

10 legal expert opinions on

Work-Life & War for Talent in Law Firms



Pinsent Masons

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LAWYER**



**KHAITAN
& CO** ADVOCATES
SINCE 1911



Hi there,

Lawyers are known for many things - like having impeccable taste in suits and heels, being great friends to turn to for advice, and knowing all the back-doors - but having a great work-life balance is unfortunately not one of them.

And that shows. When we talk to people in the business, we can't help but notice how many of them are actually saying goodbye to the legal profession. In [a global survey of lawyers by the IBA](#) we learned that 20% of the surveyed lawyers under 40 were thinking

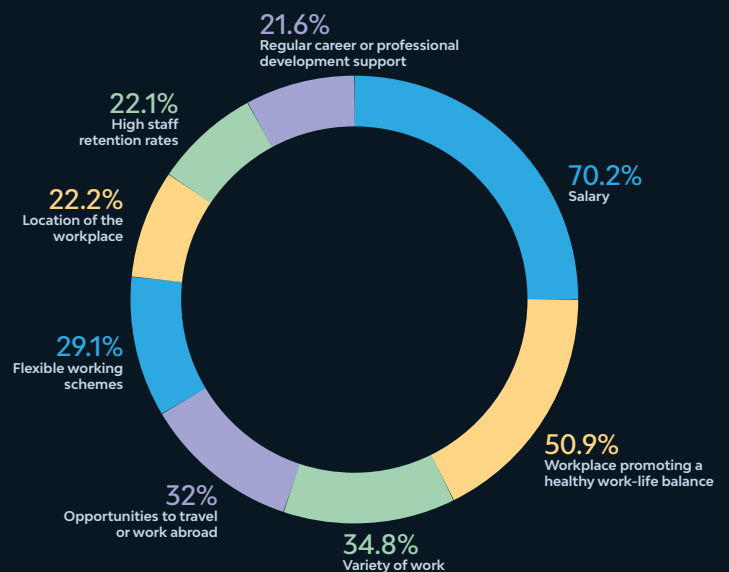
about leaving the profession entirely, citing work-life balance as a key cause for concern. Pressure is high from clients and partners to deliver in time, while at the same time there are a lot of repetitive tasks that don't add value or skill. This concern was the greatest for lawyers in the age bracket of 25 and under, at 71%.

Some of these lawyers try their luck in other firms, but if we may believe [Bloomberg Law's State of Practice Survey](#), the second most popular departure destination for attorneys was in-house - 44% of respondents reported that they knew colleagues who left to take such positions. This clearly shows that law firms are losing in the war for talent.

Is providing a better balance between work and life the solution? The more we spoke to experts, the more we understood that there is a change happening in the way both employees and firms are looking at attracting and retaining talent, and, ultimately, a strategy to win in the war for talent - a topic we originally wanted to cover in a separate report but that is in many aspects very intertwined with a work-life balance and thus inseparable.

Should law firms consider an approach in recruitment and retention in which they help their staff find a balance with software, flexible hours and remote work? Or are there other solutions? We asked 10 experts from all over the world (literally, all over the world!) to share their views in the hope to inspire you. Interestingly enough, some of them believe we have come a long way, while others are distressed about the current situation. Find out for yourself! And feel free to let me know where you stand on this matter too. You can always reach me at jorn@henchman.io.

Best wishes,
Jorn



Source: [Artificial Lawyer](#)

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**Stephenson
Law**



Alice Stephenson

Founder & CEO at Stephenson Law

The legal profession is often synonymous with long hours, unmanageable workloads, and long term sacrifices for those looking to climb the ladder to partnership. Many firms are renowned for having beds on-site for late-night stays and mass burnout and, while many lawyers will tell you that these long hours are a reflection of their ambition, for many (seven out of ten in [fact](#)), it promises to gravely impact their mental health.

It's no wonder then that, in tandem with becoming synonymous with poor work-life balance, the legal industry has become known for individuals leaving the profession in droves. Despite the phenomenal expense, effort and time that goes into becoming a lawyer, the work-life balance is so untenable that individuals are simply forced to walk away from all that training.

According to the IBA Young Lawyers [Report](#), 35.8% of young lawyers are expected to leave their workplace in the next year as a direct response to poor work-life balance. As the war for talent wages on, graduate salaries have begun to sky-rocket, with many law firms failing to consider job

satisfaction metrics that go beyond the reach of a pay packet. As big law tries and fails to tackle the talent shortage, I believe we're witnessing first-hand the failures of the legal profession's work-life balance. And these failures drive deeper than the day-to-day, with an unfair disadvantage to those with responsibilities beyond the workplace. For women, often within the caregiver role, many have to choose between raising a family and pursuing their legal careers. It's no wonder then that according to the [SRA's 2021 report](#), just 35% of UK law firm partners are women.

