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OUTLOOK Business

FOR DECISION MAKERS

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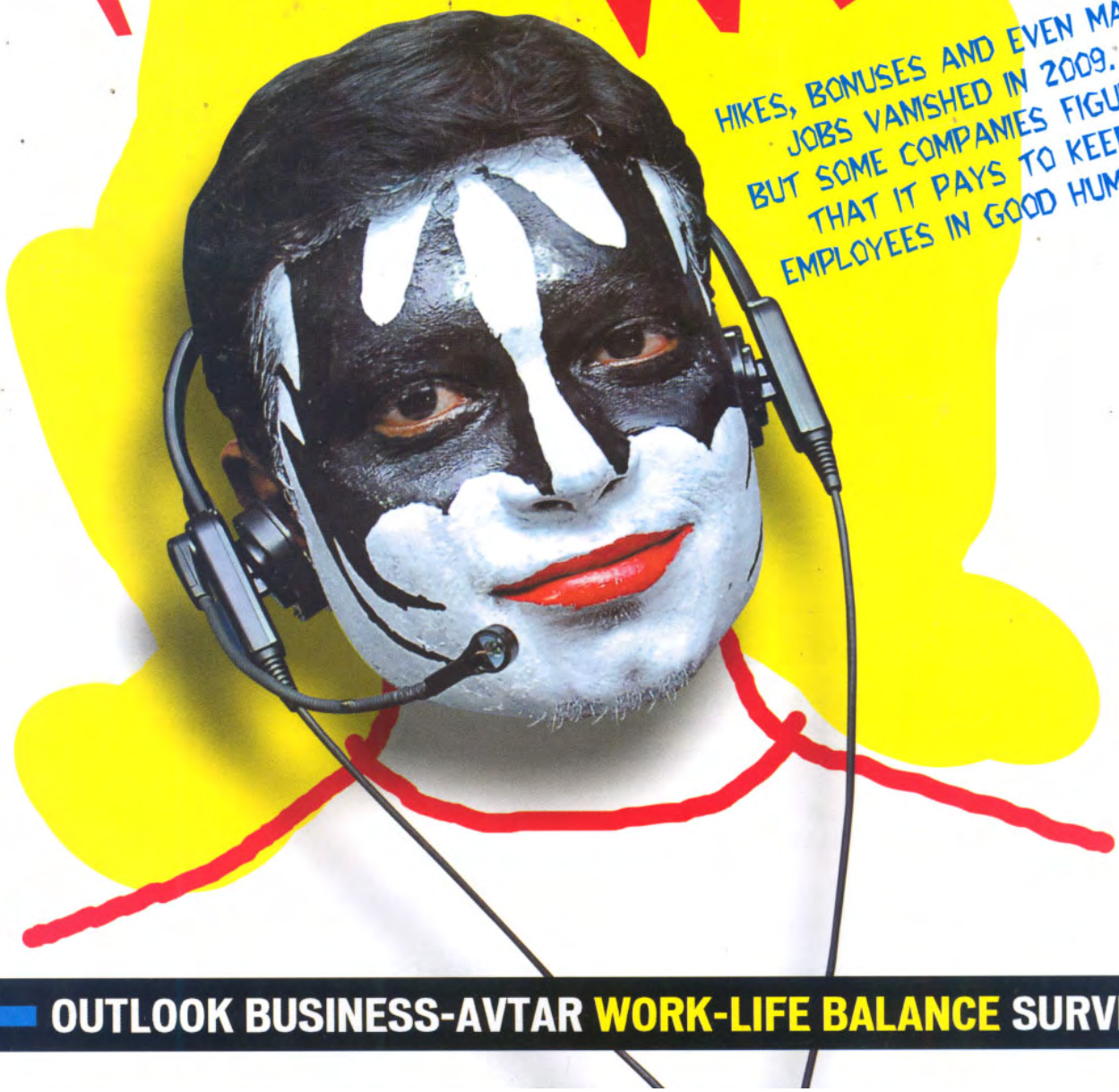
SPECIAL ISSUE

FUN@WORK

HIKES, BONUSES AND EVEN MANY JOBS VANISHED IN 2009. BUT SOME COMPANIES FIGURED THAT IT PAYS TO KEEP EMPLOYEES IN GOOD HUMOUR.



