



2022 EDITION



FEATURING WELLNESS TIPS FROM MEMBERS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS TO INSPIRE YOUR WELLNESS JOURNEY. SEE PAGE 38!

Walking the Well-Being Walk

How to Approach Mental Health + Wellness Initiatives in a Post-Pandemic World





Now is the time.



Built by **LAWYERS**, Powered by **PROS**®




The ABA Retirement Program has made it easy for your firm to sponsor an employee 401(k) plan.

The **ABA Retirement Funds Program** ("Program") is an employer-sponsored 401(k) plan designed specifically to address the retirement needs of the legal community. The Program is structured to provide affordable pricing whether you are a sole practitioner or a large corporate firm.

We have leveraged our size to bring together some of the most respected financial services providers in the retirement industry. Through the unique culture created between the ABA Retirement Funds Program and our Program partners we aspire to help every law firm, lawyer, and legal professional secure their financial future.

Quick, simple, easy.

Contact an ABA Regional Representative today; they will walk you through the simple 4-step process and your firm's plan can be completed in as little as two weeks.

 **800.826.8901**

 **abaretirement.com**

 **joinus@abaretirement.com**

The ABA Retirement Funds Program is available through the Association of Legal Administrators, an ALA Value In Partnership Program Provider Bar Association as a member benefit.

Please read the Program Annual Disclosure Document (April 2022) carefully before investing. This Disclosure Document contains important information about the Program and investment options. For email inquiries, contact us at: joinus@abaretirement.com.

Registered representative of and securities offered through Voya Financial Partners, LLC (member SIPC).

Voya Financial Partners is a member of the Voya family of companies ("Voya"). Voya, the ABA Retirement Funds, and the Association of Legal Administrators, an ALA Value In Partnership Program Provider Bar Association are separate, unaffiliated entities, and not responsible for one another's products and services.

CN1474756_0123



On the Theme of Wellness ... Is This the Worst Workplace Threat to Your Health in the Stressful World of Firm Life?

Here's how to swiftly assess your risk of suffering a data breach and secure your firm's data once and for all ... alleviating the stress of cybersecurity anxiety.

'We Didn't Know What We Didn't Know' A Story of Hacker Carnage:

In November of 2018, David Eltringham's small law firm was hacked.

*"It was a big deal. We had to notify every single client and contact we've ever had in our DB that their private information had potentially been compromised. **You can't imagine the carnage that does to a small business like ours. Many of our clients went ballistic.***

*"We knew we needed something entirely different. **But what?***

*"**Our administrator doesn't have the time to become an IT security expert. And most big-name IT security solutions are too expensive for small firms like ours.***

*"**And here's the freaky thing:** When we heard all the protections we needed that we did NOT have...well, **we had never even heard of some of them!** Our liability would have been off the charts ... **gross negligence.***

This is why I say cybersecurity anxiety might be the biggest workplace threat to a legal administrator's health. If you doubt me, let's look at the ugliest causes of workplace stress ...

Number One: Excessive Workload? Check!

Over the course of a week, **we** small firm administrators could be overseeing *accounting, information technology, human resources, workflow management, facilities and more ... you name the hat, we have to wear it. Our work is never done. Our to-do list is never completed. There is always a fire to stamp out.*

And on top of all that we're supposed to be IT security experts as well? When?

Number Two: Lack of Control? Check!

While **we** administrators are RESPONSIBLE for IT security, we often lack the time, knowledge, decision making agency, or purchasing power to address it. **We** have little control, **but we will get blamed when the firm gets hacked!** That anxiety, apprehension and uncertainty hovers over **us** everyday. **We** know a ticking cybersecurity "time bomb" is present, just like at David's firm, but **we** don't have the time or control to diffuse it!

Assess Your IT Security Risks and LOCK Things Down Once and for All - It Might Be the Best Thing You Can Do for Your Mental and Physical Wellness

And You Can Get Started in Less than **Two Minutes:**

Take our quick survey & get your Free Law Firm Cybersecurity Score by going to www.bobaguard.com/alascore

Identify the most crucial cybersecurity metrics and how to improve your score to quickly reduce your risk of getting hacked.

Here's Some Advice from Small Firms Like Yours on Cybersecurity Peace of Mind ...



*"I did not believe any security service provider could cater to our situation. It's a great comfort knowing someone is watching out for us and that our data is protected. **I feel confident with BobaGuard.***

- Nancy Lanard, Plymouth Meeting, PA

*With BobaGuard I **sleep well at night** and don't worry about the things that used to keep me up.*

- David Eltringham, Boca Raton, FL



*I have now **addressed the biggest risks** from which I was previously unprotected, allowing me to focus on building my new firm and serving my clients.*

- Galvin Kennedy, Houston, TX

*With email backup, security training, verified software updating/patching, and **ALL** the other benefits, BobaGuard has been a great fit that I'd recommend to any firm.*

- Albert Thiel, Albuquerque, NM



Get your free Law Firm Cybersecurity Score by going to www.bobaguard.com/alascore

The BobaGuard \$1,000 "Law Firm Lockdown" Guarantee
If you get BobaGuard, follow our simple guidelines and suffer a breach, we will pay the first \$1,000 of your cyber insurance deductible.

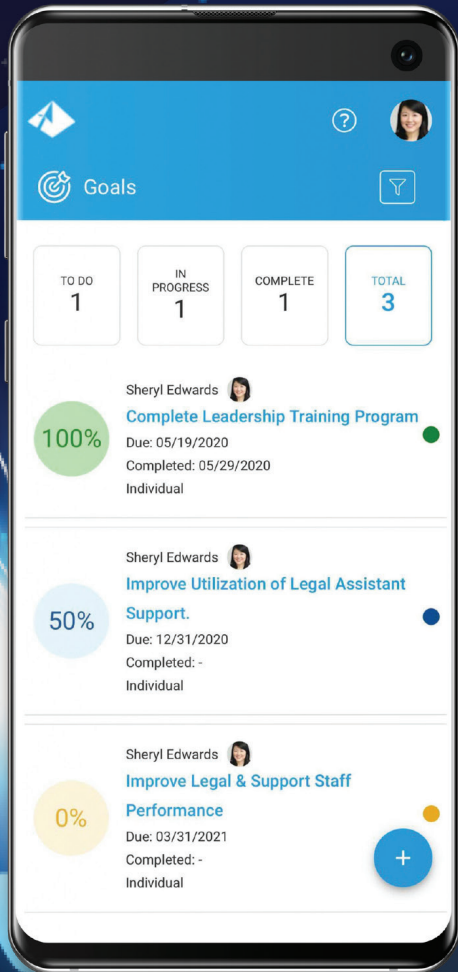
SPONSORED BY:



WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE



SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR LAW FIRMS



Built with a
Modern
Code Base

Works Elegantly
on all
Mobile Devices

Integrates with
CE Manager &
LawCruit



See our entire platform of integrated
Talent Management Software

info@micronsystems.com
(201) 652-2229
www.micronsystems.com



Over 300 Years of Experience Working With Law Firms

Founded in 1997, AHERN Insurance Brokerage has become an industry leader in providing customized insurance solutions for law firms. Our professional and competent staff brings over 300 years of combined experience working solely with law firms in brokering services, underwriting, risk management, and claims.

AHERN is part of Acrisure LLC, one of the top 10 insurance brokerages in the world and the fastest growing in industry history. AHERN, along with Acrisure, insures over 9,000 law firms nationwide with firms ranging from 1 to 1,100 attorneys.

Experience does make a difference.

AHERN | INSURANCE
BROKERAGE

ACRISURE[®]

POWERED BY EXCEPTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND TECHNOLOGY™

(800) 282-9786

AHERNINSURANCE.COM

CA LIC #0K07568



Randy Gust
12 years



Michael Davidson
34 years



Susan Kilano
24 years



Summer Gorsica
20 years



Reid Middleton
13 years



Stephen Lowe
35 years



Shawn Royle
26 years



Tracy Podzimek
20 years



Tamara Bartels
35 years



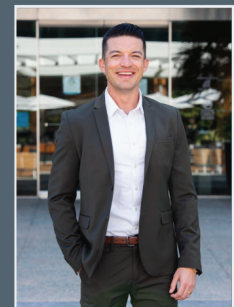
Kelley Milks
30 years



Sheila Denessen
20 years



Gabriel Yu
16 years



Jake Denson
1 year

PUBLISHER
Association of Legal Administrators

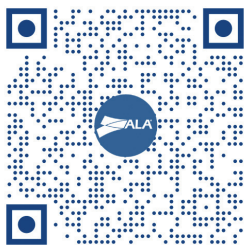
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Theresa Wojtalewicz
twojtalewicz@alanet.org

SENIOR MANAGING EDITOR
Valerie A. Danner
vdanner@alanet.org

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Justin Askenazy
jaskenazy@alanet.org

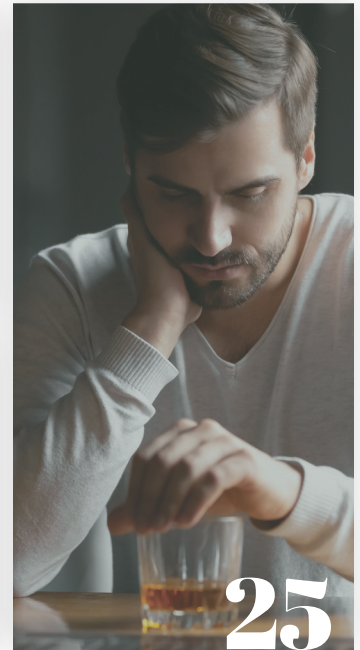
SALES & EXHIBIT* INQUIRIES
Sean Soth
ssoth@alanet.org
667-206-4266, ext. 1

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Abigail Burkle



**PREFER TO LISTEN WHILE
ON THE GO?**

Scan and you'll be directed
to audio options for content
in this issue.