**35.8% of young lawyers
are expected to leave their
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When I began my career in law, it was common for my colleagues to burn the midnight oil, working late into the night and early into the morning. As a single mother, I quickly realised that the route to partnership would cost me more than a few late nights at the office. While law could

provide my family with financial security, it would also mean years spent in the office, at the expense of my family. Despite this, I was ambitious and tried to carve a path that would allow me to achieve partnership, without sacrificing who I was. For me, this ultimately led to me founding my own firm, and creating a new normal for being a lawyer in the modern age.

I'm going to be honest - when I founded my law firm it was my last chance at making it as a lawyer. Like the many that came before me, the existing work-life balance was untenable if I ever wanted to see my children. That's why I was insistent on building this firm from the ground up, with an emphasis on providing the work-life balance denied to me in other firms. I figured, there had to be others out there who had tried and failed to fit into the rigid mould of big law.

And I was right.

The firm evolved to become a fully-remote, tech-driven business, designed to provide flexibility for ambitious lawyers who wanted success but not at the expense of their personal life. And it worked. Exceptionally talented lawyers began to join the firm and, empowered by flexibility, they were able to prove the phenomenal feats that could be achieved with the benefit of a work-life balance. The team grew into a diverse blend of caregivers, neurodivergent creatives, and in all cases, huge talent. In our five years of business, we've managed to compete with the big dogs, both in talent and client relationships.

I believe we've discovered a key piece of the puzzle: flexibility

Our secret? An understanding that job satisfaction encompasses far more than a meaty pay packet.

Today's figures point toward a stark reality for the legal industry as a whole. Salaries are sky-rocketing, while lawyers leave the profession in record numbers. The industry is struggling under the weight of mass burnout, and big law firms are clambering for a solution.

As the founder of a challenger law firm that followed a path of its own, I believe we've discovered a key piece of the puzzle: flexibility. By prioritising the ambitions, desires, and lives of our staff, we've been able to successfully scale a young firm through the turbulent startup years, right through the dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to today, where we stand as an example of what the future of law can be.

Richard Tromans

Founder of Artificial Lawyer & Tromans Consulting

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'Does legal tech make a difference to work-life balance? The short answer is: yes, with the caveat that much depends on the law firm or the in-house team to turn those efficiency gains into something more than just 'mechanical' benefits. Let me explain.

'Using legal tech can help reduce the burden of 'process work' e.g. high frequency or high volume activities that can be mentally draining, but rarely mentally stimulating to do those tasks.

What happens next will depend on your role and the business you work for. If you are an associate in a large law firm with very high billable hour targets, the idea that tech will let you go home early is likely a non-starter. Although, it may help you not to have to work until the small hours of the morning, especially if the task is on a fixed fee and very process-based. But there are no guarantees that such high-powered employers will reward time saved with more time not working.

If work is stimulating and makes you feel like a lawyer, not just a data shoveler, then you may want to keep working in that commercial law firm

That being said, even when you must keep that clock running, if tech can eat more of the process work at least the tasks that remain should hopefully be more rewarding and interesting.

If work is stimulating and makes you feel like a lawyer, not just a data shoveler, then you may want to keep working in that commercial law firm. And that has got to be a good thing.

While if you work in-house, and where there are no billable hour targets, efficiency tools may well allow you to go home on time and reduce late nights in the office. A corporate gains little from exhausted staff doing low-value work who then get upset and want to leave.

Tech can help lawyers to feel more valued, to use the skills they have developed, and to reduce staff departures

More efficient working, with the help of tech, means the company can do more, can leverage the in-house team's great talent to do more meaningful work, and hopefully, retain this talent in the organisation for longer.

Overall, tech is not a silver bullet when it comes to work-life balance, but depending on the business it can really help lawyers to feel more valued, to use the skills they have developed, and to reduce staff departures.'



Hariolf Wenzler

CEO at Ypog

Talent + Team + Technology

How to position your firm in today's quest for young lawyers.

Today's successful law firms are all about talent, team and technology. We live in times of scarce human resources, at least as the EU and in particular, Germany are concerned: too little supply (i.e. people) meets a growing demand in many industries, especially services industries. In the legal business, high entry barriers in general, e.g. bar exams, are topped with requirements of premium employers like excellent grades, additional academic qualifications etc. This leads to a market for legal professionals where virtually all top law firms fish in the same, small pond of talent.