+ OUTLOOK BUSINESS-AVTAR WORK-LIFE BALANCE SURVEY

Loud And Clear

745 employees in seven cities have one message for employers: Give us ME time, or else...

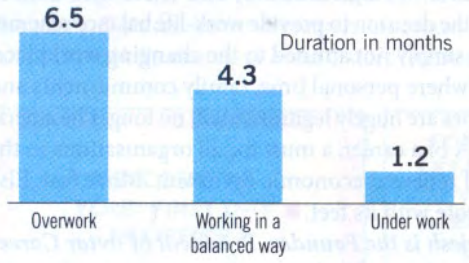
How many of your waking hours do you spend on work and other aspects of life? Ideally, what percentage of your waking hours should be given to work and how much to other aspects of life?

The time spent at work is roughly two-thirds of one's waking time. The rest is spent on "other aspects of life", which includes commuting too.

	Actual		Ideal		Difference
	Time spent on work	Time spent on other aspects of life	Time spent on work	Time spent on other aspects of life	Between actual and ideal time spent on work
Respondents	66.4%	33.6%	58.1%	41.9%	8.3 p'tage pts

On an average, how many months in a year do you have to overwork or under work or work in a balanced way?

Not surprising, following the first finding. There's definitely peak load. And companies can do well to understand the peak load months unique to their industries.



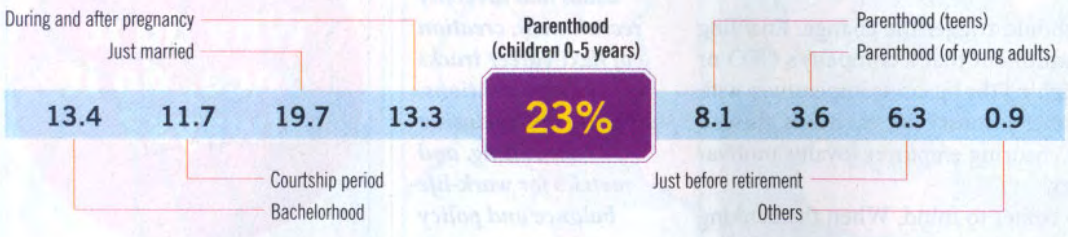
How important is work-life balance to you?

A whopping 87% consider it important enough. Why wouldn't they? Unprecedented competition has definitely made work schedules crazy. And individuals are more interested than ever in their personal lives. Work-life balance is a precious commodity.

59.5% Extremely important
27.8% Somewhat important
9.0% Neutral
3.1% Somewhat unimportant
0.7% Extremely unimportant

When do you think you need to strike the perfect work-life balance?

The diagram shows a lot of almost evenly important phases for an individual. The insight for companies is that they need to understand the life stages. This will help them better support employees based on their specific needs.



ADITYA GHOSH

President, IndiGo



ON BALANCE

Personal and professional lives are not separate. The earlier one realises this, it becomes easier to strike a balance.

PEAK WORK

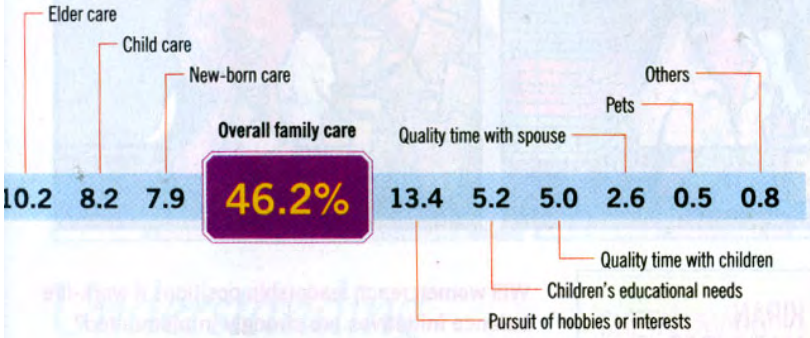
Visiting one of the 20-odd stations that IndiGo flies to, which Ghosh does at least twice a week.

OFF WORK REPORT

- Ghosh catches up on a movie with his family, or plays with his kids, aged two and three years.
- A fitness freak, he runs 20-25 km every week, and even managed to finish a half-marathon in Gurgaon. Only, in his not-so-busy days, he used to do double the distance.

