



WHITE PAPER

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND HOME

Creating a Law Firm that Offers the Best of Both Worlds



the answer company™
THOMSON REUTERS®

It's easy to dismiss the idea of work/life balance.

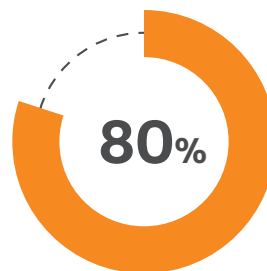
It's a common notion that the only way to find success in the legal industry is to live and breathe the law. Impending deadlines, increasing client demands and the pressure to keep up with evolving technology often means putting home life on the backburner.

But as Baby Boomers continue to retire and Generation Xers and Millennials saturate the workforce, many lawyers are bringing a new definition of professional success to the table – prioritizing flexible schedules over long hours, a wealth of experiences over a sizeable paycheck. A balance that used to be unusual is now the difference between a firm retaining top talent and one that's likely to lose them to the competitor down the road.

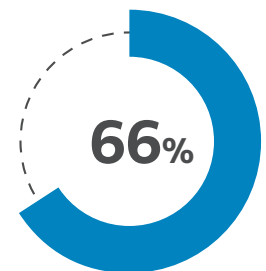
In fact, according to the Thomson Reuters Legal Executive Institute's 2018 State of U.S. Small Law Firms Report, 80 percent of firms agree that work/life balance is an important measure of success, yet an extraordinary 66 percent report that their efforts in this area remained the same or got somewhat worse within the last 12 months.

While it's clear the expectation for balance is here to stay, law firms still struggle with providing a healthy relationship between home and the office. And the time that could be spent outside of work is often being consumed by tedious administrative tasks and efforts to grow the firm, eating away at any opportunity to even the scales. What's more, 27 percent of small law firms reveal they have done

An Unmet Challenge



work/life balance is an important measure of success



efforts in this area remained the same or got somewhat worse

nothing to confront these growing challenges, remaining complacent in their efforts to make a change.

Failing to address this growing desire can mean maxed-out workers, potential for higher turnover and unmet expectations. It's time for firms that are struggling to create this kind of culture to take control and offer the balance sorely needed in the legal industry.

A SYMPTOM OF IMBALANCE

Just like a car stops working when it runs out of fuel, people can only give so much before they burn out.

The high stress and grueling hours that come with being an lawyer means burnout is especially common in the legal profession. Nowadays, clients are demanding more bang for their buck, pushing lawyers to meet aggressive deadlines while offering few added incentives.

And the demands don't stop there. Outside of practicing law, many lawyers are spending up to 40 percent of their workday handling tasks such as managing finances, marketing the firm and improving business development efforts. An overwhelming 72 percent of small law firms say spending too much time on administrative tasks is a significant or moderate challenge for them.

This always on, never enough mentality ends up resulting in significant consequences to employee longevity. The 2017 Update on Association Attrition Report found that 44 percent of associates are leaving firms after being there for just three years. And the primary reasons for their departure? Intense demands, a toxic culture and, as expected, a lack of work/life balance.

PREPARING FOR A NEW BALLGAME

When broaching the subject of work/life balance, a particular group can't be ignored. Perhaps the most talked about generation of all time, Millennials are changing the way business is getting done. And law firms would be wise to adjust to their expectations.

In 2017, more than one-third of the American workforce was made up of Millennials, surpassing both Generation Xers and Baby Boomers by an incredible margin. And according to a survey conducted by Cushman & Wakefield's global business consulting group, it's estimated that more than 50 percent of practicing U.S. lawyers will be comprised of Millennials by 2025.

This generation of lawyers is bringing along big expectations and differing priorities, including ones that aren't attached to a price tag. In fact, according to the Thomson Reuters Legal Department 2025 Series, 50 percent of Millennial lawyers say they would change jobs if it meant more balance between their personal and professional lives.



It's estimated that half of all practicing U.S. lawyers will be comprised of Millennials by 2025

Seasoned firm leaders characteristically take a more traditional approach to work, tying success to long hours and time spent in the office. Millennials, however, find a healthy relationship between home and work most valuable, with 58 percent of lawyers stating that work/life balance is the

biggest difference among lawyers of different generations. One lawyer respondent from the State of Small Law Report notes, “there is a massive disconnect between the younger generation and firm partners.”

What matters most to Millennial lawyers is an ability to work faster and smarter, looking at technology to help them work more efficiently. They are the first generation to grow up with access to a wealth of information at their fingertips, meaning they aren’t just comfortable with technology – they expect it. Firms that acknowledge and meet these needs by providing the latest software, accessible communication tools and automated processes are the ones successfully capturing the attention of these lawyers.

