

The meaning of work: The challenge of regaining employee engagement and reducing cynicism

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Abstract

Changes in the workplace have tended to significantly increase the demands placed on employees, often to the detriment of their health and personal life. As organizations have expected more from their workforce and have provided little in return other than simply a job or employability, it is perhaps not surprising that employee cynicism and mistrust have increased. This article is concerned with redressing the balance and the organizational need to recognize the meaning and emotional aspects of work.

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1. Introduction

Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life (Frankl, 1984)

The modern workplace continues to change at a radical and accelerated pace. Mainly in response to globalization and international competition, the last two decades has witnessed a significant increase in mergers and acquisitions alongside the delayering and downsizing of many organizations. Such forms of restructuring invariably have a negative impact on employees in terms of job losses, job uncertainty, ambiguity and heightened anxiety, which is not necessarily offset by any organizational benefits such as increased productivity and financial profits. Conservative estimates suggest that less than half of all mergers and acquisitions deliver the benefits anticipated by deal makers (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997) and less than one-third of downsized companies report increases in profits or stock prices in a subsequent three year period (Cascio, 1993; Morris, Cascio, & Young, 1999).

This has led some commentators (Herriot, 2001; Huczynski, 1993) to conclude that radical structural and programmatic change is of dubious benefit, even potentially dangerous (Davis & Powell, 1992), and is to some extent a matter of fashion or fad. Rather than becoming "fitter" and more prosperous, it is argued that over time leaner organizations simply become meaner (Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra, 1993; Herriot, 2001), as in the current climate, the organizations more likely to survive are the biggest rather than the fittest (Baum, 1996).

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At the same time, change in organizations has been driven by the increased utilization of information and communication technology, a rapid expansion in jobs in the service sector, outsourcing and a more flexible usage of labour (Kompier, 2005). This has occurred against a backdrop of widespread demographic and social change. In the UK, as in mainland Europe (Kompier, 2005), the workforce is aging to the extent that three out of ten workers are over 50 years of age (Dixon, 2003). The number of dual-earner couples and workers with care giving responsibilities has also increased significantly (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003) and 80% of European employers use non-permanent workers (Kompier, 2005).

As Western society has become more fragmented, there has been a breakdown of community and a growing culture of consumerism where commercial values increasingly dominate and continuing corporate scandals challenge the confidence and trust which shareholders, employees and customers now have in business leaders.

According to Herriot and Pemberton (1995), as a consequence new deals have arisen at work whereby employees are expected to work longer hours, take on greater responsibility, be more flexible and to tolerate continual change and ambiguity. It is argued that the resultant costs to the individual can be counted in terms of increased stress, poor health (Barling, Kelloway, & Frone, 2005) and work-family conflict (Bellavia & Frone, 2005). In return, employees may expect to receive higher pay levels, performance-linked rewards and simply 'a job' (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995). In contrast, the traditional deal, representing the workplace of twenty years ago, was characterized by employees offering loyalty, trust and commitment in exchange for job security, training and development, promotion and support from their employers. Whereas in the past, individuals expected employers to provide the opportunity for skills development which would lead to job advancement within their existing organization, they are now offered the chance to increase their "employability" and to become more entrepreneurial and pursue their own self-managed or boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). While some may have welcomed this new deal, for many these changes marking a reversal to a purely transactional employment contract (Rousseau, 1995) have provoked anger (Payne & Cooper, 2001) and a sense of loss due to the deterioration of mutual commitment and trust between the individual and the organization (Holbeche & Springett, 2004).

It is suggested that as a result of these changes in the workplace and society as a whole, individuals are becoming increasingly frustrated and disenchanted with work and instead are looking for the opportunity for greater self-expression and fulfillment (Bunting, 2004). For older workers, the option may be to withdraw from the labor market, whereas the remainder may choose to reduce their work effort, divert their energies elsewhere or reappraise their employment opportunities and job requirements. As those entering the workforce are typically better educated than those who leave (Kompier, 2005), evidence suggests that younger workers are increasingly questioning the nature and meaning of work. In a recent study of over 10,000 young people, Bibby (2001) sought to ascertain the characteristics which were considered to be critical to a "good job". It was found that respondents considered interesting work (86%), a feeling of accomplishment (76%), friendly and helpful colleagues (63%) and adding something to peoples' lives (59%) were as or more important than pay (66%) and job security (57%). It has been argued that the growing emphasis on the intrinsic aspect of work marks a shift from a materialistic to a post materialistic era and a rejection of individualistic cultural values, as people are seeking a greater sense of meaning and purpose in their extending working lives (Guevara & Ord, 1996).