6 A Note from the ALA President

Sarah Evenson, JD, MBA, shares the small things she does throughout the day to fight stress.

8 A Note from ALA's Senior Managing Editor

We explain why we chose a wellness theme.

10 BP Perspective

Here's how you can take the stress out of cybersecurity.

14 Diversity Dialogue

Wellness has another layer for those who are marginalized — here's how to help.

19 Walking the Well-Being Walk

How to approach mental health + wellness initiatives in a post-pandemic world.

25 An Honest Conversation About Alcohol and Legal

Examining the role alcohol plays in your firm's culture is paramount to building a healthier work environment.

30 Innovations

Legal departments are using artificial intelligence to tackle burnout.

34 Tips and Trends

Feeling like your mind is spiraling lately? Here's how to take back control.

38 Get Inspired

Members and business partners share how they take time for some self-care.



Completing the Stress Cycle

SARAH EVENSON, JD, MBA

2022–2023 ALA President

Director of Law School Programs and

Office Administrator, Barnes & Thornburg, LLP

I do not know about you, but I experience a certain level of stress every single day. At work my stress ranges from just a little when the caterer is late with the food delivery for an event, to something larger — like giving a presentation in front of my firm’s management committee. While I work to minimize my stress-inducing situations, I know I cannot control every source of my stress. But what I can control is how I respond and what I do to release those feelings.

While in a conversation a few years back in which I was sharing some details of a particularly demanding day, a friend recommended I read the book *Burnout: The Secret to Solving the Stress Cycle*. This book was a game changer and helped me to understand the importance of not only addressing the source of the stress (for example, having a difficult conversation with an employee, finishing a big

project, tackling my growing to-do list), but also the need to complete the stress cycle by reducing the feeling of stress. What I learned is that unless you complete that response cycle, you actually never stop feeling stressed. As a result, you remain in a perpetual state of stress response, and staying in that state for long periods of time can lead to over-exhaustion, aka burnout.

The book explains the important difference between stress and stressors and how stress is not bad for you — but staying stressed is. As the book states: “The good news is that stress is not the problem. The problem is that the strategies that deal with stressors have almost no relationship to the strategies that deal with the physiological reactions our bodies have to those stressors. To be ‘well’ is not to live in a state of perpetual safety and calm, but to move fluidly from a state of adversity, risk adventure, or



“

As much as I would love to take an hour break in my day and work out over my lunch break, most days it's just not possible. As a result, I have worked over the last two years to incorporate some small actions into my workday to help me close my daily work-stress cycle.

”

excitement back to safety and calm, and out again. Stress is not bad for you; being stuck is bad for you.”

While the book goes into the science of stress and the neurological and physiological response associated with it, it also identifies seven ways you can complete the stress response cycle. These include physical activity, breathing, positive social interaction, laughter, creative expression, affection and a good cry.

As much as I would love to take an hour break in my day and work out over my lunch break, most days it's just not possible. As a result, I have worked over the last two years to incorporate some small actions into my workday to help me close my daily work-stress cycle. I schedule walking meetings with my team members whenever possible. If someone is working remotely, I ask if we can jump off video and go audio only so we can walk and talk. I use the mindfulness app on my Apple Watch for just one minute before a big meeting. Each morning I find a funny meme or joke and share it with others. If I get an upsetting email, I count backward from 10 before doing anything else. Finally,

I make it a priority to take quick walks or grab coffee with different teammates each week to just chat and learn what is new in their life.

What I have found is by incorporating just a few small things into my workday, I am better able to handle the stressors that inevitably come my way. As the book says: “Wellness is not a state of being — it's a state of action.” It's great advice to follow. ■

About the Author



Sarah Evenson, JD, MBA, is Director of Law School Programs and Office Administrator at Barnes & Thornburg, LLP. She is serving as ALA's 2022–2023 President. She loves spending time in Hawaii, playing golf, working out with her husband and walking her neighbor's dog.

✉ sarah.evenson@btlaw.com

in [linkedin.com/in/lawfirmmanager](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lawfirmmanager)



Why Wellness Should Come First

VALERIE A. DANNER
Senior Managing Editor, ALA

A wellness issue for a legal publication, you say? I don't have to tell you that legal is a stressful environment. You experience it regularly. Pair that with a pandemic and the doom scrolling that often takes place on our social feeds, and it can feel overwhelming. So while we regularly present you with information that can help you manage the daily tasks at your legal organization, we wanted to devote this issue to you and your well-being.

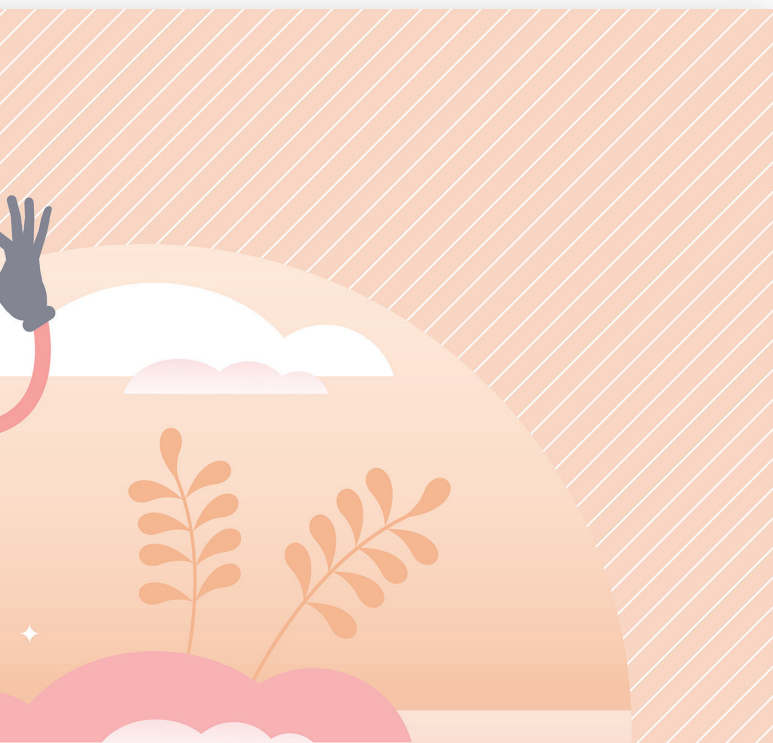
We hope these pages give you some inspiration and respite. We cover everything from building wellness in your firm to how you can destress your cybersecurity process, to the role alcohol plays in your firm's culture — and what you can do to curb its presence at social functions.

However, my favorite part of this issue is the wellness tips we heard from members and business partners. We asked

them to tell us how they fit wellness into their days. From biking and running to playing *The New York Times* Spelling Bee to throwing a ball for their dogs, the responses are varied and fun (as are the pictures). We hope you find some inspiration and encouragement in them and then find ways to make your own wellness plan for your life — and make it part of your routine.

One of my takeaways while writing the "An Honest Conversation About Alcohol" (page 25) was just how important consistency and leadership are to enforcing healthier cultures. That's how carving out a minimum of 30 minutes a day for a walk or run became my wellness routine.

I have no shame in admitting that my dog, Stella, was the boss of me, i.e., the leadership. For 15 years, she didn't give me a choice of whether I wanted to walk — it was just what we did. As a city dog without a yard, she had to get out



“

We hope you find some inspiration in them and then find ways to make your own wellness plan for your life — and encourage you to stick with it as part of your routine.

”



Stella was the best four-legged health coach and helped me establish a regular wellness routine.

for walks. She'd look at me as if to say, "Oh, you're feeling depressed? You know what will help? Throwing my ball at the park." Or, "Oh, it's snowing? You'd rather curl up and binge "The Great British Bake Off"? Not until you walk me, and I roll to make a snow angel." Sunny days. Horizontal snow. Rain. Polar vortexes. We walked through it all. Over time, I abandoned my earbuds in favor of just walking with her and enjoying the surroundings like she did, just being in the moment. It was her routine, but over time it became my routine, too, to the point where I could feel my anxiety level going up if I missed more than a day or two of getting that time outside to walk.

I sadly lost my beloved dog and sidekick earlier this year. But our lasting routine carries on. Most days, I still get up and go outside to walk or run. Her 15 years of stubborn insistence built consistency for my wellness. When I walk along the lakefront or around one of the many parks in Chicago, I often think of her and focus on the sights around me. It's a lasting gift she gave me.