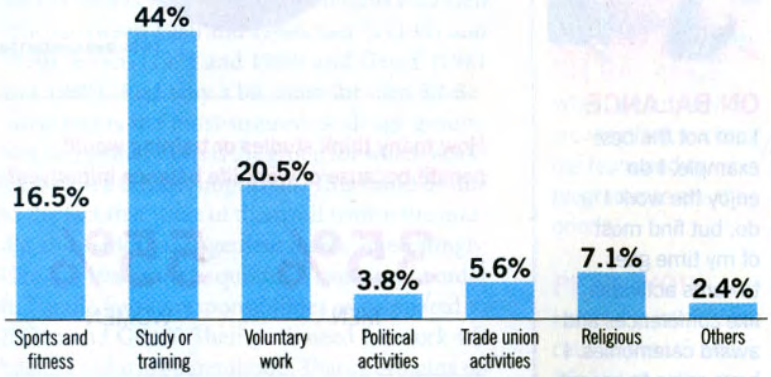
Out of the following activities, which ones do you think need the maximum support for work-life balance?

Family care is top priority for both men and women. Hobbies come next. Women are likely to be impacted the most, in case of work-life imbalance, due to socio-cultural and biological reasons. Flexi-working and support services, anyone?



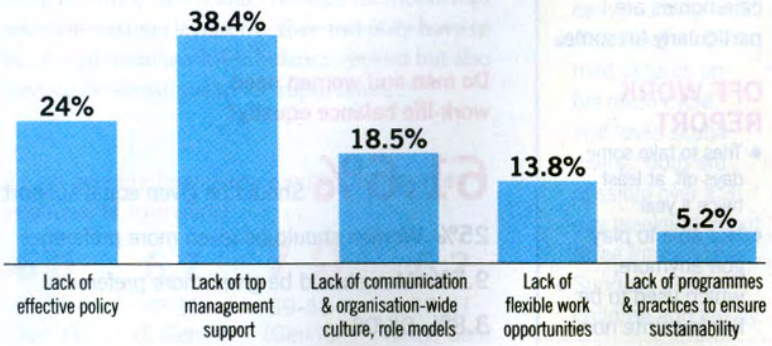
Which of your personal hobbies or interests would benefit from work-life balance initiatives?

Not terribly religious, isn't it! The highlight is the importance attached to self-development and training. Companies can tap this. Start initiatives that will help employees get trained, thereby becoming more skilled and giving them fewer reasons to quit.



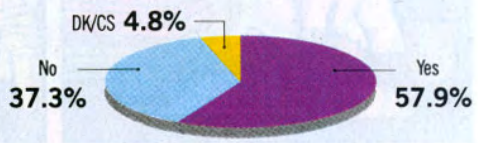
Why do work-life balance measures often fail?

What's the point of having work-life balance schemes if they're not being used? The top brass need to wake up and back such schemes to the hilt. The issue of a lack of an effective policy is even more basic. It can be rectified by understanding what employees really need.



Do you think lack of work-life balance has had an adverse impact on your career?

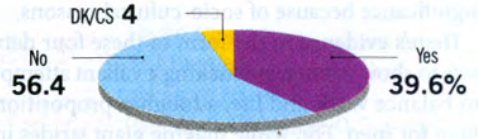
And you thought the absence of work-life balance could wreck your personal life! The numbers highlight the perception that they obstruct career growth too. Companies could lose key talent and be left with a highly de-motivated workforce and sharply dropping productivity.



DK/CS: Don't Know/Can't Say

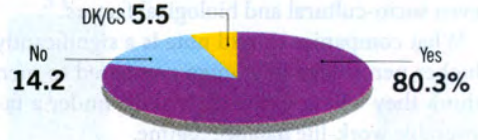
Have any of your colleagues resigned or taken a career break because of work-life balance issues in the last one year?

What you see is an outcome of someone having a messy work-life balance inside a seemingly unfriendly organisation. The career break could have been avoided. If only the organisation was responsive enough.



Do you think work-life balance initiatives will benefit your company?

An overwhelming yes for work-life balance. Would companies start believing what employees here are believing? They would have to. It's only a matter of time.







Work-Life Balance For Women

Work-life balance, though common to all, irrespective of gender, is very important for women the world over. In India, it has much more significance because of socio-cultural reasons.

There's evidence in the form of these four data sets to show women are making a valiant attempt to balance work and life, a tougher proposition than for men. For, while making giant strides in their careers, they continue to take primary responsibility for managing the family.