For many years, it has been recognized that work fulfills a variety of individual needs other than financial (Warr, 1987). More recent studies (Chalofsky, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999) have consistently demonstrated that people rate purpose, fulfillment, autonomy, satisfaction, close working relationships and learning as more important than money. With the decline of neighborhoods, churches, civic groups and extended families in developed societies, the workplace is now being seen as a primary source of community and a place to feel connected (Conger, 1994). As the last twenty years have increasingly demanded that employees adapt to the changing needs of organizations, it is now perhaps appropriate to recognize and consider how organizations should respond to the changing needs of their employees.

2. The growth of employee cynicism

The changing nature of work and work organizations, particularly the breach and violation of the psychological contract. Is believed to have engendered a rise in employee cynicism and mistrust (Kramer, 1986; Pate et al., 2000). Employee cynicism has been described as characterized by negative attitudes of frustration, disillusionment, and contempt toward and distrust of business organizations, executives, managers and other objects in the workplace (Andersson, 1996; Dean et al., 1998). In a review article, Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998) define employee cynicism as "a negative attitude toward one's employing organization, comprising of three dimensions:

1. a belief that the organization lacks integrity
2. negative affect towards the organization; and
3. tendencies to exhibit disparaging and critical behaviors towards the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect.

Employee cynicism has been proposed as a new paradigm of employee–employer relations as a result of longer working hours, work intensification, ineffective leadership and management, new deals in the workplace and the continual downsizing and delayering of organizations (Bunting, 2004; Feldman, 2000).

Stress research has demonstrated that cynicism is closely associated with the workplace problem of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Burnout is a psychological syndrome that involves a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors and leads to poor job performance, withdrawal behaviors and poor mental health and is the negative antithesis of job engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Burnout is conceptualized as consisting of three dimensions namely exhaustion, cynicism (or depersonalization) and inefficacy or the experience of reduced personal accomplishment. Cynicism, as a means of creating defensive cognitive distance, is regarded as a defensive coping response to exhaustion (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach & Leiter, 2005).

Several researchers have examined employee cynicism within the framework of the psychological contract (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Herriot, 2001). Andersson (1996) states that violations which result in employee cynicism fall into three categories namely:

1. characteristics of the business environment e.g. lack of alignment between policies and practices, unethical behavior and corporate social responsibility and inequitable compensations policies
2. characteristics of the organization e.g. poor communication, management incompetency in change implementation, lack of employee involvement
3. the nature of the job e.g. role conflict, role ambiguity and work overload.

She concluded that contemporary workplaces provide ample cause for cynicism among its employees, especially as economic and extrinsic business rewards are often put ahead of employee well-being.

In a subsequent study, Andersson and Bateman (1997) found a significant relationship between cynicism and a reduction in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and increased compliance with unethical requests.

Herriot (2001) suggests that the growth in employee cynicism is unsurprising given the gap between managerial rhetoric and reality and highlights three areas where these gaps are obvious. Firstly, there is the rhetoric of empowerment which emphasizes that individuals can expect more autonomy when in reality they are increasingly expected to be compliant, to stick rigidly to the rules and be closely monitored and controlled as in many service occupations such as call center environments. Secondly, organizations increasingly employ the rhetoric of equity and justice which emphasizes fair treatment and a single and favorable employment relationship for all when in reality employees are expected to accept differences and that some individuals e.g. part-timers, contingent workers may be treated less well than others. Finally, there is the managerial rhetoric which surrounds change, as being necessary, evolutionary and rational and which emphasizes the opportunities for employees to learn and increase their employability when in reality such initiatives are often mere play acting (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996) and the outcomes are more likely to mean more work for the same rewards.

