

**Part 7**

You are going to read an article about work-life balance. For questions **44–53**, choose from the sections (**A–D**). The sections may be chosen more than once. Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

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**Which section mentions the following?**

involvement in decision-making leading to increased worker satisfaction **44**

a term that was once used to refer to an inadequate work-life balance **45**

a reduction in one business's expenditure caused by improved staff retention **46**

a recognition among some employees of the necessity for longer working hours **47**

changes in the world of work leading to competition between established and emerging companies **48**

the statutory regulation of work-life balance ideas **49**

certain staff benefits no longer being seen as adequate by potential employees **50**

a change in how work-life balance developments are generated **51**

a way of defining what work-life balance involves **52**

a theory as to what people require out of life **53**

## Issues arising out of the continuing work-life balance debate in the UK

### A

Here in the UK, the continuous pressure of work and the relentless pace of change is impacting on people. Hard. And some people have reached the point where they want their lives back or at least are questioning how they can balance their work obligations with their domestic responsibilities. This includes new recruits – employers also recognise that in the battle to attract talented people the tried and tested incentives of high salary, a medical plan and use of a company car will not pull in the high fliers any more. But what exactly does work-life balance cover? In the recent past, 'stress' was the word that best seemed to represent this general concern about too much work, too little life. Everyone understood it, since they experienced it at a personal level, but work-life balance has larger parameters. According to the Work Foundation, it is only achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is respected as the norm. So, for example, work-life balance also takes into account the contribution that people want to make to the world in which they live. It includes the recognition that people have to manage family life and it considers the impact that an excessive workload has on people's health.

### B

We can point to the psychologist, Abraham Maslow, as the inspiration behind the work-life balance phenomenon. Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' model posits five ascending levels of need, each stage of which has to be satisfied in turn before the individual can move onwards and upwards. So, at the base of the triangular model, individuals first have to satisfy their physical survival needs, while at the apex of the triangle, is the 'self-actualised' individual whose priorities are personal growth and fulfilment. Maslow's work fused with a trend that also affected the concerns about work-life balance. Having a job for life, which had been part of the bedrock values of traditional companies, simply could not be sustained by the dynamic marketplace of the 1990s and beyond. The old certainties evaporated, and employers realised that the new imperative was to ensure their employees became as innovative as the young entrepreneurs who were creating exciting new businesses of their own.

### C

The idea of a work-life balance has evolved over time. In the UK, there has been a long tradition of government-based initiatives that were its forerunners. However, with work-life balance as it exists today, the influence of some corporate role models has had the most impact. Consider Ben & Jerry's, the US ice-cream company. Since the 1980s, this firm has recognised that people wanted a different sort of work experience. It made a virtue out of donating 7.5 per cent of its pre-tax profits to philanthropy – an employee-led initiative. Engaging employees in such a way has helped both to improve motivation and drive innovation and productivity, making Ben & Jerry's into an extremely lucrative brand. A recent survey identified more than 100 varieties of similar work-life initiatives. However, it is clear that the most important variable in work-life balance is the nature of the job itself. People want jobs with autonomy, flexibility, meaning, managerial support as well as a chance for advancement.

### D

So, do work-life balance policies work? In the UK there has been little doubt that they have had a positive impact. British Telecom, for instance, used work-life balance initiatives both to draw more women into the workforce and to address the significant problem of losing staff. As a result, a staggering 98 per cent of women returned after maternity leave, saving the organisation a tidy sum in recruitment and training. Work-life balance is already a catch-all term for many different new policy developments and the list is still growing. Many employees know from direct experience that the world of work is changing. In a 24/7 society, they recognise that their customers expect service round-the-clock. And they also know that they have to juggle their home responsibilities while stretching their schedules to meet customer expectations. Employers know this too. Indeed, there is a raft of legal provisions governing work-life balance being driven by the European Union. And what the individual employee wants and the employer is set to deliver need not be in opposition.