All top law firms fish in the same, small pond of talent

What we have seen over the last ten or so years is that all predictions were wrong. Or better: All predictions were right apart from the timeline. The billable hour is everything but dead, defined associate tracks and strong business cases are still the gold standards to get to equity partner status, hierarchy and too much work are still in place.

Yet beneath the surface, there are the undercurrents of digitization, GenZ, work-life balance and the gig economy transforming the way legal work is performed, delivered and consumed. Legal Operations and Legal Technology are on the rise, shifting legal advice from a paper-based academic discipline to a digitized and client-focused service. Blurred lines between office and work from home lead to a hybrid concept of collaboration, communication and attire. Teams, Zoom, Slack and Miro help us to visualize, annotate, like and share easily and in real-time, within the firm and with clients across organizational boundaries.

GenZ lawyers expect a responsive IT infrastructure

So how do employers attract young lawyers given these circumstances? First and foremost, as it is still a people's business: **talent** is key. Great people want to work with great people, and talent attracts talent. But other than in the old times, talent itself is not enough. **A team** is a necessary counterpart: great people want to work with, not only next to great people. They ask for purpose, feedback, explanation, training, honing skills, team events, respect for individual preferences and a diverse, sociable atmosphere. But even firms with great talents and an inspiring team spirit miss the point if they don't emphasize the third success factor: **technology**. GenZ lawyers grew up digitally native to then embark on paper-based law studies with books and (hand-)written exams. When entering the legal profession thereafter, a fully digitized setup with laptops, at least two screens, databases and smartphones is a prerequisite. Beyond this, professionalized operations, smooth onboarding, digital internal workflows and a responsive (IT) infrastructure is what they expect. Plus communication and collaboration with clients on eye level, both on a personal level and regarding the use of technology.

So if a firm understands the power of combining **talent + team + technology**, a culture of appreciating the individual, inclusive togetherness and a smart and digital working environment emerges. And how does this come to life? If you listen to the next generation, let them take the helm of projects, help them engage with clients early and learn from their habits, communication skills and expectations. So it's no secret, yet its success lies within its execution.

[1] Hariolf Wenzler is Director of Bucerius Law School's Center on the Legal Profession CEO and CEO of YPOG, a fast growing law firm serving clients in tech-related industries, many of them investors. He is a co-author of „Exzellenz, Leistung, Sinn – Was „High Potentials“ anzieht“, in: Matthias Busold (ed.): War for Talents, Erfolgsfaktoren im Kampf um die Besten, 2. Auflage, Springer Gabler 2019 (co-authored with Meinhard Weizmann).

Lucy Shurwood

Partner at Pinsent Masons LLP

I would argue that the work-life balance in most large law firms is probably the best it has ever been. Flexible working is more widely available, even in transactional teams such as Banking and Corporate, it is possible to work part-time and be promoted to partnership, and the focus on creating a more diverse workforce has arguably created more flexibility around what working as a lawyer looks like. There has certainly been significant progress since I qualified almost 20 years ago, but there is always more to be done and that's why we are a founder member of the Mindful Business Charter and committed to supporting wellbeing at work.

The Mindful Business Charter sets out principles to support well-being, things as respecting rest periods, being respectful of others' time and working practices when arranging meetings and working 'mindfully' with others, being clear about deadlines and only requesting urgent responses when work is urgent. The Mindful Business Charter is embedded in our business, we conduct regular surveys to ensure we're adhering to the principles and to identify areas where we could improve.



Pinsent Masons



Work-life balance in most large law firms is probably the best it has ever been

The move to hybrid working, which is widespread among law firms following the pandemic, has definitely had benefits in terms of work/life balance. Removing the commute and being based at home for part of the week has allowed people to spend their time away from work more fruitfully, on hobbies, family time and other leisure pursuits. Hybrid working has downsides as well, with some people feeling like they are "always on call", missing the break between home and work. Less face time with colleagues and clients also has an impact. It remains to be seen how this will affect legal practice in the longer term.

The legal services market is changing, how we deliver legal work is transforming

How much difference does work/life balance make to recruitment and retention? That's very difficult to say because everyone has different motivations in their working

As always, technology in and of itself isn't the solution, it's how you deploy it

Where we have seen technology have a positive impact on our working environment is mostly in helping to improve how we deal with high volume, repetitive tasks. This relieves some of the frustration and stress that can be associated with working on things that don't really add value but just need to be done. Clients are also reluctant to pay for highly qualified staff to work on admin tasks, so using technology to reduce or eliminate lawyer time spent on these tasks is a win-win.

