

Work Life Balance

Requires both discipline and focus...

You won't achieve work life balance unless you are committed to living your best life every day!.

Wouldn't it be great to achieve balance every day?

Perfect work-life balance is a state that few people achieve. It is certainly made easier when you love your work and find it deeply fulfilling because then the time at work can pass by with satisfaction and ease.

It's also enhanced by being disciplined about your working habits so you can prioritise, delegate, and get everything done. Then you can work normal hours and switch off more easily.

I know from personal experience that with more planning you can have a better work-life balance. This is even easier when your workplace displays empathy and understands the benefits of flexibility.

Unreasonable working conditions are created by a lack of planning and a lack of empathy

The benefits of work

There are benefits to work, especially when it is work that you enjoy and provides a sense of fulfillment –

- Boosts activity levels
- Gives a sense of purpose
- Provides meaning
- Offers a daily routine
- Promote relationships
- Builds a sense of community
- Provides financial independence
- Improved physical health
- Increased mental wellbeing

The downside of too much work

On the other hand, there are well researched, detrimental impacts of too much work –

- Negative impact on mental health
- Reduced ability to cope with stress



- Negative impact on relationships
- Physical, mental and emotional exhaustion
- Reduced efficiency and quality of work
- Increased detachment and cynicism
- Lower immune system
- Poor general health

There is often tension and also synergy between these two states – by having a good work-life balance and better general health you will do better work and having interesting work for a reasonable number of hours each day also improves our wellbeing.

What does work-life balance look like?

Well firstly, it is different for everyone! Although we do know some things that are valid across the board.

The public push for this work-life balance began around 70 years ago and often included the symbol of '888' with the accompanying statement of the daily ideal -

8 hours work, 8 hours recreation, and 8 hours sleep!

It seems this balance is still alluding to most people and some professions find it more difficult than others.

Lawyers can expect to work 66 hours on average per week!

42 hours of which is billable work.

This means that the average lawyer is coming in early, staying late, and putting in some extra time on the weekend.

Measuring work-life balance

The OECD Better Life Index was created in May 2011 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development following a decade of work on this issue, is a first attempt to bring together internationally comparable measures of well-being

11% of employees in the OECD work 50 hours or more per week, and many of them must be lawyers because they work 66 hours per week on average.

A full-time worker in the OECD devotes an average of 63% of the day, or 15 hours, to personal care and leisure including eating, sleeping, exercising, socialising with friends and family, hobbies, games, and television. It seems strange to me that this also includes commute time which can be long for some people and substantially reduce the time remaining for leisure and rest.

Here are some of the findings -

- Maintaining a suitable balance between work and daily living is a challenge faced by everyone
- The ability to successfully combine work, family commitments, and personal life is important for the well-being of all members of a household
- Evidence suggests that long work hours may impair personal health, jeopardise the safety and increase stress.
- Quality time devoted to leisure and personal care is important for people's overall well-being and brings additional physical and mental health benefits.

What can you do to achieve more and work less?

I have a simple answer and that is to increase your productivity! It is also critical to commit to putting yourself and your well-being first!

This quote from Michelle Obama sums it up...

"We need to do a better job of putting ourselves higher on our own 'to-do list.'"

You can improve your productivity by –

1. **Ruthlessly prioritising** – to ensure you have delegated the tasks that you don't need to do and dumped the tasks that no one needs to do. This means you will be able to focus on the urgent and important and also the important and less urgent tasks that you need to do.
2. **Saying NO** – or better still NOT NOW, WHEN. This will ensure that you don't inadvertently compromise on your priorities or take on the work of others at the expense of finishing your work, so you then need to stay back late.
3. **Reducing distractions** - by consciously limiting work-related conversations to the bare minimum to be polite and to foster good working relationships with team members
4. **Doing better quality work** the first time around to reduce review and rework – this can often be accomplished through training and more effective knowledge management to draw on the expertise and past good work.
5. **Improving your work environment** - so that you can concentrate more with fewer distractions. Perhaps you can use a focus room for part of the day and ensure your workstation is set up more ergonomically to reduce strain or use two monitors as various studies have found this can increase productivity by between 20 and 35%.
6. **Taking regular small breaks** throughout the day to reset and re-energise. It's surprising how much your productivity increases after a small, short break
7. **Maintaining regular start and finish times** so that your work colleagues know when you are working and when you're not. It also helps you to focus on the work so know that you will be able to go home at your regular time.

