

Mental Health Series – Work from home policies

For attorneys, a major aspect of mental health is a proper balance between work and life. You've heard the stories of associates chained to their desks by unattainable billable hour demands. You may even be one of them. Study after study has shown that this type of work environment is detrimental to the mental and physical health of these lawyers.

One way to promote work/life balance is to offer remote work opportunities. What was once looked down upon in the legal community is now making its way to the most prestigious law firms in the country.

Why work from home

Research shows that employees who work from home are happier and healthier. These arrangements provide a break from stressful commutes and allow the employer more time to spend with family and friends. There is also evidence to suggest that employees make healthier life decisions when working from home, including eating balanced meals and exercising more.

Don't worry though, employees are not the only ones benefitting from work at home arrangements. Happy employees are loyal employees, which translates into less turnover and the associated costs. Research also suggests increased productivity among remote employees, making your law practice more efficient and potentially more profitable.

Implementing a policy that works

When considering a work from home strategy for your practice, remember that one size does not fit all. Take the time to tailor a plan that fits the culture and specific needs of your firm. An article by [Above The Law](#)

discusses the recent implementation of a remote work program by mega law firm, Shearman and Sterling. They allow their workers to work from home two days each month. I know. I know. That doesn't seem like much, but it's better than nothing and a step in the right direction.

In implementing its policy, the firm laid out the following guidelines:

- The attorney must be in good standing
- The attorney cannot be physically needed in the office on the day they choose to work from home
- The attorneys must notify their teams and supervisors in advance
- The attorney must actively work and "not just check email on a personal device"

The firm also explicitly states its expectation that associates will bill the same number of hours as they would working within the office.

This is a great example of how you can make a work from home policy work for your practice. You may decide that support staff is too essential to the workplace to work remotely. You may also choose to assign specific days, instead of allowing employees to come up with their own. Plus, there's the biggest benefit of all. You get to work from home too!

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.