The legal services market is changing, and how we deliver legal work is transforming in terms of where we are physically located, the tools we use and how our businesses are structured. Work-life balance will be a critical part of those changes and how we operate in the future.

life. Whereas remote working may be a deal-breaker for some people, others would rather be in the office full-time and earn more. I think the most important thing for us as a firm is, as much as we can, to offer our people the ability to work in the way that best suits them and allows them to give their best performance to clients and colleagues.

Technology has the potential to enable a healthier work environment, but all technology requires thoughtful (/mindful?) use to ensure that the impact is positive. The move to home-working during the pandemic provides a useful example of the impact of technology. On the one hand, technology enabled the switch to home-working for many of us to be quick, easy and with minimal disruption. However, the same technology sometimes left people feeling overwhelmed, always contactable and unable to escape their work. As always, technology in and of itself isn't the solution, it's how you deploy it.

Chrissie Wolfe

Legal consultant and Founder of Law and Broader



Last month I received a series of Whatsapp messages from a good friend who works at a well-known US firm. They read as follows:

"Client just called! The deal is off!!!!"

I am CRYING actual tears of joy rn

I might actually get to see your face this summer!!!"

The backstory here was a run of about three months solid of 3 am finishes resulting in missed gym sessions, social events, important family engagements, weekend plans, sleep and pretty much all semblance of a personal life. These weren't unusual circumstances. It was the expectation that the firm had of them in return for the 6-figure salary that they were offering.

I sympathised completely having experienced albeit only a fraction of what they had in my time in practice, and couldn't imagine a better feeling than being suddenly and unexpectedly free of a burden that had been draining my physical and mental health for as long as I could remember.

What struck me afterwards is that this firm, like many others, claimed to be "client-centric".

How can you be client-centric when your workforce is visibly rejoicing at your client's misfortune? I thought to myself..

There is work to be done.

The phrase "work-life balance" has always presented as a misnomer to me when it comes to a legal career. If you have the mindset that your life doesn't begin until you physically switch off your laptop, or, later still, mentally switch off from the constant demands of the job, let's face it – your life is going to be pretty minimal as a lawyer. If you choose a career which mandates long hours then, in my view, the only sustainable way to approach it is as a part of your life.

So what do you need from life to be happy and fulfilled, and what part does your career play in that? When it's put like that, it's obvious that a one size fits all approach will rarely be the solution to keeping an entire workforce engaged and motivated over a prolonged period of time. Every person is

unique and the more diverse your workforce, the more varied their needs will be.

It's clearly an impractical goal, particularly for large organisations, to provide a bespoke working arrangement to each and every individual. There have to be common practices and a uniform approach to business or else culture and brand identity are lost. However, what there can and should be in abundance, is communication and flexibility. These are the foundations of an inclusive workplace.

It's clearly an impractical goal to provide a bespoke working arrangement to each and every individual

"The Great Resignation" of 2021, which shows [no sign of slowing](#), was a culmination of [multiple factors](#) that were not new to the world of legal work but were brought into sharper focus by, among other things, the challenges and, likewise, the freedoms of the remote-work landscape. Work-life balance, pay and progression, and a lack of purpose were cited as key drivers of the mass shift and yet the market has been slow to react to all but [pay](#) – the easiest one to address if your mindset is fixed and your pockets are deep.

But is it the right one?

What's interesting about the pay stat is that pay isn't actually the problem in many cases, it's a symptom of the problem. For the most part, when I asked the movers within legal who cited pay as their primary grievance about when they decided they wanted more money, it was after they had become dissatisfied with their job. Essentially, a higher salary was needed to compensate them for doing a job that they either did not enjoy or didn't give them enough of what they needed from

life to justify the required hours. Whatever the underlying reason, an increase in pay will offer only a short-term solution until they find an alternative which remedies the actual cause. With the average cost of replacing a law firm associate running into the [hundreds of thousands](#), is providing the alternative really such an unattractive option?

There is no quick fix to creating a work-life balance amidst 2,000+ hour targets

Perhaps not unattractive but unachievable, or perceived to be so, and those concerns are not misplaced. There is no quick fix to creating a work-life balance amidst 2,000+ hour targets or solving the more existential question of how to provide unique individuals with purpose in their jobs but there is an approach to engaging and motivating people which has been proven over decades – being human.