3. Meaning in the workplace

According to Havener (1999), organizations need to address and understand the deeper needs of employees in order to retain them and keep them motivated as “talented people demand meaningful work...deny it, they leave” (p.1). Whereas there is no widely agreed definition of meaning in the workplace, Baumeister and Vohs (2002) state that the essence of meaning is “connection” and is linked to positive outcomes for both the individual and the organization including improvements in organizational performance (Neck & Milliman, 1994), retention of key employees, effective management of change, and greater organizational commitment and employee engagement (Holbeche & Springett, 2004; Milliman et al., 2003). In contrast a lack of experienced meaning in the workplace has been linked to negative outcomes, in particular employee cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Holbeche & Springett, 2004). Whereas life is characterized by ongoing change and anxiety (Pahl, 1994), meaning is regarded as a tool for imposing stability.

Pahl (1994) argues that the late 20th century marked the beginning of a new age of anxiety in which the meaning of success has become more elusive and where people are seeking a new balance between work, family and other obligations. He outlines five main areas, namely love, work, religion, drugs and place (e.g. home and community) that people escape to in order to reduce their anxiety. As individuals are spending more and more time at work, they are also turning to work as a focal area in providing meaning, stability and a sense of community and identity in their lives (Hoar, 2004; Holbeche & Springett, 2004). A lack of meaning in the workplace has been considered responsible for the new phenomenon termed the “Quarter Life Crisis” (Robbins & Wilner, 2001) whereby young people between the ages of 25 and 35 are becoming increasingly disillusioned with their jobs and are consequently leaving them for more successful and fulfilling careers.

Baumeister (1991) claims that the search for meaning is driven by four needs. Individuals need:

1. a sense of purpose
2. a set of values to provide a sense of ‘goodness’ and positivity to life and as a means of justification for action
3. a sense of efficacy; and
4. a sense of self-worth.

Whilst work may satisfy three of these needs, it often fails to offer people a reliable and convincing set of values. Chalofsky (2003) has developed a construct of meaningful work that focuses on the alignment between an individual’s competencies, values and purpose and is closely linked to the concept of intrinsic motivation. His construct consists of three themes relating to a sense of self, the work itself and a sense of balance which contribute to create an “integrated wholeness” (Fig. 1).

Emotions are a central element to the notion of self and are strongly linked to motivation, behavior (Stanley & Burrows, 2005) and psychological health (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Following more than 70 years of research into the workplace correlates of job satisfaction, evidence has consistently shown that the link between performance and satisfaction is rather weak. Renewed interest in the role of emotions and affect at work has highlighted that how people feel about themselves, about their work, and others around them may also be important to their work performance. Meaning represents the inter-relationship between the internal world of the individual and the external context of the workplace. In their search for meaning, individuals are thought to organize experiences around three central questions:

1. Where do I belong?
2. How do I connect and relate to others? And
3. What is my value...contribution to others?

The concept of meaningful work, an important element in self-identity and self-worth, also reflects the growing interest in the field of positive psychology which emphasizes the need to focus on actively developing the positive aspects of life and work rather than just attempting to identify and address the negative aspects (Seligman, 2002a). Importantly, Seligman (2002b) differentiates between living a pleasant life, a good life and a meaningful life. He

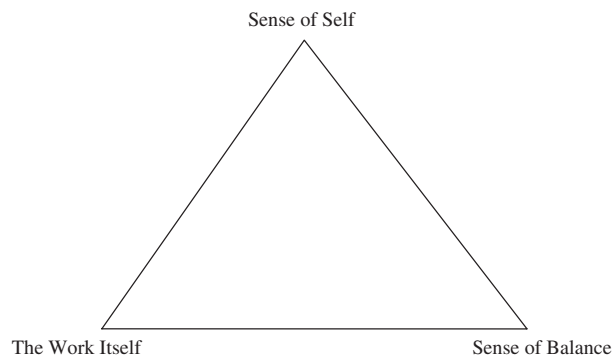


Fig. 1. Meaningful Work: an integrative framework.

regards the pleasant life, which is reflected in sensual pleasures (e.g. material wealth) as the lowest state of happiness, closely followed by the good life, associated with enjoying something we are good at, with a meaningful life providing the highest level of attainment and most lasting form of happiness. According to Seligman (2002b), a meaningful life is concerned with doing something one believes in (e.g. has meaning and value). Such ideas date back to Aristotle and the notion of eudemonia, a form of happiness achieved by living virtuously and attaining goals that have intrinsic merit.