So get inspired and find your reason to start doing something healthy for yourself. Then persevere until it becomes part of your routine, too. You deserve it! ■



Taking the Stress Out of Cybersecurity

TOM LAMBOTTE

Chief Executive Officer and Founder, BobaGuard and GlobalMac IT

It's easy to lose sleep over cybersecurity, especially when you consider how firms are specifically targeted.

Having virtually finished exploiting the Fortune 500 pool, cybercriminals have moved onto more unsuspecting pastures — small and midsize enterprises across all industries. Couple that with more people working remotely and doing tasks at home from unsecured home networks, and you've got a situation that presents hackers with easy access to your data.

Lawyers are also appealing targets because of their privileged and confidential status. It's simple to see how attorneys may be more inclined to pay a ransomware demand to reclaim their sensitive data. At the same time, small- and medium-sized legal organizations are less likely to have comprehensive, up-to-date cybersecurity measures in place. A 2020 ABA Legal Technology Report found that less than half of survey

respondents (43%) use file encryption and that less than 40% use two-factor authentication and intrusion prevention.

By now you're probably thinking, "Oh great, more scary stats to freak me out and keep me up at night. Point taken. But what do I need to put into place to secure the law firm?"

Here's the good news that can help ease your cybersecurity stresses: There are many things you can do to protect your law firm from ransomware and other cyber threats. We've got some tips:

- 1. Educate your employees on cybersecurity risks and best practices.** Include training on how to spot phishing emails and what to do if they receive one. Modern solutions also provide phishing simulations to test your staff.



“

I know what you're thinking now: 'Gee, thanks, that is so helpful. I've read [cybersecurity] advice a hundred times. My problem isn't that I don't know what I should be doing, but rather how do I go from theory to implementation?'

”

- 2. Implement a comprehensive cybersecurity solution** that includes endpoint protection, email security and web filtering. Once in place, these tools will stand guard and block threats 24/7.
- 3. Back up your data regularly** and store backups offline or in the cloud. This way, if you are hit with ransomware, you can restore your data without paying the ransom. We highly recommend third-party backups. For example, if you're counting Google Vault as backup and Google gets hit, you won't be able to access either one.
- 4. Keep your software and systems up to date**, as many ransomware attacks exploit vulnerabilities in outdated software.
- 5. Have a plan for what to do if you are hit with ransomware.** The plan should include who to contact and how to proceed.

These five tips go a long way to help protect your law firm from ransomware and other cyber threats.

I know what you're thinking now: "Gee, thanks, that is so helpful. I've read that advice a hundred times. My problem isn't that I don't know what I should be doing, but rather how do I go from theory to implementation?"

It's true — these aforementioned tips are nothing new and nothing you haven't already read hundreds of times. Yet you're still losing sleep over the looming threat. If you feel stuck and unable to make progress, you are not alone. Turns out, you need a *Who*.

In his book, *Who Not How: The Formula to Achieve Bigger Goals Through Accelerating Teamwork*, Benjamin Hardy, PHD, states: "When you're trying to accomplish something challenging or difficult that you've never done before, you probably need a Who. Let me say that another way: You absolutely need a Who if you're trying to accomplish something new and challenging, unless you're fine not getting that result you want in the near future."

In this scenario, "not getting that result" implies the firm suffers a data breach due to not having adequate measures in place. The bigger the challenge, the more essential the Who.



WHAT'S THIS ABOUT, "WHO NOT HOW?"

The concept Hardy writes about was created by Dan Sullivan. Essentially it comes down to this: Whenever you have a problem or a challenge or imagine a bigger and better future, there's a problem. You don't currently know *how* to achieve the goal.

The first thing you usually do is ask yourself is "How can I accomplish this goal?" While it appears to be a natural question, it's the worst question you can ask. We've been brainwashed into thinking that we must accomplish everything on our own since we were children.

And the role of legal administrator — what I often refer to as "the wearer of many hats" — has this expectation built-in (as you're well aware). You've got to be able to figure things out and handle a wide range of responsibilities.

TIME FOR A BETTER QUESTION

If you want to lower your stress in a significant way, you must stop asking yourself, "How can I accomplish this?"

A much better question is: "**Who can help me achieve this?**" The bigger the challenge, the more essential the Who.

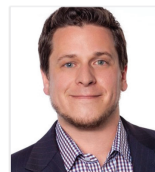
If you are not the Who — and I can almost guarantee you are not unless you're a trained cybersecurity expert who happens to be a legal administrator — here's what you need to accomplish your cybersecurity goals:

1. You need a Who.
2. You need a budget to pay that Who.
3. And you need buy-in from the managing partner(s).
(Hint: Start there, then work your way back up this list.)

If you're struggling to implement all these cybersecurity measures on your own, there are several companies that offer comprehensive cybersecurity solutions specifically for law firms. These security firms can help you choose the right solution for your firm, preferably curated from an array of best-in-class providers rather than a single proprietary source.

That's the Who you seek. The right Who will have made it their mission to help law firms get the right cybersecurity solutions implemented within their firms. ■

About the Author



Tom Lambotte is a cybersecurity expert who has been in the tech support industry for over a decade. He founded BobaGuard in 2019, which offers turnkey solutions to solo lawyers and small to medium law firms.

In addition, he is the Chief Executive Officer and Founder of GlobalMac IT, an established managed service provider specializing in serving lawyers nationwide who use Macs by implementing his Proven Process™.

 bobaguard.com

 globalmacit.com

LAWPAY[®]

AN AFFINIPAY SOLUTION

+



ALA's Exclusive
VIP Partner
for Payment
Processing

“I love LawPay! I'm not sure why I waited so long to get it set up.”

– Law Firm in Ohio

Trusted by 50,000 law firms, LawPay is a simple, secure solution that allows you to easily accept credit and eCheck payments online, in person, or through your favorite practice management tools.



22% increase in cash flow with online payments



Vetted and approved by all 50 state bars, 70+ local and specialty bars, the ABA, and the ALA



62% of bills sent online are paid in 24 hours



PAYMENT
RECEIVED



YOUR FIRM LOGO HERE

Trust Payment
IOLTA Deposit

New Case Reference

**** * 9995 ***

TOTAL: \$1,500.00

VISA



AM
EX



POWERED BY
LAWPAY

eCheck

DISCOVER

PAY ATTORNEY

Get started at
lawpay.com/ala
866-921-0115

Data based on an average of firm accounts receivables increases using online billing solutions.

LawPay is a registered agent of Wells Fargo Bank N.A., Concord, CA, Synovus Bank, Columbus, GA., and Fifth Third Bank, N.A., Cincinnati, OH.



Walking a Minefield Without a Map: The Explosive Intersection of Well-Being and Belonging

NEHA SAMPAT, ESQ.

Chief Executive Officer and Founder, *BelongLab*

I was conducting interviews for a client's belonging assessment, and I had asked everyone to come to their interview with a personal story of belonging or not belonging.

At one interview, the interviewee remarked that they had struggled to identify a belonging story. I asked them why, and they explained: "Honestly, I can't actually think of a time I *didn't* belong." During a later interview, a different interviewee lamented that they also had struggled to identify a belonging story. I asked them why, and they explained that they couldn't remember the last time they *did* belong.

Does it surprise you to know that the former was a White man, and the latter was a Black woman?

Sadly, this situation is common. In our society, belonging is experienced as a privilege, with some (usually the White,

male, cisgender, straight types) experiencing belonging as a given, while many others (usually the historically oppressed and the multi-marginalized) experiencing belonging as an audacious dream.

Yet, according to the study, "A Theory of Human Motivation" by A.H. Maslow, belonging is a core human need, following only physiological and safety needs. It's a cornerstone of human well being — a sense of belonging cultivates a sense of meaningfulness in life, and a sense of meaningfulness in life is associated with overall well-being, as per the 2013 study, "To Belong Is to Matter: Sense of Belonging Enhances Meaning in Life." Thwarted belonging leads to mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety.

Unfortunately, the workplace exacerbates historically excluded individuals' struggle for belonging, thereby



“

Build a culture that acknowledges traumatic events and their disparate impact on the work and well-being of the most impacted communities.

”

compounding their well-being challenges. For instance, a 2019 study of sexism against women in the workplace* confirmed that “sexism was associated with a poorer sense of belonging in the industry, which was associated with poorer mental health and job satisfaction.”

The rotten “isms” (e.g., sexism, racism, etc.) inequitably tax the well-being of the marginalized in many ways. For example, marginalized folks experience extra pressure for perfection because they actually are held to higher standards (as reported in an *Atlantic* article from 2015). This forces them to work exponentially harder to get just as far as their nonmarginalized counterparts. Their organizations often add under-compensated and under-valued diversity work to their already burdensome loads, all while providing them with little access to the built-in networks of support, mentorship and sponsorship that so many others take for granted. The marginalized are essentially pushed into a minefield without a map. Meanwhile, societal injustices continue to bombard them, traumatize them and chip away at their safety. This challenge is formidable, yet addressable. Here are some ways for your legal organization to push through it.