Research by [Gallup](#) supports the view that employees who feel genuinely valued, understood and prioritised remain in their jobs longer and are happier and more productive at work. Therein lies the basis for open communication and flexibility in the workplace but it has to be genuine. Asking open questions about what individuals are seeking from their career, from their life, and how the business can help them achieve this is vastly superior to a firm-wide policy rollout based on the collective views of the board. New technology will please some, but not all, remote-working will please some, but not all, the demise of the billable hour and an alternative to the partnership model will please some, but not all. The only commonality between your employees is that they are all human so why not make your policy humanity? For the win, it's free.

togbåt

Bram Vandromme

Co-founder Togbåt!



'Run, Forrest, Run!'

Overall, the mental health of lawyers is in really bad shape. Alarming studies appear worldwide on a regular basis and show us that rates of mental illnesses, such as depression, anxiety and stress, are much higher in the legal profession than in the general population. Lawyers are leading the charts and that's not something to be proud of. In our own country (Belgium), research showed that 9 out of 10 lawyers experience stress about their work, and about 30% of them think it's problematic. They cannot find a sufficient balance between their work and their private lives.

A hard winter is coming for the retention rates in law firms

A hard winter is coming for the retention rates in law firms. Fewer young people start at the bar and lawyers leave law firms sooner than ever before. Research proves that women run away as fast as they can. After ten years almost 50% of the female starters have left the bar. On top of that, especially young lawyers seem to experience the

highest stress rates. The high workload and the lack of a healthy work-life balance are more decisive reasons to leave the bar than financial ones.

Although this might remind us of the 'Run Forrest Run'- movie scene, this is not a beautiful picture.

The combination of young people leaving the bar on a big scale with severe mental health issues is a toxic cocktail that endangers the future of our profession.

I think we are wasting talent on a big scale, and still there are not enough alarm bells ringing. Not in the bar, and not within law firms. The house is already on fire, but it seems we don't feel the heat. Yet.

When Henchmann asks me if technology can enable a healthier work environment, the answer is always 'yes'. However, the health problems are much more profound than that. For me, it's clear that finding ways to be more efficient, f.e. with technology, can be game changers in the continuing pressure on lawyers. But, like a lot of problems, dealing with the mental health issues of lawyers is a complex issue, that is, in my opinion, rooted in the mindset of lawyers and law firms, rather than caused by the lack of technology.

Being good has nothing to do with being busy

How can we free our profession from both handcuffs - mental issues on the one hand, and wasting talent on the other? There are no clean shots to solve these problems. But what I do know is that a lot of change is required. Starting with ourselves. I'd love to share six thoughts:

Busy is not cool.

In our culture, a good lawyer is a busy lawyer. Please, get rid of this idea. Being good has nothing to do with being (too) busy.

'How are you?'

As a firm, if you are really worried about the mental health of your people, a good starting point is to ask them how they are doing, and what you can do for them. Just like that. But you have to mean it, don't just pretend to be interested.

Everybody is different.

Map out individual paths. I think that

firms should step away from the idea of treating everybody like they have the same personality and needs in their career and life.

As a lawyer, try to be yourself. Don't pretend to be someone you are not.

'No, I won't do it'.

Learn to say 'no'; to the firm partners and to clients. Lawyers who cultivate the idea that if they aren't always available, there will be no clients left, are part of the problem. Fear of losing clients by setting boundaries is a trap.

Don't show your teeth, but your hand.

My personal happiness grows when I find a solution to the problems I'm facing as a lawyer. Therefore I think that if law firms focus more on the outcome than on the battlefield, and prioritize mediation and solutions, the fulfilment of the lawyers will grow.

You don't sell time.

Let's not forget the elephant in the room: one of the main reasons for mental health problems is probably the traditional [billable hour business](#) and pricing model that most law firms use. It creates an overwhelming pressure on lawyers and a lot of them feel prisoned in the model they're part of. There seems to be no way out. Software tools, like HENCHMAN or others, can help to find the exit. You don't sell time, you sell an outcome.

Dr. Nadine Lilienthal

Co-Founder of LEGALEAP and Podcast Host



Winning the battle for talent: The tactics of an underdog

The only weapon big law seems to have in the fight for talent in Germany is salary increases, most recently up to 160k.

But those who only pay higher salaries are missing the point.

I can't even count how many times I've heard from partners over the last few years that they are having trouble filling open positions at their law firms. Many of them have been on the hunt for talent for months and months.