Unfortunately, this is causing the generational gap to widen even more, with 66 percent of lawyers reporting that technology skills and knowledge is a challenge between generations. A firm that is not working to bridge this gap and deliver on these expectations only means losing its ability to appeal to this new pool of talent.

MAKING BALANCE A REALITY

Simply put, work/life balance is no longer a wish-list item. For firms to remain a viable choice for top lawyers, balance must be a tool in their arsenal of resources to improve the well-being of employees and the office as a whole.

Aside from the individual benefits, making it a priority can also save money in the long run. According to the Harvard Business Review, the

psychological and physical problems of burned-out workers in the U.S. costs organizations an estimated \$125 billion to \$190 billion a year. A lawyer from the State of Small Law Report explains, “The hiring of each new lawyer is a five-year process, and each mistake – including lawyers who leave for personal reasons unrelated to their ability – has a dramatic impact on the firm.”



While work will always need to be done and deadlines will always need to be met, there are opportunities for firms to incorporate balance into their culture for a healthier, happier future.

Legal Solutions and Innovation

It’s common to think of technology as a barrier to positive work/life balance. But in reality, firms that rely on cloud software are opening up an entirely mobile way of working, promoting a more nimble and efficient way to practice law.

These app-based or web browser services, Google Docs and OneDrive for example, not only eliminate the need to be physically present to be productive, but allow lawyers the ability to collaborate and communicate in real time. Product liability lawyer [Rob Sullivan](#) shares, “I don’t use paper; I just need my iPad. It has everything from trial presentation software to deposition review software on it.”

The affordability, accessibility and security that cloud platforms provide strips away the need for complicated server hardware, software downloads or outside help typically unavailable for smaller firms.

While late nights and weekends spent working are inevitable in the business of law, firms are now using

these advancements in technology to provide lawyers with the ability to accomplish the job anywhere. Video conferencing, instant messaging and web-based applications offer the flexibility to work, communicate with clients and collaborate with coworkers from any location.



This is helping criminal defense lawyer NiaLena Caravasos play interference between her home life and the office. “Just the other day, I woke up to an email from a prospect who was desperate for help,” she shares. “It only took me a few minutes to answer and I was able to refer him to a colleague. If I ended up letting things like that pile up, it would take me much longer to deal with issues and end up having more of an impact on my life.”

Technology is also opening up a new way of working, with many firms moving to an entirely paperless office. Instead of sifting through mountains of paperwork, firms are able to efficiently organize their practice online with just a few taps of a keyboard. What’s more, new lawyers are now expecting their workplace to provide the most up-to-date technology. To keep up, many firms are finding value in using the proficiency of younger associates who are comfortable with technology to implement cutting-edge tools to help them work more efficiently.

Consider Technology

Lawyers are using technology to work more strategically, freeing up their day to take on more fulfilling (and lucrative) work.

In the case of Sullivan, it’s imperative he stay efficient in his research because he’s often up against bigger teams. “If we’re not extremely efficient with our time and don’t know the case better than the other side, you’ll be bullied into making bad decisions.”

“We have to be 100 times more efficient and know the case 100 times better because we have so many eyes looking at us.”

Be Flexible

One of the biggest misconceptions around work/life balance is that it compromises productivity. In reality, it can actually significantly – and positively – impact a firm’s bottom line.

The Corporate Executive Board representing 80 percent of Fortune 500 companies found that employees who felt they had good work/life balance worked 21 percent harder than others. This same concept holds true for small law firms as well. Increased lawyer satisfaction can also drastically improve office engagement.

When people feel trusted and empowered to work in their own way, motivation and loyalty tends to trend up. Perhaps that’s why people who have a good work/life balance are 10 percent more likely to stay at their companies than those who don’t, according to employee engagement platformTINYpulse.

Options such as working remotely, four-day work weeks and job-share opportunities not only help boost morale and promote healthier employees, but allow lawyers the chance to get things done that would otherwise interfere with their work schedules. This flexibility can be especially appealing to working parents, lawyers in the office looking to continue their education or people with other responsibilities that require time away from the office.

GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT

The results are in – lawyers yearning for work/life balance is not a myth.

Year after year, the ability to find that balance between personal and professional life is continuing to be a bigger priority for the workforce. The firms that are successfully introducing a more balanced culture are positioned to see more positive results, oftentimes improving lawyer engagement and loyalty all while decreasing the threat of turnover and weakened morale.

The immunity law firms had from this kind of balance is now gone. To create a powerful impact on performance and overall health, a firm must reimagine how they're doing business. Simple shifts in mindset are leading to greater results, helping strike the balance between the happiness of lawyers and the success of a firm.

thomsonreuters.ca

For more information, contact
Thomson Reuters at **1-866-609-5811**

The intelligence, technology and human expertise
you need to find trusted answers.



the answer company™
THOMSON REUTERS®