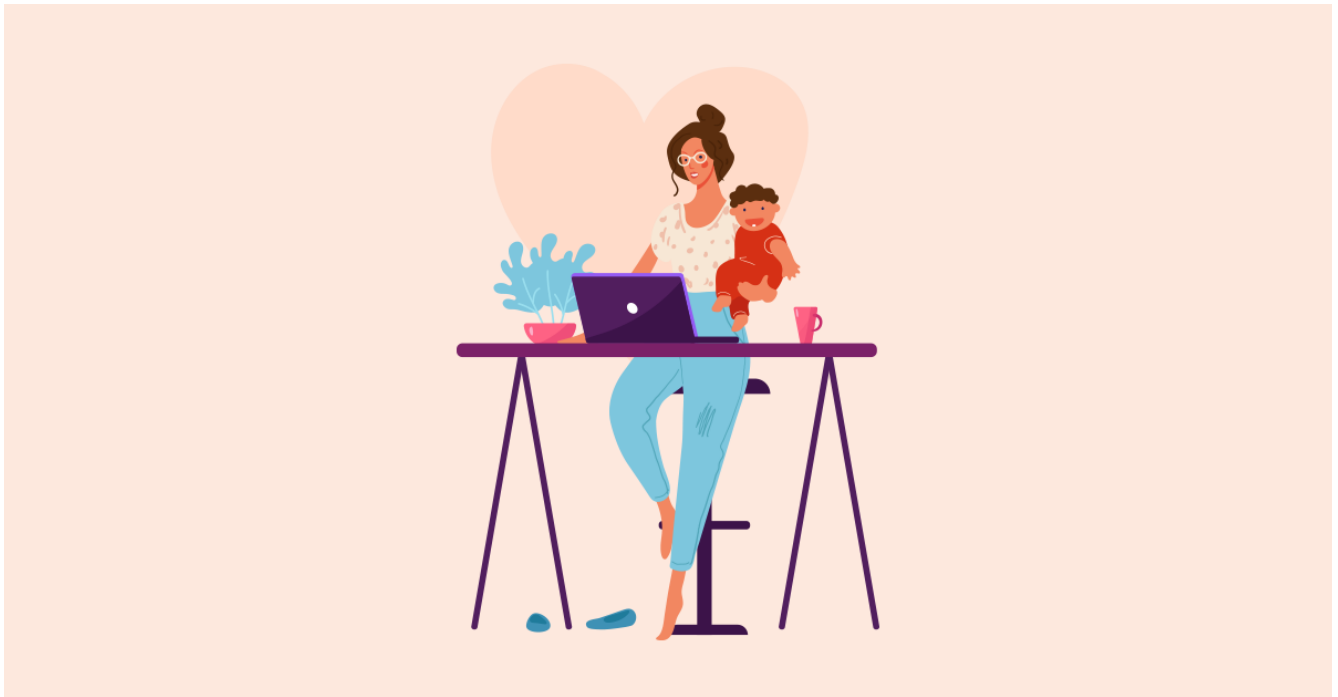


How to Manage Work-Life Balance at Your Law Firm



Did you know that 77% of lawyers have admitted to [experiencing burnout](#)? Unfortunately, this alarming statistic isn't surprising when considering the daily realities many lawyers face.

One of the biggest challenges of life is balancing a career with the desire to live a fulfilling life outside of work. This also applies to lawyers — a career path that's known for intensive work schedules. Law firms are notorious for long hours, demanding workloads, and competitive environments that aren't conducive to work-life balance.

Lawyers aren't immune to the stress of constantly hustling. They are at a higher risk for depression, drug and alcohol abuse, heart disease, divorce, and suicide, according to a study by the [American Bar Association](#).

For lawyers, time — especially billable time — is a finite resource. They may find themselves sacrificing their personal commitments and free time to meet overwhelming demands at the office, but it doesn't have to be that way. Work-life balance is achievable.

What Is Work-Life Balance?