Meanwhile, a small minority of partners seem immune to this problem. These partners attract and retain the best lawyers. How do they do it?

They do one thing differently. They understand how people feel. Because they are empathetic, they have an unerring sense of their employees' needs.

Those who only pay higher salaries are missing the point

But what can you do if you struggle with empathy? Well, especially if you feel a lack of empathy, you're already halfway to developing it!

For those of you who want to take a shortcut to empathy, here's a cheat sheet for attracting and retaining talent.

CHEAT SHEET FOR NON-EMPATHS

1. Your employees will thrive when you understand that their needs for flexibility are very diverse. Some prefer working fully remotely, some enjoy coming to the office, and others feel most comfortable with a hybrid working model. While a few like working late at night, others are most productive when they start at 7 am. Some want to take a walk during lunchtime; others need to put their kids to bed or like to meet a friend for coffee in the afternoon. All of them need proper time to rest to be at their best.
2. If you want your employees to feel like a team, treat them that way! Don't host office drinks and invite only a part of your workforce. Make sure that some employees aren't required to address you formally, while others call you by your first name.

If you want your employees to feel like a team, treat them that way!

3. Communicate with your team like a pro! Don't send an email that contains only a question mark. Avoid forwarding emails from clients without explaining to your employee what to do with them. Say "Thank you!" and explain what you liked about a particular contribution from a team member. We think that we say thanks way more often than we actually do. Bring that number up.
4. Take your employees' call for a purpose in their working life seriously. If your law firm does not provide an overarching purpose, help your team to understand in what ways their work adds value to society and the world, to create a future for all of us that is worth living in.
5. Be the person people can talk to when they have a problem. Ask your team members: how are you doing this week? And really listen to the answer.

6. If one day you aim to implement a new legal tech tool in your law firm that people will actually use in their daily practice, do the following: Talk to your team members before (!) buying a tool to really understand their problems and needs. Involve them in finding the best technical solution. Thank them for their contribution.
7. When someone quits their job, it's understandable if that takes an emotional toll on you. However, you are at your best when you acknowledge that this could be a great development opportunity for your employee. Never forget: Be kind to those who leave, as they could come back. They could come back to work for you, they could become your client, or they could refer new talent to your company.

Marisa Monteiro Borsboom

Founder and General Counsel at MQM Legal



The first time I came across the term “lawyer” was somewhere in my first years of school, I would guess that I was around 8 or 9 years old. During a parent-teacher meeting, my teacher amusedly suggested that I would one day probably become one, as I was always trying to get my friends out of trouble or detention.

Despite the fact that I flirted with many possible career paths, in the end the prophecy ended up coming true. And although I didn’t find studying for the law degree particularly exciting, I knew I had chosen the right profession from the moment I first set foot in a courtroom, dressed in my black robe. I was destined to be in court.

My career up until now has been quite unusual, and has given me a very unique perspective to share. In a nutshell, after 3 years of working for a law firm I took the risk to start my own firm together with a senior colleague.

So which learnings, based on my observations, readings and meandering experience in both Portugal and the Netherlands, can I share?

1 What is the current balance of work-life in law firms, when I see many of my colleagues across the globe?

When there’s too much talk about improving the work-life balance, progress is often far from reality. For change to happen, we need to stop talking and start doing.

I remember reading a research article on heart attacks across different professions some time ago and we, the lawyers, stood on top of the list. An unenviable title, but I’m afraid this profession is stressful by design. We are tasked with juggling a continuous flow of information, very demanding agendas, and continuously familiarising ourselves with constantly shifting legislation. This profession imposes a demanding lifelong training and learning mentality which can be, to say the least, draining. Moreover you are expected, and often need to, give your all at the start of your career. Other important life milestones, such as starting a family, might be looked at in a way that they restrict your “all in” mentality, and can fall by the wayside. This baptism by fire is dramatic, and many are

left behind, need to quit, or succumb to the pressure and stress, sometimes literally.

With the dawn of Legal technology, the hope is that lawyers will gain some extra superpowers that free up time, including mental time, for a more balanced life in which they can have more time for their family as well as to care for themselves, body and mind.

With the dawn of Legal technology, the hope is that lawyers will gain some extra superpowers that free up time

2 Is the current hierarchical structure and partner aspiration sustainable?

I'm going to get straight to the point: we know it's not. From our experience and from conversations we are having.