- 1. De-silo diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) from other priorities in your firm — especially wellness.** You cannot foster true inclusion without well-being, and you cannot cultivate well-being without true inclusion. Therefore, seed collaboration between your wellness and DEIB professionals and have them co-sponsor programs. Address bias and exclusion as root causes of mental health challenges, thereby centering the historically excluded in wellness conversations.

Make sure your DEIB programming addresses wellness. Kori Carew, Esq., Chief Inclusion & Diversity Officer at Seyfarth Shaw LLP, connects these dots and shares that among other actions, her department intentionally includes a wellness component in their DEIB programs. They’ve also equipped firm leaders with curated resources and tactics on “well-being and its intersection with connection and belonging.”

- 2. Double down on the work to stop harming the marginalized.** Don’t teach folks how to walk the minefield. Instead, remove the mines: Tackle microaggressions (which, of course, are anything but “micro”), stop tokenizing, disrupt unconscious bias

*A Confirmation Study of the Relations Between Workplace Sexism, Sense of Belonging, Mental Health, and Job Satisfaction Among Women in Male-Dominated Industries

Connect to ALA’s Resources on DEIA

ALA’s Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility is a great resource for your DEIA initiatives. ALA also regularly updates the DEIA section on its website with the latest content from the digital version of *Legal Management*, white papers, podcasts and more. Visit alanet.org/deia. You can also follow the committee on Twitter: @ALADiversity.



individually and systemically, foster allyship and advocacy, and build empathy.

3. Simultaneously, acknowledge that those on the receiving end of bias have suffered real harm, and dedicate resources to provide healing from that harm.

Create safe spaces for connection and support within harmed communities, including in the form of well-resourced employee resource groups. Build a culture that acknowledges traumatic events and their disparate impact on the work and well-being of the most impacted communities.

Carew shares that, at her firm, they conduct regular well-being check-ins, and also make a special point to check in after national tragedies. Sometimes they’ll engage a psychotherapist to provide additional support. Some organizations even offer time off for people to process traumatic events.

4. In addition to healing, empower marginalized individuals, not to “fix” what’s wrong with them, but to remind them of what’s right with them.

Invest in programs that help them bust through internalized bias and imposter syndrome, unlearn assimilation, and tap into their unique identities, experiences and voices as their superpowers.

Seek out and honor the unique aspects of marginalized folks that they have historically been forced to hide. For example, provide training on inclusive interviewing and inclusive leadership to create truly safe spaces for historically excluded folks. Build an environment that encourages

others to bring more of their true and best selves to their work and their lives.

Ultimately, your greatest asset is a team diverse in identities, experiences and perspectives. Create space where each person is seen, valued and celebrated — a space void of minefields, where belonging (and the well-being that accompanies it) is experienced by all. ■

About the Author



Neha Sampat, Esq., is Chief Executive Officer and Founder of *BelongLab*, where she helps organizations create cultures of belonging into which each individual can bring more of their true and best self.

Through consulting, training, speaking and writing, she addresses hidden barriers to belonging, such as internalized bias, unconscious bias, distrust in teams and wellness challenges. She is an internationally sought-after expert on inclusive leadership and disrupting imposter syndrome (systemically and individually), and she runs *Owning Your Value* programs to cultivate evidence-based confidence and nurture authenticity.

@belonglab

[linkedin.com/in/nsampat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nsampat)

belonglab.com



IT Training
Staff Training
Lawyer Training
CLE Tracking
ALL-IN-ONE

**A MOBILE-FRIENDLY LMS
FOR YOUR ENTIRE FIRM**



*See our entire platform of integrated
Talent Management Software*

info@micronsystems.com
(201) 652-2229
www.micronsystems.com



“I love paperwork!”



(said no one, ever.)

Tabs3 Software anticipates the needs of today's modern law firms with continued innovation. Thanks to decades of experience partnering with our clients, you don't have to put up with annoying workarounds or duplicate data entry where other legal software falls short.

You can automate data entry, streamline complex billing, implement paperless invoicing, accept credit card and ACH payments with Tabs3Pay, and more. If you ever need help, our outstanding support team is just a call or email away. **Sign up for a personal demo today.**

Learn more or schedule a demo:
[Tabs3.com/ALA](https://www.tabs3.com/ALA)

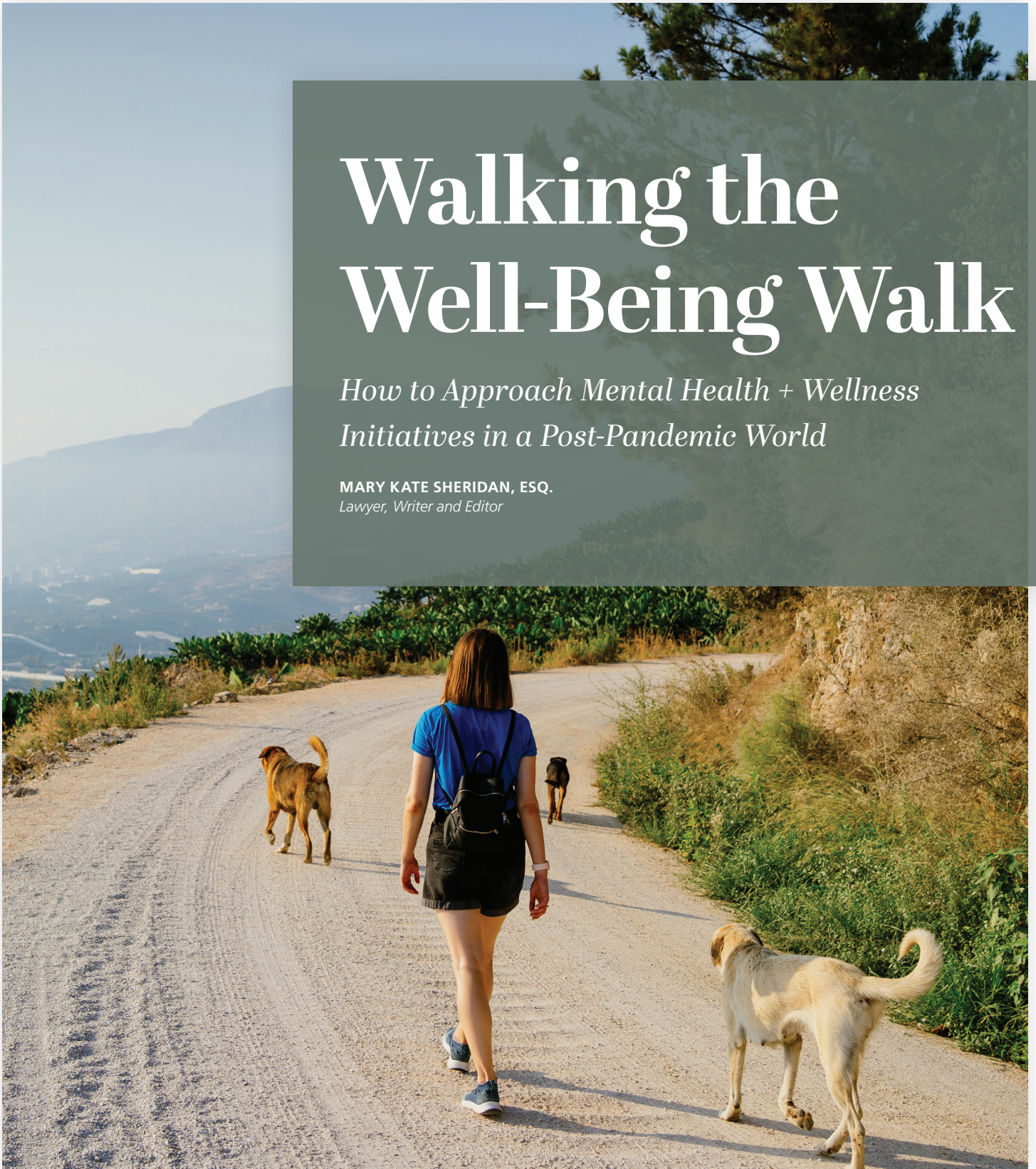


Billing | Practice Management | Accounting

Walking the Well-Being Walk

How to Approach Mental Health + Wellness Initiatives in a Post-Pandemic World

MARY KATE SHERIDAN, ESQ.
Lawyer, Writer and Editor



The legal industry is at a crossroads (and has been for some time) on how to reconcile the inherently stressful nature of law firm life — which often thrives on high-stakes, high-pressure work — with the unquestionable need to prioritize well-being and mental health. Given the alarming rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse within the legal industry, firms can't afford to overlook these key areas if they want to have — and retain — a healthy and productive team.

"If mental health and attorney well-being are not on firms' minds — if this is not a discussion firms are already having — they are behind the eight-ball at this point," says Laura Mahr, Esq. — Founder of Conscious Legal Minds and well-being coach, trainer and consultant. "Cutting-edge firms are having — and need to be having — conversations about wellness. Firms that are ignoring mental health are going to be left behind.

