

Attorney Health & Wellness: Overcoming the Challenges of COVID-19 Remote Work When your Law Firm Workload Requires Terrible Hours and Weekends

Remote work has successfully met many of the unique challenges brought about by COVID-19. But these working arrangements have also come along with their own obstacles for attorneys. Among those drawbacks are the risk of overworking and a lack of work-life balance. Even when working from home, too many work hours can lead to burn-out and increased work-related stress.

A healthy work-life balance is a must, particularly at such a challenging time in the world. But what do you do when your law firm expects a workload that cannot be accomplished within the confines of a reasonable workday? How do you manage those expectations while also protecting yourself from the dangers of overworking?

When working from home, it can be challenging to maintain a separation between your job and personal life. That's why it's important to establish clear boundaries between the hours that you will focus on your work responsibilities and the hours that you will reserve for family and home. The work is right there within arm's reach at all time, so it can be tempting to sneak in a few hours here and there. But these small concessions can quickly evolve into a situation where you are spending all of your evenings and weekends working.

If you've been working too many hours, you may find yourself constantly thinking about work, abandoning your normal routines to finish one more task, or feeling overwhelmed with work responsibilities. All of this can cause

tension within yourself and your personal relationships, along with stress and even medical complications.

This post will provide some tips and strategies that attorneys can use when working remotely to address the dangers of overworking and promote personal wellness.

Focus on You

The first step to creating a better work-life balance is taking a look at yourself, how you are feeling, and what you need to thrive. It may sound overly simple, but your emotions and mental space tell a lot about where improvements are needed. Try to clear your mind and change your perspective every once in a while. Start the mornings with meditation or take a lunchtime walk. Reclaim a weekend for a road trip or just spend a movie night with the family.

It can be easy to fall into a rut when you are inundated with overwhelming work responsibilities. Focus on yourself sometimes and take steps to recharge. When you feel more energized and joyful, you will also be more productive in your work life.

Identify Roadblocks

Identify what is and is not currently working in your remote work arrangement. For example, is a lack of adequate workspace keeping you disorganized? Perhaps you don't have the right technology to complete tasks in an efficient manner. Not having the right resources is more than just annoying. It can keep you from handling job duties in an effective manner, which can leave you feeling frustrated and mentally exhausted.

Make a list of what you need to properly handle your work tasks in a timely manner. Then, approach your law firm supervisor with your concerns and requests. If you are going to make technology suggestions, do some research to help the decision-making process move more quickly. For

example, TimeSolv legal billing software offers the tools for quick and easy time tracking even when working remotely.

Plan Your Day and Stick to the Plan

A successful remote work arrangement must include an actionable plan. Plan your day to include what time you will begin working and what time you will end. Even if that entails a 10-hour workday, plan it out so that your 10-hour day doesn't morph into a 12-hour day. Planning your day gives your mind a structured view of the tasks ahead. It helps you feel more organized and in control of your work hours.

Once you establish a schedule, stick with it. Don't be tempted to spend an extra 20 minutes here or an extra hour there. Opening that door can lead to far too many work hours. Now, some client matters will require longer hours and demand more of your time. That is completely understandable and to be expected. But when every single day becomes consumed with nothing but work, there is a problem. Repeatedly working an excessive number of hours can make you feel completely overwhelmed.

Have the Difficult Conversations

This may be the hardest strategy to implement, but your mental and physical wellness is worth it. If you are consistently feeling overwhelmed by the expectations of your firm, consider having a conversation with firm leaders. Let them know that you are experiencing challenges and explore possible modifications to your schedule. Perhaps you can secure some assistance from a support staff member, or maybe your caseload can be tweaked to utilize your expertise and skills in a more efficient manner.

Think about potential strategies that meet your needs, as well as the needs of the firm. Your work schedule doesn't have to be an all or nothing situation, especially if both sides are open to compromise.

These conversations should happen with your family as well. Work tasks often extend into the evenings and weekends because regular actual work hours are being consumed with personal tasks or family interruptions. Set boundaries with the members of your household to manage disruptions to your workday.

Avoid Multitasking

The ability to multitask is highly regarded within a professional environment, but recent research suggests that multitasking can actually prove more disruptive than efficient. But doing too much at once can cause you to get less done and experience greater amounts of stress. It becomes an endless cycle that drains your energy.

Instead, focus on one task at a time. Give each task your entire attention to the exclusion of everything else. It will keep your mind clearer and allow you to dedicate more of your mental capacity to the task at hand. Focus leads to greater productivity and greater productivity can lead to a better work-life balance.

A Healthy Routine is Key to Overcoming the Challenges of Remote Work

The remote work environment of COVID-19 requires structure and routine – especially when working for a demanding law firm. With these strategies, you can establish a healthy work routine that allows you to meet your professional responsibilities while preserving your personal time and meeting your needs.

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