4. Traditional theories of work motivation

Chalofsky (2003) emphasizes the centrality of the job itself as a source of meaning in the workplace and so reinforces the continuing importance of traditional theories of work motivation (e.g. Herzberg, 1966), job design (e.g. Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980) and the work environment (e.g. Warr, 1987). Turner et al. (2002) have similarly stressed the relevance of designing jobs which encourage employees to actively engage in their tasks and work environments in order to gain meaningfulness from their work.

Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980) emphasize that jobs should be designed which provide skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback on results. Warr's Vitamin Model (Warr, 1987) outlines the key features of the work environment associated with employee well-being. As well as opportunities to exercise personal control, use skills, variety, money, goals, supportive supervision and physical security, Warr considers that employees need to have environmental clarity, opportunity for interpersonal clarity and a valued social position. A valued social position relates to having a job which is perceived to be meaningful both personally and by others.

However, there are other, less considered, ways in which the experience of work can be enhanced by increasing employee engagement (Kahn, 1990) and reducing employee cynicism (Dean et al., 1998) which will now be discussed.

5. The social dimension of work

Boverie and Kroth (2001) argue for the importance of developing work environments that are humane, challenging and rewarding and where people feel passionate and energized by their work. Energy has been defined as "a type of positive arousal which people can experience as emotion — short responses to specific events, or mood — longer lasting affective states that need not be a response to a specific event" (Quinn & Dutton, 2005). For Maslach and Leiter (2005), energy is the outcome of positive employee engagement. According to Cross et al. (2003) organizations benefit from positive dynamics and an energized workforce because employees work well together, relationships are supportive, inspiring and information is freely shared. Furthermore, they assert that energy can be an internal characteristic of the individual, derived from the job itself or 'caught' from the energizing influence of others.

Passion is conceptualized as consisting of two elements (the job of working i.e. work is fun, exciting and enjoyable and the meaningfulness of work i.e. work is viewed as important and makes a difference (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). One aspect of developing passion in the workplace is by providing a nurturing environment and a sense of community (Boverie & Kroth, 2001) whereby individuals are attracted by the social affiliations and meaning that work provides (Hodson, 2004). The social needs of employees for friendship and support were identified many years ago (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939), yet the changing nature of work has contributed to erode the opportunity to socially connect with others. Factors such as increased work demands and time pressures, an increase in remote working, greater reliance on electronic communication, even within centralized office environments and the physical design of workplaces, e.g. call centers (Donald, 2001) have contributed to reduce the quality and quantity of interpersonal communication. The importance of interpersonal relationships and social support are well recognized in the stress and well-being literature (Cooper, 2005) and have been incorporated into workplace health legislation in several European countries (Levi, 2005). However, the role of promoting social interaction as a means of creating identity and meaning has become neglected by organizations perhaps because socializing is viewed to be a distraction from work. The results from a survey of the top 50 rated employers in the UK (Sunday Times, 2001), which included highly profitable companies, such as Microsoft and Capital One (Newell, 2002) found that 91% of employees described their company as a friendly place to work that went to great lengths to provide opportunities for interaction and socializing amongst its employees. As Herriot (2001) points out, emotions are an extremely important element in the formation and expression of self. As emotions are dependent and activated by social relationships, the social dimension of work should be given greater acknowledgement.

6. Alignment with personal values

According to recent studies (Collins & Porras, 1994; Miller & Skidmore, 2004), there is growing pressure from individuals who want their work to be more aligned with their personal values. Thomas (1990) provides further support in highlighting that one of the most important factors prompting career change is the quest for meaningful work which provides a greater fit with personal values. Senior managers exert a lot of effort into promoting and socializing the values of the organization into employees (Anderson & Ostroff, 1998), yet employees have relatively few resources with which to resist this pressure and re-affirm themselves (Ackroyd & Thomson, 1998). There are very few organizations that do not include integrity amongst their espoused core values, yet as Herriot (2001) has suggested, their behaviors are not consistent with the rhetoric. Consequently not unexpectedly, employees express anger towards rather than derive pride in their organization's stated values.

Warr (1987) has highlighted that an employee's assessment of their job, corporate brand, product or service they provide affects their self-esteem and perceptions of the meaningfulness of their job. Corporate image can matter a great deal to an employee as it represents their assessment of what characteristics others are likely to ascribe to them because they work for a particular organization.

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) believe that the relationship between an employee's sense of their organizational identity and corporate image and their own sense of who they are and what they stand for suggests a very personal connection between organizational action and employee motivation.

