have a space for employees to go to when they just need to step away for a moment. Create a designed [quiet space](http://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/how-to/growth-strategies/2014/09/create-space-for-introverts-in-extroverted-offices.html?page=all) in your office where employees can take a mental break when they need to.

This space should be uncluttered and free of all company materials. Instead, fill it with luscious plants and flowers, comfortable seating, some light reading material, and perhaps some soft music. Establish a precedent that this space is not an employee lounge that welcomes chatter, laughter, venting, or meetings. This should be a calming space for silent reflection that respects solitude and peace.

**Allow Schedule Flexibility**

Not every business is well-suited for a virtual workforce, so don’t compromise the productivity of your company if you need your employees to arrive at work in-person. However, it is another thing entirely to give your employees the [option to work remotely](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/careers-leadership/15-perks-an-employer-can-offer-to-improve-work-life-balance/article4098904/) when they really need to because of an emergency that requires them to make up time later.

For example, if your employee’s child is sick, consider offering her the opportunity to work from home that day or come into the office over time weekend to make up for lost time. This way your employee doesn’t have to worry about missing work and wages from taking the time off and your company’s deadlines can still be met.

**Engage in Team-Building Exercises**

[Team-building exercises](https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/234475) may sound too cheesy for your company environment, but some of them really do foster a much-needed sense of team work around the office. If your employees feel like they can depend on each other for support, they will feel like they have someone to go to when feeling stressed out or overwhelmed.

**Encourage Vacations**

Many companies stick to the old standard of two weeks of vacation per year, but [studies and surveys have shown](http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/08/the-case-for-vacation-why-science-says-breaks-are-good-for-productivity/260747/) that 14 days off per 365 days in the year simply isn’t enough to achieve a work-life balance. Employees who work at small companies and growing start-ups often feel the most pressure to work every day without regard to personal time and self-rejuvenation.

One way to encourage your employees to take vacations for their own benefit it to implement a “use it or lose it” vacation policy, whereby employees’ allotted vacation time expires at the end of the year if left unused.

**Encourage Short Breaks Throughout the Day**

On a smaller scale, it’s important to workers’ mental and physical health to take frequent breaks throughout the day. The human body was not designed to sit still and stare at a screen for eight hours, and doing so can lead to a wide variety of health issues. Taking breaks at work also makes employees [better at their jobs](http://news.health.com/2015/09/18/workday-breaks-help-employees-reboot-researchers-say/) because they are more focused, less burned out, and more productive in the long-term.

**Allow Unpaid Time Off for Life Events**

Some life events merit paid time off, but other life cycle needs are a bit more complicated. Be considerate about your employees’ emergency family needs and their desires to better themselves.

For example, you could offer unpaid leave for events that don’t qualify under the [Family and Medical Leave Act](http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/), such as helping care for a parent with a serious illness or extending maternity leave for a couple more months after the birth of a child. You may also wish to offer unpaid leave to valuable employees who want to attend graduate school or are exploring the option of moving to a new place for a spouse’s job.

**Ask Employees for Guidance**

Who better to consult about what employees in your office truly need than the employees themselves! If you get a sense that your employees are struggling with work-life balance, ask them what changes around the workplace might help. You might be surprised what you hear and collaborate on some [mutually beneficial strategies](http://www.myopinionatbesix.com/besixsurvey/media/besix-survey/pdf/4.-employee-engagement-the-key-to-improving-performance.pdf) together as a result.

To facilitate these discussions, which can often be difficult ones to bring up, consider having regularly scheduled meetings either as a group or as one-on-one discussions to talk about balance issues. These types of meetings can be held quarterly, semi-annually, or annually depending upon the size and individual needs of your workforce.

**Be a Good Model for Balance**

No one likes to take life advice from a hypocrite, so make sure that your words and actions are in line. If managers in your company are responding to emails while on vacation, it sends a message to employees that they are expected to do so as well. Be sure to respect the balance and privacy of your employees and avoid contacting them after normal work hours unless it is an absolute emergency.

**Putting Ideas into Practice**

As you can see, the long-term benefits of encouraging employees to find a balance between their work and home lives greatly outweigh any temporary inconveniences and policy changes. However, it’s also important to recognize the early warning signs of burnout, which is a continual state of physical and mental exhaustion. According to a [*American Journal of Nursing*](http://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/Fulltext/2012/01001/Striving_for_work_life_balance.7.aspx) publication, a state of burnout can cause employees to become disconnected from both work and home because they don’t have enough energy to sustain both lives. Employees who feel unrecognized or dissatisfied at work can lead to burnout, and this type of exhaustion at work can be a health and safety hazard.

Overall, it’s important to encourage employees to be self-aware about their own personalities and tendencies, as some people are more prone to imbalances than others. Through your words, actions, and example, emphasize the need to continually assess one’s goals to determine what brings satisfaction, inner peace, and balance. Empowering your employees to take control over their work and home lives can have a profound impact on their job satisfaction and performance, enabling you to do what’s best and most effective for your company.