

# Three Keys to Selling and Achieving Work/Life Balance in Today's Legal Market

By Deborah Epstein Henry

Most lawyers fear that employers will look askance if they raise work/life balance needs in today's legal market. Lawyers worry that work/life balance is now seen as a luxury—they should feel lucky to have a job. Here are three tips to maximize the likelihood of your work/life needs being met, especially in today's challenging economic climate.

First, use flexibility as an asset to meet the business demands of your employer. Many employers are uncertain of their staffing needs and don't want to pay for lawyers' time if the work is no longer there. Show your willingness to flex your work, hours and pay with the demands of the practice. Demonstrate how it is economically in your employer's interest to hire or retain you at flexible or reduced hours. Second, take gender out of the discussion. Work/life arrangements are often seen as a "mommy" issue. However, increasingly men and women are expressing work/life needs for different reasons at all stages of their career. When you propose a work/life arrangement, the basis for your request should be irrelevant. Do not approach the request as an accommodation. Instead, explain how you will meet the demands of practice on flexible or reduced hours while not negatively impacting colleagues or clients. Third, be indispensable, responsive and accessible. The greater your employer perceives your value and importance, the more negotiating power you will have. If your work quality is top notch, an employer will be more receptive to developing a creative solution to recruit or retain you at flexible or reduced hours. Also, be responsive and accessible when you are out of the office to meet the needs of clients and colleagues. In turn, if you set your expectations for flexibility rather than predictability, you will be more satisfied with your arrangement while meeting the demands of a thriving legal practice.

*Deborah Epstein Henry, a former practicing litigator, is founder and president of Flex-Time Lawyers LLC, a national consulting firm advising the legal profession on work/life balance, the retention and promotion of women, and new models of legal practice. She is the author of LAW & REORDER: Legal Industry Solutions for Work/Life Balance, Retention, Promotion & Restructure (American Bar Association, 2010, [www.ababooks.org](http://www.ababooks.org)). For more information, see [www.lawandreorder.com](http://www.lawandreorder.com) and [www.fleximelawyers.com](http://www.fleximelawyers.com).*