Everyone seems confident of what the fairer sex is capable of. Over two-thirds of those surveyed believe strong work-life balance initiatives can help women reach leadership positions. Interestingly, 62% are all for equal organisational support for both men and women. Just about a fourth of those polled give more preference to women. Never mind even socio-cultural and biological factors.

What companies should note is a significantly higher percentage of women compared to men think they will upgrade their skills under a favourable work-life balance regime.

What is required is solid support from the organisation. The tool that will help them a lot seems to be the flexi-work option. Organisations invest heavily in training and developing their employees. What a loss it would be if they fail to create infrastructure and support systems to ensure women are retained and keep contributing to organisational growth?

Meanwhile, women are waiting for men to assume more responsibility in the home. There's a subtle hint in more women voting for paternity leave than the men themselves. Will the companies oblige?

KIRAN MAZUMDAR SHAW

Chairman & MD, Biocon



ON BALANCE

I am not the best example. I do enjoy the work I do, but find most of my time goes towards activities like conferences and award ceremonies. I have come to accept that I am a prisoner of work (laughs).

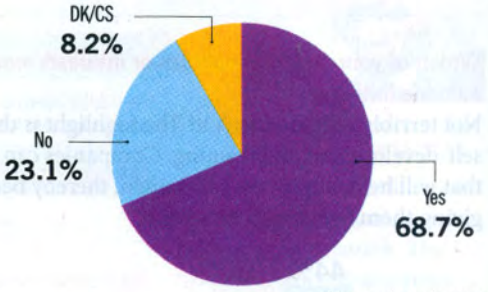
PEAK WORK

Conferences take so much of my time. And award ceremonies are particularly tiresome.

OFF WORK REPORT

- Tries to take some days off, at least twice a year
- Not able to play golf anymore, which used to be her favourite non-work activity

Will women reach leadership positions if work-life balance initiatives are strongly implemented?



DK/CS: Don't Know/Can't Say

How many think studies or training would benefit because of work-life balance initiatives?

35% MEN **55%** WOMEN

How many believe paternity leave is important and should be provided?

78% MEN **82%** WOMEN

Do men and women need work-life balance equally?

61.6% Should be given equal support

25% Women should be given more preference

9.7% Men should be given more preference

3.8% DK/CS



ILLUSTRATIONS BY VIVEK THAKKAR

Understanding Gen X

If companies decide to introduce work-life balance initiatives, they may have to do a bit more for Gen X. Okay, before we go further, this isn't the same Gen X that is referred to in the US. India's workforce is classified as Free Gen (born between 1940 and 1960), Gen X (1961 and 1970), E Gen (1971 and 1980) and Gen Y (1981 and 1990). And why a bit more for Gen X? Because this is the most stressed of all age groups. Not surprisingly, this is the group for which work-life balance is most important. This could be due to the fact that most of them fall within the middle and senior management levels. Interestingly, Gen X is less prone to quitting a company in order to handle family responsibilities as compared to E Gen and Gen Y. Their peak need for work-life balance is during parenthood. That is, bringing up children between 0 to 5 years. Their need is similar to E Gen's. In contrast, the Gen Y group needs maximum support just after marriage and Free Gens, just before retirement. When asked about people seeking flexible careers, a big percentage of the more experienced respondents said they perceive it as a sign of the individual's incapability. Keep in mind, Gen X and Free Gen members lead teams at various levels. So, they not only have to be offered more work-life balance options but also have to be sensitised to its importance.

On an average how many months in a year do you have to overwork?

6.0	6.7	**7.0**	6.2
19-28 (Gen Y)	29-38 (E Gen)	39-48 (Gen X)	49-61 (Free Gen)

CHETAN MAINI

Deputy Chairman & CTO, Reva Electric Car Company



ON BALANCE

When a company is growing fast, building the team and new programmes are the priority.

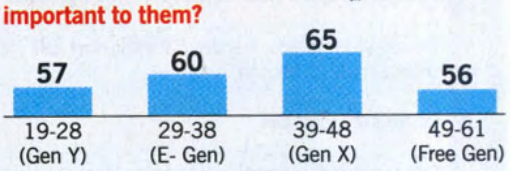
PEAK WORK

I attend to conference calls to the US after 10.30 pm, after my kids go to bed.