Riordan, Gatewood, and Bill (1997) define corporate image as 'an individual's perceptions about the actions, activities and accomplishments of an organization' and are critical to stakeholders. In a study examining how employees regarded their organization's external image (Riordan et al., 1997), they found that high regard correlated with increased job satisfaction and less intention to quit. A positive corporate image has also been linked with the ability to attract a high caliber of job applicants (Fombrum & Stanley, 1990; Lemmink et al., 2003).

Corporate image is affected not just by the financial performance of a company but also by its impact on the environment and on social justice; what has been termed "the triple bottom line" (Elkington, 1997). Scandals such as the Ford Pinto case in the 1970s, the Maxwell pensions fraud in the early 1990s and more recently the financial misrepresentations made by AOL/Time Warner and Parmalat emphasize the harmful effect that unethical behavior can have on the wider community and devalue the virtue, honesty and meaning of work.

Holbeche (2004) considers that many employees increasingly want to work for ethical organizations that actively live out their values and where managers "walk the talk" on policies and practices. Additionally, Miller and Skidmore (2004) claim that if mission statements and corporate social responsibility policies fail to have authenticity and practical application, this will result in a cynical, unmotivated and uncommitted workforce. According to Steer (2005) this means that corporate integrity should be much more than a core value on a mission statement and that more organizations need to publish clear codes of conduct and invest in ethics training. Although Friedman (1993) argued that the only social responsibility business organizations have is to use their resources to maximize profits in any way they can so long as they stay within the law, this view is now increasingly being challenged. In contrast, many consider that organizations also have a responsibility to get involved in community affairs and to alleviate social problems, which they often play a part in creating (Matthews, 1988; Newell, 2002). As organizations such as The Body Shop, through the rejection of animal testing etc, have demonstrated, social and environmental responsibility can co-exist with, and possibly improve, financial performance.

Spirituality and meaning are terms that are often used interchangeably in relation to an individual's search for self-fulfillment, meaning and purpose in life. Spirituality may have connotations of religion but in fact is connected to personal values and a desire to make a difference and create a meaningful world (Kinjerski & Skrypnik, 2004; Neck & Milliman, 1994) and so achieve "a sort of immortality" (Handy, 1998) by what is left behind. Among others (Pfeffer, 2003), a spiritual workplace is considered to be characterized by the harmonization of an individual's work role with their personal values and has been associated with increased organizational commitment, greater job involvement and work satisfaction and a greater propensity to remain in an organization (Milliman et al., 2003).

While some jobs by their intrinsic nature, e.g. doctors and healthcare professionals, provide a greater opportunity to make a difference in the world than others, organizations can help individuals achieve a sense of meaning and immortality by actively supporting and encouraging employees to become involved in community work and/or donating a percentage of their profits to charity. Secondments and career break schemes can also assist employees to engage in activities which provide meaning and the opportunity to make a difference in their lives and that of others.

7. Trust in leadership and management

Several researchers (Herriot, 2001; Holbeche & Springett, 2004) suggest that meaning in the workplace is closely linked to trust and integrity. Trust has been defined as “one’s expectations, assumptions or beliefs about the likelihood that another’s future actions will be beneficial, or at least not detrimental to one’s interests” (Robinson, 1996). It has been suggested that change initiatives frequently fail due to mistrust because organizations do not provide employees with a meaningful framework to understand and justify the proposed changes (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Trust is recognized to be an integral part of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995). There are two types of psychological contract; transactional contracts relating to a fixed term exchange (e.g. financial rewards) and relational contracts linked to open-ended relationships, characterized by emotional exchange (e.g. personal growth and development). In order to re-engage employees in this age of anxiety in which an estimated 6% of the workforce are unemployed, 25% are underemployed and one third worry about losing their job in the future, there is a need to return to more relational contracts where mutual commitment is built over time and is dependent on promises being honored and trust earned, not induced (Chalofsky, 2003; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995).

The development of trust and meaning in the workplace is a major responsibility of leadership (Andersson, 1996; Flade, 2003) in that it has the potential to increase the closeness that individuals feel towards their work (Boverie and Kroth, 2001). Poor or ineffective leadership has consistently been found to result in stress and poor mental health (Kelloway et al., 2005) and has emphasized the need for leaders and managers to act as role models, show a visible personal commitment and an orientation towards deeds not words (Konz and Ryan, 1999). A point re-echoed by Herriot (2001) that in order to restore trust management needs to demonstrate by its actions that it habitually does what it says it is going to do.