8. **Time boxing** your calendar to take advantage of your higher focus time
9. **Getting enough good quality sleep** to improve your productivity, work quality, and cognitive ability
10. **Being physically fit and limiting the intake of processed foods, sugar, alcohol, and caffeine** – numerous studies link health and fitness to improved focus, higher productivity, and exceptional cognitive ability
11. **Reduce multitasking** as this reduces your productivity. Use timeboxing techniques to ensure you can truly focus on high priority, critical activities
12. **Preparing and taking your own lunch and snacks** to the office so that you don't need to leave the office to buy food. Taking time to prepare or source high-quality food when working from home.
13. **Good enough is good enough** – apply the concept so you expend sufficient time and energy to create an outcome that is fit for purpose, without over crafting
14. **Create a 'third space' between home and work**, even if working from home. Use the time immediately before and after work to exercise, cook, connect!

How do work breaks help your brain?

Meg Selig, posted on Psychology Today on 18 April 2017 - How do work breaks help your brain? **5 surprising answers.**

1. **"Movement breaks" are essential** for your physical and emotional health. The benefits of taking brief movement breaks have been well-researched. Just a 5-minute walkabout break every hour can improve your health and well-being.
2. **Breaks can prevent "decision fatigue."** the need to make frequent decisions throughout your day can wear down your willpower and reasoning ability, and it can also lead to procrastination.
3. **Breaks restore motivation**, especially for long-term goals. For challenging tasks that require sustained attention, research shows briefly taking our minds off the goal can renew and strengthen motivation later. This is when those Important and Non-urgent tasks, that I cover in Module 1 of my Personal Productivity Tools Online Course, can be progressed before going back to the Important and Urgent tasks.
4. **Breaks increase productivity and creativity.** Working for long stretches without breaks leads to stress and exhaustion. Taking breaks refreshes the mind, replenishes your mental resources, and helps you become more creative.
5. **"Waking rest" helps consolidate memories and improve learning.** Scientists have known for some time that one purpose of sleep is to consolidate memories. However, there is also evidence that resting while awake likewise improves memory formation.

How much is enough?

Ask yourself – How much is enough?

Can you afford to earn less and work less to reclaim your work-life balance?

This is a great exercise to help you break the cycle of too much work. It works in two ways –

Step 1 - Consider if you could work fewer hours and still get your work completed

Step 2 - Consider if you could earn less money and still have a great lifestyle

You may not have a breakthrough or specific action the first time you reflect on these questions, although over time you might realise that you can adjust both working hours and expectations

You may be able to reduce distractions at work, become more productive, and work a few fewer hours a week, or

Perhaps you could afford to work 4 days a week, either as a compressed working week on full pay, or 4 days per week on less pay, or

You could find ways to reinvest your commute so that it is either productive work time that is counted in your overall hours or so that it is time for leisure or exercise. You could start cycling to work or make it your time to read books just for fun

About the author...



Hi, I'm Therese Linton, a global leader in legal project management legal process improvement, and personal productivity. Over the last decade, I've worked with thousands of lawyers to introduce innovative ways of working that delights clients, reduces stress, improves work-life balance, and leads to better legal outcomes.

I've been encouraged by my best friend, business partner, and many clients to expand the positive impact of these ways of working with the NEW Positive Lawyer coaching program.

I've been growing and learning throughout this journey myself. I have firsthand experience with learning new skills, along with the ups and downs that are inevitable when striving for mastery.

Announcing an amazing new program - THE POSITIVE LAWYER®

The Positive Lawyer provides the new 'non-negotiable' approaches to legal work, and a well-researched collection of tools and techniques to support positive mindsets, improve resilience and uplift legal working environments.

It's the solution for lawyers who want to stress less and live more! Participants will be supported with a ground-breaking coaching program, tailored to address the complex challenges faced by lawyers today. Over 6 months you will participate in 6 face-to-face sessions, or workshops, and have fortnightly contact to complete guided activities to support your breakthrough and transformation.

If you're committed to releasing yourself from limiting beliefs; learning new skills that are critical to your success; developing and implementing realistic action plans; reigniting your enthusiasm for your career...then register your interest at <https://basaltgroup.clickfunnels.com/registerpl>.

My aim is to inspire you to achieve great things and I look forward to joining you on your journey! Cheers...T