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letter from the young lawyers' president



Jeffrey M. Wank

Finding the *Ideal* Work-Life Balance

With the advent of smart phones and technology advancing at a rapid pace, finding the ideal work-life balance has become increasingly more difficult. For starters, our profession demands prompt responses and has come to expect quick turnaround answers. Young lawyers know all too well that not responding promptly can result in negative feedback. With all of us carrying smart phones, it is practically a guarantee that an e-mail or text is received just as quickly as it was sent. It is hard to say we are ever truly disconnected from work.

The situation I routinely find myself in, and often dread, is deciding when to put the phone down. At this stage of my life, my family consists of my beautiful wife, Alice, and me (of course certain adjectives are essential to this article). At the dinner table, there is a constant "ding" coming from the other side of the room, signaling a new e-mail, text message, or voicemail. At night, whether I am at the gym (obviously a few times a week), or sitting on the couch watching television, responding to work related e-mails have become routine. At times I have found myself communicating with my wife in between email responses. Many young lawyers have children and desire quality family time uninterrupted by "reply all" and "urgent" emails.

This got me thinking: Is it okay to take a break from family time on a Sunday to respond to an e-mail that can wait until Monday morning? Should we respond to work questions during dinner? Do the quick responses actually help or hurt in the long run?

Of course one quick Google search on this topic brings up hundreds of articles from so called experts, with the theme suggesting that we should all strive to find a healthy work-life balance unique to each individual. Personally, I continue to try and disconnect from work during vacations, dinner, and family time. Admittedly, it has become increasingly more of a challenge. Nonetheless, I implore all lawyers to strive to find that ideal work-life balance. Certainly it will never be perfect, but the effort to put the phone down, truly listen to your loved ones, and be present in the moment, will go a long way. I would suggest that not only will it strengthen your relationships, but also you will find that emphasizing a goal of reaching a work-life balance will reinforce the values in which you cherish the most. And while I am not advocating a change to the modern "quick-reply" e-mail when appropriate, I hope you will consider disconnecting each day for an amount of time appropriate to reach your ideal work-life balance. Perhaps my boss said it best as I was leaving the office last month for a weekend getaway: "Don't worry, the work will be here when you return!" 