But many firms don't know where to start or how to best react to the growing demand for well-being services for attorneys and staff. Read on for insights into the current landscape of law firm wellness, including the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, current trends and best practices for developing well-being initiatives.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has made it more important than ever for law firms to focus on mental health and well-being. According to *The American Lawyer's* 2021 Mental Health & Substance Abuse Survey, more than 70% of respondents said the pandemic worsened their mental health.

The silver lining is that law firms recognize how their employees have been affected and have responded. In fact, more than half of respondents in the aforementioned study said their law firm made a greater commitment to employee mental health due to COVID-19.

"The pandemic put mental health at the forefront of law firm management," says Mahr. "Wellness programs used to be seen as something that would be nice to have — and were primarily focused on workout programs or gym memberships and the physical health of employees.

The pandemic has really pushed mental health and emotional well-being to the forefront [as] a must-have for comprehensive wellness programs."

One firm that took action and prioritized well-being in response to the pandemic is Ball Janik LLP.

"If there is a positive that came out of COVID, the past two years increased our focus on mental health," says Heather Oden, Ball Janik LLP's Chief Operating Officer and member of the Oregon Chapter. "It was important to us to implement actionable tactics to create an environment that promotes sustained well-being."

“

The pandemic put mental health at the forefront of law firm management.

”

Key to the firm's approach was listening to its people to understand their wellness needs.

"With the help of our people, we recognized and identified the need for a revised work environment that centers around both productivity and our mental and physical health," says Jim Prichard, Ball Janik LLP's Managing Partner. "We instituted a new task force to focus on planning initiatives such as on-demand mental health support, flextime, regular employee check-ins and fitness memberships."

Some of the firm's new initiatives include working with LRS Architects to make Ball Janik's headquarters an inclusive, equitable and collaborative work environment and closing the office during Thanksgiving week and other holidays to encourage people to step away from work.

Most importantly, the firm is committed to staying nimble. "As leaders, it can be difficult to admit we don't have all the answers, but we made sure to communicate that this first

round of initiatives is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and as ‘work norms’ evolve, so will we,” says Prichard.

TRENDS IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING INITIATIVES

Indeed, there isn’t one standard method for promoting wellness within a law firm — firms must assess their cultures and needs to determine the best strategies. Below are some approaches currently trending in the legal industry.

1. Personalized Offerings

While group wellness programming is often a popular choice at law firms, some firms are incorporating more personalized solutions.

“I think people want to move to a place where their individual needs are addressed in a way that goes past the lunchtime presentation or the three-hour seminar,” says Drew Amoroso, Workday Strategist and Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Due Course. “Those things are helpful because they raise awareness, but if you’re talking about changing habits and routines and actual behavior change, that takes more than a one-hour wellness seminar,” says Amoroso.

For example, firms may consider providing one-on-one wellness coaching to their lawyers and staff.

“

As leaders, it can be difficult to admit we don’t have all the answers, but we made sure to communicate that this first round of initiatives is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and as ‘work norms’ evolve, so will we.

”

“Coaching is a great tool to give people the structure and the consistency that they need to enact serious, meaningful wellness changes,” says Amoroso. “People need repetition. They need accountability. They need some structure, particularly when it comes to wellness issues, because those are things that are deeply ingrained in our bodies and our minds; and when it comes to wellness, it’s hard to unwind the major challenges we have in our own DNA.”

Offering one-on-one coaching also demonstrates a firm’s commitment to each person’s needs.

“There is a kind of transformation that happens in a one-on-one session that is difficult to achieve in a group setting,” says Mahr. “When firms offer associates and partners one-on-one coaching, it sends a strong message that, ‘We as a firm care about your personal well-being.’”

2. Respite

Another trend is creating respites for those who work within the firm.

Many firms are seeking ways to incorporate rest, respites and rejuvenation, according to Bree Buchanan, Senior Advisor for Krill Strategies and Board President for the Institute for Well-Being in Law. “We’re not going to stop the profession from being stressful or high stakes — nor would most lawyers want that; they go into law because they enjoy the intellectual challenge and strategy involved,” says Buchanan. “So the question is: How do we make it a profession that is sustainable? Focusing on people actually taking their vacations and encouraging it.”

3. Rejection of the 24/7 Mentality

In this same vein, some firms are proactively setting boundaries on 24/7 availability.

Buchanan encourages firms to take a close look at their practices for responsiveness. Supervisors should be realistic and intentional about the true urgency of a project, says Buchanan, who notes that leadership should establish “guardrails” to counteract expectations that people should be available around the clock.

Simple changes like waiting to send an email until business hours — rather than the middle of the night — and prioritizing those projects that truly require immediate assistance can go a long way.

4. Resilience Training

Resilience training is another area gaining traction within law firms.

“Resilience training focuses on teaching people to bounce back from stress better than they were before the stressor happened; it is helpful for lawyering but also helpful for life,” says Mahr.

Some topics that may fall under resilience training include burnout prevention, healthy coping strategies, and wiring your brain for optimal resilience in challenging times.

Plus, “resilience training” as a title also may attract more people, including those worried about the stigma that is regrettably often associated with therapy.

“Resilience is a positive word that people can feel comfortable talking about,” says Mahr. “Who doesn’t want to be resilient? Everyone wants to be resilient. It’s easier to draw people to resilience trainings focused on solutions than to mental health trainings focused on problems.”

BEST PRACTICES FOR WELL-BEING INITIATIVES

Firms should consider the following best practices as they shape and manage their well-being programs.

“

You can learn to ask the right questions and practice emotional intelligence at the supervisory level so everyone is not only working together to get the work done but also looking at the team and the person from a more holistic viewpoint.

”

Create well-being policies: In shaping well-being strategies, firms should work toward creating formal policies, especially for those experiencing mental health or well-being crises.

“On a very basic level, take a look at the policies you have in place,” says Buchanan. “Imagine if you are presented with someone who is having a behavioral health crisis. The last thing they are in a position to do is navigate some opaque policy trail within a firm; it needs to be very explicit and clear,” says Buchanan, who refers firms to the Well-Being Template for Legal Employers by the Policy Committee of the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP) and the ABA Working Group to Advance Well-Being in the Legal Profession.

Build a culture of trust: One hurdle legal organizations must overcome when creating well-being and mental health programs and initiatives is the stigma some may feel for participating or in seeking help.

According to the International Bar Association report *Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Industry: A Global Study*, 41% of legal industry professionals surveyed “would not discuss mental well-being concerns with their employer for fear it may have a negative impact on their career.”

Firms must build trust by demonstrating that they value well-being and support everyone in seeking the assistance they need.

“My advice is to create a company culture where talking about wellness and mental health is commonplace,” says Oden. “Create opportunities where employees can give open and honest feedback and let that feed decision-making.”

Get Certified in Mental Health First Aid

Working in the legal field can be taxing. Do you know the risk factors and signs of mental health challenges? Do you know how to address them when you see someone exhibiting these signs?

ALA regularly offers the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course to provide the tools you need to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health illness and substance use disorders. Just as CPR helps even those without clinical training to assist an individual having a heart attack, MHFA prepares participants to interact with a person experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis.

This course fills up quickly, so don't delay! The fall dates are October 21, October 28, November 4 and November 11. Visit alanet.org/mhfa for complete details and to register. (Registration opens in early August, so check soon!)

Firms should also consider providing emotional intelligence (EQ) training to leaders and supervisors to nurture this culture.

"You can learn to ask the right questions and practice emotional intelligence at the supervisory level so everyone is not only working together to get the work done but also looking at the team and the person from a more holistic viewpoint," says Amoroso. "Ultimately, this is a key component in helping people prioritize their own wellness and feel heard and supported in those efforts."

Measure progress: Understanding the impact of your firm's efforts is important both for buy-in and future planning, but firms should be patient when it comes to measuring progress of well-being initiatives.

"Measuring success in something like this does take some time because the outputs don't necessarily track immediately with the inputs," says Amoroso. "So measuring the return on investment or measuring the overall mood or the environment is something that can be hard to manage, and it also takes time for these things to change."

That said, firms can take a dual approach of measuring immediate progress based on participation and collecting data to assess long-term progress.

"We are measuring short-term success by the willingness of our employees to participate in mental health conversations

around building and sustaining a better culture," says Prichard. "The long-term metrics will be fed by data we are collecting and will center around our goals for an environment that promotes retention, professional opportunities and job satisfaction."

Supporting the mental health and well-being of your lawyers and staff makes good business sense in terms of productivity and retention — and it's also the right thing to do considering the demands of the profession and the added stress of the coronavirus pandemic. Firms should consider their own unique needs as they craft well-being initiatives and be intentional as they roll them out. ■

About the Author



Mary Kate Sheridan, Esq., is a communications professional and attorney with more than 15 years of experience in the legal industry. She frequently writes about law firm administration, covering topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion; wellness; legal technology and more. This article was written solely by the author and not on behalf of any organization.

✉ marykatesheridan.com



Check Out the Latest Opportunities in ALA's Job Bank

The ALA Job Bank is *the* online resource that connects law firms, corporations, governmental agencies and similar professional service organizations with prospective candidates for nonlawyer positions.

