

## The Life

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### **Will We Ever Get Tired of Talking about Work/Life Balance?**

Posted by Zach Lowe

Here's one statement guaranteed to get people talking, courtesy of Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric Co.: "There's no such thing as work/life balance. There are work/life choices, and you make them, and they have consequences."

Welch, speaking at a conference in late June, went on to say that the female CEOs he knows "had pretty straight careers," and that women "have got to make tough choices and know the consequences of each one," [according to a Wall Street Journal story out Tuesday](#). As you'd expect, many executives of both sexes said Welch is out of touch.

Chantal Kordula, a partner at [Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton](#) and the mother of three children under the age of 6, says her jump to partner at Cleary shows Welch's "work or life" choice is false. Kordula, who took five months off after the birth of each of her children, says her promotion to partner was delayed two years because of time off for child care and an unexpected stint in the firm's Washington, D.C., office.

For each child, she took the maximum 13 weeks paid maternity leave, plus her accrued paid vacation time and some unpaid leave. Once she returned to work, Kordula opted to return to a full schedule instead of the 80 percent work week many new mothers choose.

"You just need to do what works for you and let the chips fall where they may," she says.

Her husband's schedule is flexible at times, and Kordula occasionally fits in afternoon parenting duties--barring an urgent request from a client. "It's unpredictable," she says.

People seem to be fretting about work/life issues even more now that the economy has tanked. Some employees and employment lawyers are concerned that people working flexible schedules are more vulnerable to layoffs, according to [this Forbes story out today](#).

In one anecdote in the story, a lawyer recounts how an advertising salesman who was laid off despite glowing reviews and a solid sales record. The reason? The lawyer speculates it was because he was the only one in his group who worked a flex schedule.

So is now the time to avoid a flexible schedule and trudge into the office every day for a full day? Not if you ask Deborah Epstein Henry, founder of the consulting firm [Flex-Time Lawyers](#). She claims firms can increase their revenue by allowing lawyers at all levels to work flexible schedules.

Just more food for thought on an issue that doesn't seem to be going away.