In addition, it is argued that leaders need to demonstrate greater transparency in the way information is shared and to treat employees like adults (Holbeche and Springett, 2004). As Herriot (2001) observes, recourse to the familial metaphor in organizations is inappropriate in circumstances where the offspring or employees are treated differently and unfairly but are expected to suppress their anger. As in any dysfunctional parent–child relationship, such behavior demonstrates a lack of emotional literacy and leads to deep-seated resentments and alienation (Sawaf et al., 2001).

Emergent interest in emotions in the workplace and the concept of emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 1999; Goleman, 1998) has emphasized that leadership need to do more listening and responding to their employees (Sawaf et al., 2001). Emotional intelligence has been shown to be closely associated with transformational leadership (Barling et al., 2000), considered to be essential for effective change management. As Herriot (2001) suggests the growth in employee cynicism and mistrust is not inevitable if organizational leaders manage with intelligence and concern for the emotional consequences of their actions. Whereas in the past, employees were expected to leave their emotions behind when they entered the workplace, an attitude based on denial and idealism (Sawaf et al., 2001), this is now recognized to be inconsistent with the template of an emotionally fit and healthy society. Investment in emotional intelligence training is a potentially effective way of improving leadership behaviors and providing employees with role models that they are more likely to trust (Cartwright and Cooper, 2005). Zohar and Marshall (2000) have proposed an alternative form of intelligence called Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) which relates specifically to the ability to address and solve problems of meaning and value. SQ is considered to be closely related to the concept of servant leadership developed by Greenleaf (1997) whereby the leader takes care to ensure the priority needs of others are being served so that they can grow as individuals.

According to Avolio and Gardner (2005) contemporary leadership requires a focus on restoring confidence, hope and optimism at work, which also enables individuals to display resilience and to bounce back after disastrous events and actively helps individuals in their search for meaning and connection. This type of leadership has been termed Authentic Leadership and emphasizes the importance of developing transparent, trusting and genuine relationships. Quinn (2005) articulates the likely requirements of effective contemporary leadership as being:

1. increased honesty about what meaningful results leaders want to create
2. the display of behaviors which are congruent with their inner core values this increasing integrity, authenticity and confidence
3. acting in a way which puts the needs of the organization as a whole above their own, resulting in greater trust and an enriched sense of community
4. more adaptive and creative in response to wider external influences and less inclined towards followship relative to other organizational leadership.

8. A sense of balance

As well as participating in work which represents a satisfactory balance between individual needs and values, individuals are increasingly seeking a job which enables them to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance. Long working hours and increased use of technology which enables employees to work anywhere and any time has meant that the physical and temporal boundaries of work have changed to the extent that work increasingly infringes on personal and family life. Greater job security, increased social support and the existence of family friendly policies have been shown to reduce the incidence of work-family conflict (Barling et al., 2005; Cooper, 2005). However, more importantly, organizations need to create a culture which makes low demands for working outside of regular hours and respects family commitments and personal non-work time. This means ensuring that those who utilize family friendly policies do not experience adverse career consequences (Bellavia & Frone, 2005) and that individuals are encouraged to take their full holiday entitlement.

9. Conclusion

According to a recent survey (Flade, 2003) over 80% of the UK workforce are currently lacking any real commitment in their jobs. More than a decade ago, Peters (1994) recognized that there was a huge potential reserve of energy and commitment in organizations which could be released by making “meaning for people” and highlighted the fact that people desperately need meaning in their lives and will sacrifice a great deal to institutions that will provide this meaning for them. It would seem that this call was largely ignored as we have plunged even deeper into the age of anxiety and the growth of employee cynicism. As individuals become increasingly disenchanting and disillusioned with work and fatigued by the constant demand to change and to be flexible in response to organizational needs, employers now need to actively restore the balance, recognize the meaning and emotional aspects of work and move towards creating a more energized, fulfilled and engaged workforce. This means not only maintaining a sense of balance between needs and values relating to work but also ensuring a wider work-life balance.

It seems apposite to close with an insightful observation made over thirty years ago:

“Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, in short for a sort of life rather than a Monday to Friday sort of dying” (Terkel, 1972).

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