



TenStep Supplemental Paper

9 March 2007

Prayer Answered!

Life Map - an innovative solution to maintaining that elusive work-life balance

Key Learnings

- Maintaining employees' work-life balance has gone from merely being a motivational tool to recruiting criteria
- The success elements are health, wealth, wisdom and relationships
- A Life Map helps individuals define their 'Life satisfaction' goals and achieve them

Gone are the days of flexi timings and work-life balancing tools that could motivate employees. With stress levels rising, health problems increasing and families breaking up, recruits are proactively selecting organizations that allow them to balance their work and personal lives.

Success

“Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success” - Albert Schweitzer

“He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much” - Bessie Stanley

All of us have our individual perspectives of what success means. Greg Langston vaguely refers to four elements that matter:

Health

Refers to the physical and mental ability to be able to pursue success. Better health implies a better career.

Wisdom

In other words, mental agility. Corporate world appreciates innovation and creativity. Wisdom takes one closer to one's professional dreams

Wealth

Generally considered to be the sole criteria of success, wealth includes personal and professional assets. True success, though is difficult to attain if this is pursued too aggressively.

Relationships

Relationships lose out to 'wealth' at the workplaces. Personal or professional, relationships are important, and both must be nurtured with care.

'Unsuccessful' Success

Invariably, all organizations require maintaining a perfect work-life balance from their employees. If ignored, this problem rears up its head in the form of:

TenStep Supplemental Paper

- Employees' health issues: Stress related health issues afflict employees easily
- Low productivity: Dissatisfied employees have a low productivity
- High employee turnover: Retention becomes difficult and hiring costs rise with high turnover rates

'Successful' Success

Mark Hollingworth, director of the consulting firm 5i Strategic Affairs and author of *Growing People, Growing Companies*, speaks about Life Maps, in his essay, "Resolving the dilemma of work-life balance: Developing Life Maps" in the *Ivey Business Journal*. As a concept, a Life Map is similar to an organization's Strategic Map or Balanced score Cards, except that it is modeled to achieve 'individual' objectives. In Hollingworth's words it is a tool "which allows individuals to achieve their personal objectives and balance the work-life equation."

Attaining Success

An objective is defined and mapped on certain criteria, like a strategic map. The objective here is "Life satisfaction." The Life Map is constructed in the following sequence:

Step 1

Personal success and happiness objectives must first be defined. Such an objective definition puts an individual's life into perspective, and identifies the most important things in his life. However it is difficult to exactly identify these parameters of happiness. The following pointers could however help:

Identifying the 4Ls

4Ls or elements are considered to be essential for a satisfactory existence. They are 'Love', 'Live', 'Learn' and 'Legacy'. While 'Live' decides how much money is required for a decent living, 'Love' describes the kind of social and work environment that would satisfy us. 'Learn' expresses our next learning. 'Legacy' decides what one desires to create and leave behind. These four parameters could help define "Life Satisfaction."

Identifying developmental axes

The modern-age employee is conditioned to think of his success as dependant on only one axis - 'advancement at work.' However, other important factors such as emotional, spiritual, intellectual and physical growth are ignored in the process. When defining the Life Map, all these axes are considered. Based on these axes, a scale with the "ideal ranking" and the "present ranking" is created. The objective is to identify gaps and the bridge them through the Life Map.

The first step is an eye-opener for most. It reveals the vast discrepancy between society's definition of success and a personal definition. It also attributes most stress to incorrect prioritization.

Step 2

TenStep Supplemental Paper

Next, 'Relationship Objectives' need to be set. All the relationships and roles one plays in his life must be examined. This is because while identifying developmental axes, even these are ranked on a scale. Each role is ranked on a scale of one to ten, based on the quality of the relationship at present and what is desired. This scale answers questions like, "*Who are the most important people in our life?*" "*What should be done to improve these relationships?*" and most importantly, "*How willing are we to let go of our present lifestyle to cater to these relations?*" These questions require careful thought. It must lead to creation of "win-win relationships", where one balances all relationships perfectly. Professional relationships must not be ignored during this exercise.

Step 3

Inevitably, this is the most important stage of the Life Map. Corresponding to the Internal Processes aspect of the Scorecard, this stage of 'Self Management', reviews the areas which draw most of our time and energy. In the light of the new 'Life Satisfaction Objectives', our lifestyle must be reexamined. Time spent on activities which do not give us satisfaction must be curtailed.

Indeed this is also the trickiest stage to overcome. It is very difficult to forsake materialistic, tangible rewards that one has gotten used to, like overtime bonuses, performance incentives and other perks. However, these activities enhance our happiness quotient; they should be substituted.

Step 4

This step helps individuals in reaching their 'Learning Objectives.' The focus here is on growth and development, professional and personal. To bring back the much elusive balance into our lives, relaxing activities must be taken up. Gardening, learning a musical instrument, and participating in sports all fall into this category. However, objectives can also include professional development too. A course which will help in understanding a subject one is interested in, or will be useful in the future career, can be taken up.

Step 5

The 'Financial Independence' stage requires some thought, like all the other stages of employing 'Life Maps'. It calls for reflection on what really makes them happy and an honest view of is the finances needed to ensure it. The working, investing and spending habits must be revalued. It is difficult to forego a luxurious lifestyle; however, it is important to do so to achieve our 'Life Satisfaction' goals. After all, it is futile to spend money and time on activities that fail to satisfy us.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can also be used to achieve Life Satisfaction. They would aid the individual in laying down assessable targets and then calculating where the disparity lies.

Life Maps are the best tools to achieve an elusive work-life balance. They help one in a deeper self-analysis and in making better-informed professional and personal decisions. However, one must not be bogged down by issues like withdrawal symptoms, which are a part of giving up habitual activities.