I recently started a cooperation with a brilliant lawyer that left everything behind. "I couldn't handle it anymore," he said, referring to the brutal game you need to

play to become a partner, "life has so much more to offer". He was reaching his 50s and he was putting things into perspective. Many of the women that I have met who were fantastic professionals, also made a lot of sacrifices. But I see that younger generations are more concerned with what is at the end of the rainbow... Becoming a powerful partner with no meaningful life beyond the office walls is less and less appealing to them.

This will lead to the designs of new business models I believe. They will be more agile, cooperative and free. I do believe however that this will be easier to implement for new organisations. The existing (and large) ones will have a hard time to adapt.

3 Is a healthier working environment seen as a win in the current war for talent?

Health, and especially mental health, is on the top of everyone's agenda nowadays. And it should be if you want to stand a chance in the war for talent, since the new generation will choose an environment that takes the individual into consideration.

Somewhere they can thrive, grow and are nurtured and supported while they give their 100%. I believe many of us don't mind the fact that the job is demanding, because we actually enjoy the work. But we can't continue to collectively burnout at the current rate, or we will remain at the top of that unenviable podium. We need to create a better experience.

4 How can a better work-life be achieved in your opinion?

The equation I looked for was the following: more freedom to manage my time, in a hybrid environment, with a strong team spirit and engagement from colleagues who care for each other. This is not very common in traditional structures where instead of "all for one" you see the mentality of "all for themselves and save yourself first" dominate.

Not so long ago, a senior lawyer made a comment about a young lawyer we both know: "He is too nice; he is always trying to help others. He shouldn't do that. I am trying to tell him he needs to be more focused on himself and his own work."

To this I replied: "I hope he will never change."

To me, this is very indicative for the environment we've created. We've often been described as sharks - no need to name names - but we also have saints and iconic leaders among us. Thomas Moore and Gandhi come to mind as clear contenders. So, are lawyers sharks or saints? We are probably both. And a good environment will know how to balance the human capital it has. This will be the real key for success in the future.

How can firms win the war for talent? They can start by setting their record straight. What kind of firm does it want to be? What kind of human capital does it want to attract? What kind of growth is expected? What is the desired size? What is the desired profit? The answers will determine the working environment. In a shark tank, you will have a shark climate. I myself set out to be a remora a long time ago so I could survive in any tank, but I prefer to be in a more human-centric environment where old-fashioned principles like "one for all and all for one" are the mantra.

Where we care and take care of each other knowing how demanding and stressful everything can be.

5 Can technology enable a healthier work environment?

Technology can be extremely helpful, but it can also be a nightmare. If it is not fit for the purpose, then it doesn't help at all. Some courage is needed to say this though. The arms race towards better and newer technology in the major law firms is leaving many behind. To be beneficial technology needs to focus on the needs of the professionals using it and not on becoming a vehicle for more pressure and control. Moreover, if we can make technology more accessible many lawyers will find themselves with a far better competitive advantage in these challenging times.

6 How can an individual (not a partner per se) impact the work-life balance of a legal organisation?

One would hope that a non-partner would be heard, and I think many will be if they

come up with practical suggestions to create a flexible environment. So it's all about having courage to speak up and bringing solutions to the table. And if one still doesn't feel like there's a good match with a specific firm, my advice would be to look for a better fit. One thing is for sure, the legal profession is demanding, so make sure the vocation is there, and not only the degree, as you will need it!

As for the firms, the future is human, cooperative and multidisciplinary. Foresting a human-centric legal design model, for both clients and legal professionals, will be the key for successful and fulfilling legal careers.

Shreya Vajpei

Innovation at Khaitan & Co



There is an expected demographic shift in the median age of lawyers at law firms, with millennials and Gen Z lawyers now making up the majority. We know that these groups of lawyers are changing the traditional way in which law firms operate and that they have different priorities than previous generations[1]. The pandemic has reshaped how young lawyers evaluate their work, and traditional criteria such as compensation and promotions are not the only things that motivate them. This group tends to value culture, diversity, complex work, and effective mentorship and aims to be better corporate citizens.

The pandemic has reshaped how young lawyers evaluate their work

These attitudes were reflected in the IBA Young Lawyers' Report which showed that a significant number of young lawyers (under 40 years) are either leaving or considering leaving their current job in the next 5 years. For them, a lack of work-life balance is a matter of concern, and a flexible workplace is key to long-term continuity in the profession.[2]

Over the last few years, Khaitan & Co has completely restructured how it works. We understand the importance of a collaborative and flexible workplace and our new Virtual Office Policy allows for various modes of working - ranging from hybrid to completely remote. Our members can also avail themselves of flexible working hours, blackout periods (when there is downtime for the entire team), recuperation leave, and much more.