With more than 600 open legal management positions posted each year, **ALA's Job Bank** can help you find that "next step" in your career.

- Search open positions in legal management
- Share open positions with your network
- Subscribe to our weekly *Career Connection* newsletter

alanet.org/careers

LAW FIRM RECRUITERS: Post open staff positions to attract qualified candidates with the experience and knowledge you're looking for.



An Honest Conversation About Alcohol in Legal

It can be an uncomfortable topic, but examining the role alcohol plays in your firm's culture is paramount to building a healthier work environment.

VALERIE A. DANNER
Senior Managing Editor, ALA

In 1997, when Murphy & Grantland began in South Carolina, employee wellness wasn't something the firm focused on — it just happened organically. Founded by two lawyers who valued physical fitness and community service, the firm established ways to take care of their lawyers and staff so the staff could in turn provide the best service to their clients.

Erich Crowson, an independent member who has been the Operations Officer there for two years, says given how the firm started, alcohol was never a centerpiece of workplace social functions — it remains that way today. “It wasn't the goal of the firm, but it was birthed out of who we are, and over time, it's continued,” he says.

He considers himself lucky to work for a practice where the leadership doesn't just espouse values on a website — they live them every day. The practice went from two lawyers to 27, and Crowson says those who want to practice here want that similar healthy culture experience. “I want to brag about [how] my firm really does so much right,” says Crowson. “The partners and shareholders really put their money where their values are,” he adds.

Twenty-five years later, their practice seems to be ahead of its time, as workplace wellness is top of mind for many in legal. In an industry often dominated by work-hard-play-hard attitudes, it's a refreshing turn. Because if we are going to have a genuine conversation about the state of wellness in legal, we must first have an honest conversation about the role alcohol plays in firm life.

“The cycle of stressful work and overconsumption of alcohol can lead to burnout, decreased performance and impaired healthy interactions among co-workers, not to mention the potential impacts at home,” says Pete Rubinas, Regional Coordinator with SMART Recovery. SMART, which stands for Self Management and Recovery Training, is a free community of mutual support meetings and tools for those struggling with any type of addictive behavior.

It can be particularly problematic for staff if it's a managing partner or other firm leader who struggles with alcohol. The fallout from that can trickle down and inject the entire culture with an added layer of pressure to an already stressful environment.

Given the statistics, you have likely or are likely to encounter this issue in your legal organization. A recent study from the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation found that 36% of lawyers admit to struggling with alcohol use. But it's not just the lawyers with problematic drinking habits. That same study found that when grouped together, 21% of lawyers and others in the legal profession identify as having issues with alcohol.

It underscores another point, according to Eric Webber, Program Director, Legal Professionals Program, at Caron Treatment Centers, a nonprofit dedicated to addiction and behavioral health care treatment, research, prevention and addiction medicine education: When it comes to work stresses and alcohol reliance, firms need to look beyond just the lawyers.

“I don't think this is limited to just the lawyers. I think this is a legal community phenomenon,” says Webber. “When we're talking about ALA [members] ... it's also really important to pay attention to what their needs are and recognize the pressures that members of ALA are under.” He urges legal managers to also look within their own department given the whole staff experiences the same high-stress atmosphere.

“*The cycle of stressful work and overconsumption of alcohol can lead to burnout, decreased performance and impaired healthy interactions among co-workers, not to mention the potential impacts at home.*”

As a society, we are at a crossroads in terms of our mental health. To keep moving forward, we need to take the turn that leads to building healthier habits. Depression and anxiety are

“

In my opinion, the single biggest thing that firms can do is to build safe and inclusive cultures for individuals to speak openly about the challenges that they are facing to live a balanced life in a stressful profession. Then it's up to leadership to listen, respond and be willing to do things differently than 'the way it's always been done.'

”

constant, unwanted companions for many, as well as factors that will contribute to alcoholism and other substance issues. Finding healthier ways to deal with stress is paramount.

Old habits die extra hard in legal, so it's not an easy shift for firms, particularly ones where social functions are often built around a bar. But if you are ready to start the conversation, here are some ways to make healthier habits stick in your legal organization.

CULTURE — NOT POLICY — COUNTS

For anything to stick, it has to come from the top, full stop. And it can't just be a written policy change that people read but don't actually practice.

“Quite frankly, policy is easy to change. Give me a piece of paper. Give me a computer. Give me some subject matter. I can change policy — but changing culture is a bit different,” says Webber. What will have an actual effect is seeing it in action.

When something is consistent and part of the firm's core values and beliefs where leadership sets the example, staff follows.

“In my opinion, the single biggest thing that firms can do is to build safe and inclusive cultures for individuals to speak openly about the challenges that they are facing to live a balanced life in a stressful profession,” says Rubinas. “Then it's up to leadership to listen, respond and be willing to do things differently than 'the way it's always been done.'”

Consider Crowson's example of the culture at Murphy & Grantland. It demonstrates this principle in action. Part of their

values is to invest in their people. One example is a mentoring program for associates so the newer lawyers can better identify their niche. Employees also have emotional intelligence (EQ) training, too. “We want everyone [who works here to be] better lawyers and better people.”

If some of your more seasoned firm leadership is resisting this idea, it might be worth looking to your most recent crop of hires. This is where the narrative of change struggles with Boomers against Millennials against Gen Z (somehow, Gen X seems to get omitted from these dialogues) might actually carry weight: Rubinas says it might be the younger group of lawyers and legal professionals who get momentum behind a positive wellness shift, especially as more traditional-minded Boomers continue to retire.

“It might be more effective than trying to change those who have been around for a while,” says Rubinas. He says he finds that younger generations are currently very interested in exploring alternative ways for organizing their lives, as reflected in the Sober Curious and similar movements.

COMMIT TO IT

Set expectations — then consistently demonstrate them. For example, every Tuesday at 10 a.m., Crowson says they have a voluntary 15 minutes for prayer in their firm where they pray for those in the legal community and for things going on in the world. There's another 15-minute meeting on Friday mornings for attorneys, who each take turns selecting topics. These conversations cover everything from professionalism and civility to things people want to celebrate.

“Staff knows to expect these meetings every week, so we have that block of time. It creates a formal but informal space to build connections while reinforcing the culture. It allows everyone to have shared opportunities and life experiences with one another,” says Crowson.

Carving out 15 to 20 minutes once a week might be a way to ease into getting firm leadership on board. These meetings can be focused on whatever works specifically with your firm’s culture. Maybe it’s meditation every Wednesday for 20 minutes. Or maybe it’s going around and saying something you’re appreciative for in another co-worker. The important part is just that it regularly happens.

Webber notes that at the recent ALA Annual Conference in Kissimmee, Florida, he was pleased to see offerings of morning yoga and morning walks to start the day. Just gathering with peers who understand your work stresses can go a long way.

“It might just be folks who say, ‘Hey, I’d like to get together and be able to talk about what it’s like in our particular corner of the universe,’ says Webber. He notes that those in recovery have a 12-step meeting, but it can also be less structured and just a gathering of peers who have similar firm sizes and responsibilities as you.

ALCOHOL ALTERNATIVES

Here’s where it can get tricky — how to build an event without booze. It’s become almost a reliable crutch for social events, easy to lean on and something that will draw people.

“It is true throughout much of our society that social gatherings revolve around drinking,” says Rubinas. “This makes it challenging for those attempting to limit their consumption or abstain.”

This is muddied by the fact that many activities can be paired with drinking, so having some deliberately alcohol-free events takes some work.

At a minimum, when planning events, you can have a wide variety of nonalcoholic beverages available, says Rubinas. But committing to a healthier firm culture needs to go further beyond that.

Step one is to lay the groundwork. Even when the event

is announced, be upfront about it, says Webber. “State the importance of why there is either no alcohol or limited alcohol for the event. Put your culture in action.”

At the center, these events are about the community and the collective bonding of those gathering — let your creative side take over when planning.

Escape rooms, rock climbing, driving ranges — the

“

I don’t think this is limited to just the lawyers. I think this is a legal community phenomenon. When we’re talking about ALA [members] ... it’s also really important to pay attention to what their needs are and recognize the pressures that members of ALA are under.

”

options are many, notes Rubinas. He points to the number of nonalcoholic craft beers, wines and spirits. “Some restaurants and bars are even designed around zero-proof concoctions. Visits to those establishments could be billed as opportunities to socialize with co-workers — while fully remembering the interactions!”

Crowson says golfing is always a hit, but his firm has done Spartan races, kayaking and hiking trips, and volunteer service, noting that during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, some attorneys went to Louisiana to help with cleanup efforts. The creative outings extend to their client interactions, too. Realistically, he says firm leadership understands that many of their attorneys or clients are going

to share a drink on occasion, but it's not what the gathering is built around. "We just hope that we can share life and experiences with one another."

Another element to tap into? Nostalgia.

In fact, Webber says there's value in doing things that conjure up fond memories. He suggests any activity that allows for nonwork things to happen, such as taking a fishing trip or going to a local park and organizing games that perhaps employees haven't played since they were kids. He says he saw a group in Kissimmee out on the hotel lawn playing a late night game of Duck, Duck, Goose. He can't say for sure whether alcohol was involved, but the even if it was, the fun can be replicated without substances. It's the throwback game that was the connecting element of fun.



