



The Good, the Bad, and the Takeaways of Working Remotely

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Lawyers, especially young lawyers, are wondering if the legal field will permanently adopt remote work options. Many lawyers have established new work-from-home routines, created “home offices,” improved technology skills, and generally excelled in new remote work environments, arguably being more productive than ever. Now we are left to speculate whether this option will be gone as quick as it arrived. While there are obstacles, working remotely is a valuable option that should be permanently offered to lawyers, even on a part-time basis.

Elimination of Commutes

Long, stressful commutes can lead to exhaustion before starting the workday. Elimination of travel time allows lawyers to start the day with a clear, focused mind. The hours previously spent in the car can instead be better used towards client matters, business development, or health and wellness practices, which are more beneficial to employers and employees.

Increased Productivity; Better Focus

While working from a traditional office space generally provides for a collaborative environment, which is positive for many reasons, it often results in interruptions, distractions and, at times, a decrease in productivity. Home offices can be created to inspire and are generally quieter workplaces that allow lawyers to better focus on the task at hand, producing higher-quality work, and giving young lawyers a greater sense of control over their day-to-day tasks.

Greater Accessibility

Before COVID-19, the legal field had a remote work stigma. The shift to remote work now allows lawyers to be more accessible and accomplish more without being in the same physical location as clients or colleagues. This accessibility benefits employers, clients, and lawyers alike. Lawyers who need work accommodations or flexible hours are now able to accept jobs that used to

require face-to-face office time without placing them at a disadvantage. With many employers having the tools in place, legal teams can further expand their geographic reach for both employees and clients.

Less Stressful Work Environment

It is no secret that the legal field is stressful. Lawyers not only carry around their own personal stress, but they also carry the stress of their clients. When working in a traditional office, lawyers may also carry the stress of their colleagues (and their colleagues’ clients). Remote work allows lawyers to shed those added layers of stress, resulting in mentally healthier lawyers.

With Change, Comes Obstacles

While many young lawyers can and do excel remotely, newly barred lawyers, new hires, and lawyers who live alone may not. Working in an office setting can help create a more collaborative environment, form working relationships, and organically foster mentorships, which can be difficult to do virtually. Remote work has the



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potential for negative mental health issues, particularly for lawyers who live alone or in less than ideal home environments. Likewise, working remotely can further worsen the 24/7 work mentality. These work-from-home obstacles can be addressed by intentional efforts to socialize, taking “coffee breaks” with colleagues, setting work hours, or only remote working part-time. As a practical matter, a “home office” is not an option for some lawyers because of cost or limited space. Accordingly, flexible work arrangements may be the better option allowing lawyers to choose the right work environment based on their circumstances.

Takeaways

Remote lawyers are demonstrating success beyond their years. With lawyers spending less time commuting, being less distracted in the office, and feeling less consistent stress, more hours and energy are gained to dedicate to family, friends, community, and personal health and wellness. While not all young lawyers agree that working remotely is for them, young lawyers can agree that this remote work *option* is a positive change. ■



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YLD Board Volunteers at Metropolitan Ministries

The YLD Board got into the spirit of the season by packing boxes of food for families in our community at Metropolitan Ministries on December 10.