During the pandemic, several of our members returned to their hometowns across India, and some of them desire to continue working from those locations or from larger cities closer to their hometowns. Our new LexFlex policy addresses this concern and empowers members who wish to work from locations where the Firm does not have an office. We are also actively opening satellite offices in several Indian cities, Gurugram being the first, to cater to this requirement.

We are always looking for ways to help our team members find value and be innovative in their roles at the firm. Many of our lawyers work on technology, client

experience design, human resources, strategy and knowledge management initiatives – and all this is credited to their required productive hours. We are also working on a firm-wide resource allocation project that will facilitate lawyers to work across practice areas in a geography-agnostic fashion.

Many of our lawyers work on technology, client experience design, human resources, strategy and knowledge management initiatives – and all this is credited to their required productive hours

At our law firm, we care about the physical and mental wellness of each of our employees. To help with this, we have a tie-up with Optum, a leading Indian healthcare and technology company which can help with not only that but also guide on personal finances. We also use technology

to make things more efficient and help lawyers reclaim their time and improve their work-life balance.

Even before the young lawyers forced the traditional firms to rethink their ways, we had a diversity and inclusion initiative (ARISE), an ESG Initiative and had been (and are) actively working towards reducing our carbon footprint. We believe in empowering young professionals, and a number of these initiatives are run by them. The writing is on the wall -- law firms that are willing to adapt and reinvent their workplaces are the ones that will be most successful in attracting and retaining top talent. Creating a supportive and conducive culture is key to making this happen.

[1] Lawyers want better alignment with duties and desires, says Stand-out Lawyers mid-year survey (2021). Available at: <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/legal/stand-out-lawyers-report-2021/> (Accessed: 1 August 2022).

[2] New IBA report reveals significant numbers of young lawyers want to leave their current job (2022). Available at: <https://www.ibanet.org/New-IBA-report-reveals-significant-numbers-of-young-lawyers-want-to-leave-their-current-job> (Accessed: 1 August 2022).

Kaden Smith

EMEA Director at NetDocuments



How to Tip the Scales on Keeping employees ... and Keeping them Happy

The [2022 Report on the State of the Legal Market](#) (Report) published by the Center on Ethics and the Legal Profession at Georgetown Law and Thomson Reuters Institute, warns: "The traditional law firm response of just throwing more money at the talent acquisition and retention problem is not likely to work as well going forward." In fact, several recent studies have shown that "money does not buy you love" when it comes to recruiting and keeping employees content.

As described in the Report, some midsize firms have taken a more creative, beyond money, approach to supporting employees, and are offering more work flexibility by basing associate compensation not on hours billed but on tasks accomplished and quality of work. Recognizing that the pandemic has caused increased chronic stress, anxiety, and depression, firms have established counselling and wellness programs to assist staff in their return. Firms are also planning a wide variety of social and recreational activities to gradually rebuild firm culture.

Lawyers love technology! What they hate is complexity

As shared in the recent "10 Legal Tech Trends for 2022 and Beyond" [whitepaper](#), Joy Heath Rush, Chief Executive Officer at the International Legal Technology Association, makes a valid point about the role technology can play in the war on talent and employee satisfaction. "One of my favorite urban myths is that lawyers don't like technology. They love it! What they hate is complexity, so we're seeing user experience sometimes trumps



features and functionality.” To Joy’s point, a pleasant user experience leads to higher user adoption, which routinely translates to streamlining and automating work. Beyond providing technology basics, a firm that’s known for innovation and pushing the envelope to deliver a better user experience and succeed for clients might gain favour among job seekers.

Another factor that could impact recruiting and ultimately life/work balance is how serious firms take new employee onboarding. We’ve all been there ... we start a new job and before we know it, we’re a few months in and are still trying to figure out internal processes and how to use the customer relationship management system to pull up client info. Firms that go the extra mile and equip the new employee crop with everything they need to succeed, right at the outset, will do well in the open market. Plus, since most onboarding is subpar, doing this exceptionally well will stand out.

To further attract and retain top talent in the future, we must make the employee experience better, make it easier to do work, especially in a remote or hybrid reality, and provide professional development and mentorship opportunities that breed success and satisfaction.



**Happy to show you how other law firms
have leveraged a plug and play solution like
Henchman in the war for talent**

Email me at dunya@henchman.io