"Put together a big hokey pokey that people are going to remember. Everybody remembers the hokey pokey. It's the absurdly silly things that people will connect with," says Webber.

It can be simple and silly but still be an effective way to get people to laugh and bond together, which is what such events are about. Plus, it's those observable behavioral changes that make the impact.

PERSEVERE THROUGH IT

There has been a lot of change in the last few years, which has been an extra struggle in a legal culture that already prefers to keep going as it always has.

Rubinas says that for too long, our professions have had the "that's the way it's always been done attitudes." But it's shifting. "Many appear to be exploring what it might look like to actually make the changes that are necessary to help their employees lead healthier lives. Considering the role that alcohol use plays is an excellent opportunity to promote wellness in the workplace."

Firms would be remiss to promote workplace wellness while not considering the impact of alcohol in their culture. It comes back to what the legal organization allows and the norms that form its foundation.

"It takes time [and] takes perseverance. It takes initiative. It takes buy in from the people who are involved in the culture," says Webber. "I think leading by example is one of the most powerful things ... garnering people's respect." ■

About the Author



Valerie A. Danner is the Senior Managing Editor of *Legal Management*. She has a bachelor's in journalism and has been writing and editing for various publications for more than 20 years.

 vdanner@alanet.org

AI Takes Aim at Busting Burnout

ALEX KELLY
Chief Operating Officer, Brightflag

Corporate legal teams — like professionals across all industries — are susceptible to burnout. The global pandemic and its aftermath that upended many of the routine ways of doing business has only exacerbated the problem, and it appears to be getting worse.

Surveys by the American Bar Association, Bloomberg Law and others point to mounting stress under the challenges of working amid the pandemic. A Gartner survey further indicated that 54% of corporate lawyers are exhausted.

But amid corporate legal teams a surprising antidote is gaining traction: artificial intelligence (AI). Such legal technology helps mitigate burnout by empowering attorneys and legal staff to do smarter, more-rewarding work, while removing the kind of repetitive tasks that drain energy and enthusiasm.

The Bloomberg Law survey underscored the risks of such mundane, exhaustive work. Average hours per week worked

(53) remained unchanged from prior surveys. Yet two-thirds of junior and midlevel associates and 4 out of 10 senior associates reported a decline in their well-being. They blamed heavier workloads and work-related responsibilities among other factors. Nearly a third reported experiencing new or worsening health issues.

Left unchecked, burnout can lead to insomnia, irritability and health issues, which in turn lower productivity, increase mistakes and erode quality of work.

To better understand how AI helps combat burnout for legal teams, it helps to take a closer look at the factors that lead to burnout.

BURNOUT FACTORS AI CAN ASSIST

Christina Maslach, Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, created a measurement tool to diagnose the problem called the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Her research



“
Left unchecked, burnout can lead to insomnia, irritability and health issues, which in turn lower productivity, increase mistakes and erode quality of work.
 ”

also noted six risk factors that can lead to burnout: workload, control, reward, fairness, community and values. For at least four of these factors, AI technology can play a significant role.

1. Work Overload

That **workload** can contribute to burnout is unsurprising. Work overload, Maslach says, not only depletes the capacity of people to meet the demands of the job but also stifles innovation. When work overload is a chronic condition, there is little opportunity to rest, recover and reinvigorate.

AI can directly lessen a legal team’s workload. Through advanced textual analysis and machine learning, AI can automate a number of tasks.

For example, legal invoice review can be done more quickly and efficiently. Time spent on discovery can be shaved by AI combing through and identifying parts of text documents, correspondence and email relevant to a matter. AI can perform contract analysis to extract business terms and track dates, parties and other information. A similar approach is undertaken with due diligence as

modern software now intelligently identifies the provisions that likely matter most in a corporate transaction.

2. Control Issues

Lack of **control** also can contribute to burnout, Maslach notes. When employees feel a sense of autonomy, and when they feel they have the necessary resources to influence decisions that affect their work, they are more engaged.

When AI performs legal invoice review, it’s not just saving time by handling a mundane task. It’s also capturing granular data: Who worked on what matter? How long? Doing exactly what? This data provides insights into a company’s legal operations. Attorneys and staff can leverage this data to prove to leadership where their time is most valuable.

3. Inadequate Rewarding

Insufficient recognition and **reward**, Maslach says, increases vulnerability to burnout. The work and the workers are devalued — people feel they are toiling and ineffective.



By performing more of the repetitive tasks, AI gives attorneys and staff more time to spend on higher level, strategic thinking. With data-driven insights, legal teams can also focus on value and efficiency.

What draws praise is results. The legal department earns recognition as a whole, and individuals earn recognition for the improved performance of outside counsel. AI empowers attorneys and staff to achieve those results.

4. The Fairness Factor

The perception of **fairness** can also impact burnout. Maslach notes that it reflects whether work decisions are perceived as fair and equitable. Cynicism and hostility can arise when people feel they are not being treated fairly.

That's where AI can also help by bolstering a sense of fairness because of the visibility it brings to legal operations. People know who is doing what, what matters are taking how much time, and where value and efficiency are found. The heightened transparency and the objectivity from the data is the long-term key to bring fairness and equity to the industry.

Burnout is the nemesis of quality work, and the high-stakes nature of legal services can compound the risk. But AI legal technology is a promising new way to reduce the factors that contribute to burnout while enhancing the job satisfaction that keeps burnout at bay. ■

About the Author



Alex Kelly is the Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of Brightflag, an AI-powered legal operations platform. Prior to founding Brightflag, Kelly advised financial institutions and global enterprises as a corporate lawyer within a large international law firm. He is responsible for growing and enabling every corner of the Brightflag team as the company aims to redefine how corporate legal services are procured and delivered.

 brightflag.com

We're the full-service
technology partner
for the legal industry.

Case Closed.



Innovative Computing Systems

— Trusted Legal Technology Partner —

30⁺ YEARS
of Excellence

Learn more and judge for yourself at
innovativecomp.com



@ICSGetsIT

Innovative Computing Systems
800.541.0450 | sales@innovativecomp.com



Mindset Reset: Take Back Control

RACHEL DRUCKENMILLER
Keynote Speaker + Leadership Trainer

Do you feel like you've lost control of your mind lately? Like you can't seem to help yourself from spiraling into negativity or fear or worry? Like your thoughts and feelings just keep circling around and recycling themselves, keeping you in a pattern of feeling stuck?

If you've felt that way, you're not alone. *And you don't have to stay there.*

You have more control than you think and have the power to reset your mindset. You can take back control of it when you feel like you've lost it.

REFRAME STRESS

When too many demands — cognitive, emotional, psychological, physical, professional, firm stresses — are placed on us and exceed the internal and external resources

we have to respond, we tend to cave under pressure. We fall apart. We break down. We feel like we can't handle *one more thing*.

That's why most of us tell ourselves we need to get *rid* of stress. But what if instead of trying to get rid of it, we *reframed* it?

I love what Stanford professor Kelly McGonigal says about how to reframe stress in her book, *The Upside of Stress*: "Stress is what arises **when something we care about is at stake.**"

It's not a sign to run away — it's a sign to lean in and step forward. The only way to not experience stress is to be indifferent and apathetic — to not care. But if we don't care, we also deprive ourselves of the experience of joy, elation and contentment.



One of the ways we can help ourselves better respond to stressful situations is to build up our resources and become more resource-FULL, so that we can rise to the demands and challenges we face.

PAUSE, BREATHE, NOTICE + CHOOSE

I've had the opportunity to learn firsthand from some of the most brilliant minds in the field of psychology and mindfulness, notably Rick Hanson, PhD, and Daniel Friedland, MD. Both have taught me about the power of the pause and the power of breathing as a way to reset our mindset.

Our brain has a built-in negativity bias, which leads us to over-learn from negative experiences and under-learn from beneficial experiences. We have a bias to be on alert to anything that might harm us or that our brain perceives as a threat. It primes us to get sucked into the negativity and fear around us during stressful events like a global pandemic.

We have two branches of the nervous system: the sympathetic system and parasympathetic system. The

“

One of the ways we can help ourselves better respond to stressful situations is to build up our resources and become more resource-FULL, so that we can rise to the demands and challenges we face.

”

sympathetic system is activated when we're in fight-or-flight mode. Think of it as your foot on the gas pedal, full speed ahead. We're meant to activate that state when we're truly under threat and need to fight back or escape, but many of us have been in that state chronically and taxed our nervous system as a result. It's exhausting to stay in that mode.

We have the ability to activate the other branch, the parasympathetic system, at will. It's activated when we are resting and digesting. It's sometimes called the "rest and relax" state. Think of it as having your foot on the brake, slowing things down and grounding and centering your body. When that state is active, we feel safe and can then access our higher-level thinking, problem-solving and empathetic skills.

In the midst of all that we can't change, reminding ourselves of what we can change is empowering. We have the power to reset our mindset. When we change our *physiology*, we change our *psychology*. In other words, we can move the body to move the brain.