[Work-life balance](#) is the ideal state of balance in which a person prioritizes their career demands with the demands of their personal life equally. Some of the common reasons that work-life balance can suffer may include:

- Increased responsibilities at work
- Long hours
- Increased responsibilities at home
- Having children

A good work-life balance has numerous benefits, including lower stress levels, less risk of burnout, and a strong sense of well-being. While it will never be perfect, you can find better ways to achieve work-life balance and take care of your professional and personal responsibilities.

person stressed working

Why Do Lawyers Struggle with Work-Life Balance?

Every size law firm faces its own unique challenges when it comes to managing operations, staff, and workload. Lawyers often double as managing partners or managers on top of their own caseload.

This is how lawyers may find themselves working a few evenings or weekends. Before they know it, there's no separation between work and home.

For young lawyers, this problem can be more pronounced. They work hard now in hopes that it will pay off later, whether that's [making partner](#) or having a smooth-running practice. But there will always be more clients, more cases, and more work, even if they can no longer work at the same volume and pace.

How Can I Help My Law Firm Staff Have a Better Work-Life Balance?

Work-life balance isn't a box you can tick off as completed. It's an ongoing process that should evolve with your firm.

An important place to start is by documenting what work-life balance looks like for each staff member. You can then use this information to determine a course of action that's flexible but committed to achieving that goal. It may not be perfect to start, but small steps and consistency can lead to results.

Here's how each staff member should approach work-life balance:

Outline Personal and Professional Goals

Work-life balance is an individualistic process. Lawyers need to determine what's working and what isn't to identify patterns and develop concrete goals. These [goals](#) should be written down to keep them top of mind.

Promote Accountability

For your staff to achieve their goals, they need to be accountable to someone. Have your staff share their goals and meet with them once a month to discuss their progress. This will allow you to assess any bottlenecks in their progress and support them as needed.

Consider Alternative Work Schedules and Styles

Not everyone is suited for a traditional 9-5 schedule, and more and more lawyers are seeing the value in [hybrid schedules](#). Part-time and flex work are also options to give staff more control of their workday. They'll be more productive when they are working but still have the freedom to balance the responsibilities in their personal lives.

Provide Time for Rest and Relaxation

Making time for self-care can minimize the effects of [lawyer burnout](#). Self-care looks different for everyone, but the general needs include activity, good nutrition, and adequate sleep – all the elements of taking care of yourself.

For this to happen, staff may need some time away from work as needed. Give your staff time off to travel or engage in hobbies or family events. While they may be out of the office, they will come back with new perspectives and renewed focus.

Designate Time for Different Tasks

Few things are as disruptive to [productivity](#) as checking your email or phone every few minutes to stay on top of communications with clients or case developments. This not only hurts productivity in the office, but it can seep into personal time and prevent them from being in the moment.

Make sure each lawyer [strategically organizes](#) time for emails, case correspondence, and client communication. Instead of responding to each message or email individually, lawyers should set aside an hour or two each day at specific times to address any correspondence.

Here are some more quick tips for managing tasks:

- Block off focus-time
- Learn strong time management
- Prioritize tasks with deadlines
- Avoid overcommitting to tasks

Ditch the Electronic Leashes

Most everyone carries a digital device that keeps them tethered to work, blurring the boundaries between work time and free time. As more firms embrace digital transformation and automation to make running a law firm easier, less expensive, and more efficient, the downside is that it keeps lawyers “always on,”

Instill boundaries to allow your staff to truly unplug. It’s common for lawyers to sneak in some time on weekends or during vacations to get ahead, but it’s important that they understand that they need some distance in their personal lives.

person using laptop with Bill4Time workflow feature

Use Legal Technology

Cloud-based technology like [Bill4Time](#) can help law firms reduce the time spent on administrative tasks and keep everything in one centralized location. Having law practice management software can help you [maximize billable work](#), automate the client intake process, and obtain electronic signatures to get more done in less time.

Achieve Work-Life Balance at Your Firm

Improving work-life balance not only benefits your lawyers, but it can have tremendous advantages for your firm. It's a work in progress with small steps toward prioritizing work and personal lives equally for more satisfaction and fulfillment.