OFF WORK REPORT

- Yoga thrice a week at night. And either cycles or takes an early morning walk.
- Also fancies off-road detours on his motorcycle, and loves scuba diving. Both are possible over a 3-day weekend about three times a year
- Sundays are for children and family.

How many say work-life balance is extremely important to them?



During which stage do you think there is maximum need for work-life balance initiatives?

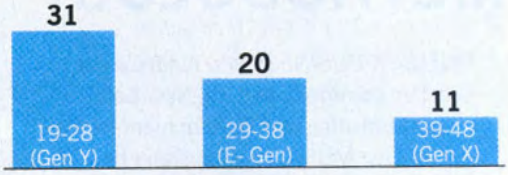
25.9% 19-28 (Gen Y) Just married

31.0% 29-38 (E Gen) Parenthood (children 0-5 years)

25.9% 39-48 (Gen X) Parenthood (children 0-5 years)

56.3% 49-61 (Free Gen) Just before retirement

In order to manage familial responsibilities, how many would consider switching to other companies with flexi-work options?



Why make every day a repeat telecast?

It's All About Flexibility

Most popular work-life balance options/non-statutory leave programmes:

No	Work-Life Balance Option	Exists and part of company policy			Important and should be provided		
	Discretionary Work Arrangements	Yes	No	DK/CS	Yes	No	DK/CS
1	Flexi-working arrangements	60.3	39.1	0.7	82.7	14.6	2.7
2	Concierge services (include information requests, setting dinner reservations, making telephone calls, researching travel arrangements, etc.)	60.5	37.3	2.1	80.5	16.8	2.7
3	Training or professional development	79.2	19.3	1.5	91.5	6.2	2.3
4	Personal development	67.1	31	1.9	88.2	9.3	2.6
5	Pick up and drop facility	34.8	63.4	1.9	74.1	24.3	1.6
6	Proximity to a bank or existence of a bank in your organisation	64	33.8	2.1	76.1	19.6	4.3
7	Proximity to a restaurant or existence of a restaurant, café and canteen in your organisation	54.6	43.5	1.9	76.5	20.4	3.1
8	Existence of a social club	27.7	68.7	3.6	58.4	38.8	2.8
9	Special membership rates for gym/sports facilities	27	70.3	2.7	58.5	39.3	2.1
10	Proximity to a crèche or existence of a crèche in your organisation	25	69.8	5.2	54	41.1	5
	Non-Statutory Leave Arrangements						
12	Paternity leave	53.8	40.4	5.8	79.6	14.4	6
13	Career breaks	35	58.9	6	64.3	30.1	5.6
14	Unpaid leave (to take care of family)	63.2	33.4	3.4	81.1	15	3.9
15	Compassionate leave	61.5	35.4	3.1	76.4	19.5	4.2
16	Marriage leave	73.6	24.4	2	90.5	7.2	2.3
17	Study leave	50.5	46.3	3.2	81.2	15.2	3.6

(All figures in per cent)

METHODOLOGY

OUTLOOK BUSINESS and Avtar Career Creators commissioned the New Delhi-based Marketing and Development Research Associates (MDRA) to understand how employees in corporate India are balancing their work and life. The research was conducted across seven cities—Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune and Bangalore—with roughly equal representation from each city. MDRA used its unique sampling design based on its '3S' sampling criteria. The '3S' stands for size, spread and selection of respondents. The respondents have been selected on the basis of criteria allocated such as gender, management levels and industry sectors, among other things. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents by experienced and trained investigators of MDRA, through face-to-face interviews. The field survey was successfully conducted among 707 respondents from November 23 to December 7, 2009. Later on, 38 more responses were received by email. Almost half of the respondents (46%) were women. A majority belonged to the 29-38 years age bracket (45%) while the younger generation (19-28 years) made up about 32.6% of the respondents. Over 50% of the respondents were graduates while 21.5% had completed their masters. The survey covered sectors like FMCG, IT, ITES/BPO, consulting, telecom, travel and hospitality, retail, manufacturing, and BFSI, among others. The maximum representation (18.3% of the respondents) was from the BFSI sector. The annual compensation of those who were surveyed varied from up to Rs 2 lakh to above Rs 20 lakh. About 48.3% of the respondents were junior-level managers. Middle-level managers accounted for about 35% and senior-level managers made up 16.6%.

MDRA People Who Make the Difference