Here's a simple way to start.

4-7-8 BREATHING

When we breathe — especially when we take a long, slow exhale — we activate the rest-and-digest branch of the nervous system and turn on the brake. As we calm down the body, we calm down the *mind*.

I have a video about this you can watch (bit.ly/UnmutedLife) that outlines this simple breathing practice I like to use with my clients. It helps people reset their body and their mind. As you go through the practice, notice what changes in your body, what you become aware of and how you feel.

If you have trouble falling asleep at night, use this practice four to five times before you go to bed to lower your heart rate and calm your body down enough to fall asleep. A lot of people find that it works wonders for them, so give it a try!

NAME IT TO TAME IT

When we are caught up in a reactive state of being, we tend to become consumed by and over-identify with our feelings. We say things like, “I’m so ANGRY!” or “I’m sad” or “I’m frustrated.”

As a result, we start to become our emotions. When we claim emotions as our identity (“I am fill-in-the-blank”), we feel stuck.

When it comes to our emotions and resetting our mindset, I like to use another technique that Dan Siegel, MD, calls “Name it to tame it.” The act of *naming* an emotion gives us more power and control over it and moves us into our higher brain, out of that fear-driven, reactive state.

Simply shifting our language to, “I’m **noticing** anger” or “I’m **feeling** sad” separates you from *being* that emotion and becoming so consumed by it. Some people suggest imagining your emotions as clouds in the sky passing over you rather than emotions *being* the sky — something you’re stuck in and can’t escape from.

An app I recommend using to more effectively identify specific emotions is called the Mood Meter app. (It’s only \$1 in the app store of your choice.) It splits up emotions into two characteristics — energy and pleasantness:

- High energy, unpleasant emotions would include things like anger, fury and irritation.
- Low energy, unpleasant emotions would include feelings like despair and sadness.
- Low energy, pleasant emotions include feelings that have been elusive to many of us like calm, contentment and peace.
- High energy, pleasant emotions include feelings like elation, joy, curiosity and excitement.

When we can language our feelings, we feel more empowered and in control.

LOOK FOR THE GOOD

I’d be remiss to talk about resetting your mindset without mentioning the importance of taking in the good and focusing on what you are grateful for and what’s working. What we focus on expands, and the more we intentionally shift our focus to notice the goodness in our lives (no matter how seemingly small that goodness might be), we rewire our brain.

We will not be able to control everything that happens around us. (It’s an exercise of futility to try to do that, by the way. Trust me, I’ve tried!) But we can control how we respond to what happens around us.

I hope these insights help you reset your mindset and minimize your reactivity, so you can be more responsive and feel more empowered. ■

About the Author



Rachel Druckenmiller helps organizations, leaders and their teams activate resilience, connection, engagement and energy through interactive keynotes, trainings and team building experiences.

 UnmutedLife.com

 linkedin.com/in/rachelbdruckenmiller

ALA's 2022

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS SURVEY

**Comprehensive information on law firm salaries,
benefits, staffing ratios and turnover.**

Get critical data to
benchmark your firm
against the competition.

**Purchase the
reports today!**

alanelt.org/compsurvey



Get Inspired

Life in legal is often stressful, making it hard to carve out time for yourself. These members and business partners share how they take time for some self-care.

We all know it's important to take care of ourselves but making time for it isn't always easy. That's why ALA asked members and business partners: What are ways you fit wellness and self-care into your day?

The following are their tips — as well as some fun photos!



As a time management coach, it is essential to fit in time for my health, self-care and my sanity!! This photo says it all. I enjoy Disney, hanging in my backyard, going to the gym (Lift like Luisa) and playing with my family.

Sarah M. Tetlow
Independent Member

Long ago, I started running for fitness. These days, running is my primary self-care routine. I fit it in to my day by setting the alarm at 5:30 a.m. When the sun comes up, I am out the door towards a trail near my house. Any fatigue melts away with each footstep. Some days I walk. I also take a four- to five-minute meditation break midmorning to rev up my energy levels. A yoga session at the end of the workday helps to reset.

Kathryn Simpson Vidal, CLM, SHRM-CP
Houston Chapter

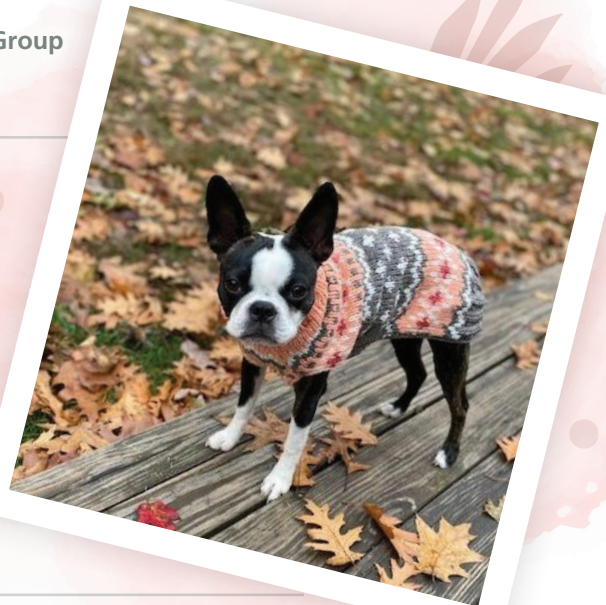




Here's my daily wellness and self-help routine ... as told through Baxter the Labradoodle's eyes:

My Mrs. is rarely stressed and is usually smiling. I take all the credit. Every day I force her to play outside. She throws my ball until I can hardly breathe. I don't mind — it's a sacrifice I make for her well-being. In the rain, she chases me through puddles. I don't understand why she gets mad — it's all about relieving stress. We start each day this way. I heard her tell Mr. it's her way of starting the day off right — all thanks to my doggy exercise plan.

Karen Scher
Affinity Consulting Group



When I need to destress, I take 15 minutes to play fetch with my Boston Terrier, Cookie. It gets me outside in the sunshine. Plus, it's impossible not to laugh as she goes from super serious, waiting for me to throw the ball, to a goofy girl bounding all over the yard with a tennis ball in her mouth! A favorite part of the day for both of us!

Kate Aucoin
Independent Member



When I need a brain reset at work, I play Spelling Bee by *The New York Times*. A friend and I have a daily competition, which I always lose. The best part is that no matter how little I play, I still feel refreshed.

Allison G. Sponic
Philadelphia Chapter

WELLNESS TIPS



For me, self-care is not an option; it is a necessity to get through the week. It can be something as simple as having a cup of tea, snuggling or walking with my dogs or getting acupuncture. Weekly, I visit the chiropractor and monthly I visit my massage therapist. When the weather is nice you might find me with my hands in the dirt planting herbs or flowers. On those extra tough days, I find peace in the Calm app. So many self-care options!

Stacie Hedrick, CLM
Mile High Chapter

At the end of a stressful day, I like to stand in the shower for a while with the water flowing over the back and sides of my head. I try to be very mindful, thinking only about the sound and feel of the water. It really feels like I'm washing the stress away.

Jill O'Connell, SHRM-SCP, SPHR
Gateway Chapter



I get up about an hour earlier than needed and do an on-demand, light workout video. They are usually about a half hour. I also take my dog out for a longer walk, too, if he is willing. Just spending a little bit of time on myself before I give what I have to work and family starts my day off on a more positive note.

Kelly Fowler
Philadelphia Chapter





My daily self-care is hopping on my Peloton Bike and riding for an hour or so. My husband and I also love to glamp in our 35-foot fifth-wheel camper. When we're on the road, I combine both by moving my Peloton into our camper, and I ride no matter where we are or what the weather. So much fun!

Lisa Sterritt
Puget Sound Chapter

A few years ago, I began taking a 45-minute boot camp at a national fitness chain that opened near me. I schedule this time on my calendar so that it becomes part of my day and not an option. Each day brings a new workout — from cardio to strength training. When I'm able, I take the noon class, and I return from it feeling energized and ready to take on the rest of the day. It's the most helpful break I can give myself as I leave the stress of work behind and focus on me. As a result, I feel less tired physically and mentally, and my stress level is improved!

Robyn Henry, MBA
Philadelphia Chapter



Schedule and discipline — it is a priority for me to work out three times each week and walk each day. I try not to schedule so much that I cannot accomplish this.

Brenda Deertz, MBA
Gateway Chapter



**Some answers edited for clarity.*

Register before
**February
10, 2023,**
and **SAVE!**



**ALA
2023**

**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
& EXPO** May 7-10

Seattle Convention Center
Seattle, Washington



**REGISTER
NOW!**

Registration Code:
B00-690-690AX10



#ALAConf23
ALAannualconf.org



NEW



ALA 2022 BENCHMARKING SURVEY

ALA's 2022 Benchmarking Survey reports on topics ranging from virtual work to firm structure to productivity. It provides important metrics on: practice areas, number of attorneys, billing/hourly rates, outsourcing, office space, support needs, and more to help maintain a current and ongoing understanding of the industry's landscape.

PURCHASE TODAY

