Work-Life Balance Committee

By: Sreelekha Haridas Maruthur

With the unrelenting pace and volume of work and the pressure to be an ‘ideal worker’, work-life sustainability has become a grave challenge. At this time, the relevance of advocating for work-life balance cannot be overemphasized. Summarizing the objectives of the Work-Life Balance Committee, its co-chair, Priyanka Talukdar said, ‘our goal this year is to continue to host discussions and programs oriented towards tackling and addressing work-life management challenges, and together come up with tools and strategies to balance the various roles in our daily lives’.

The committee recently held a successful program on the topic: The Work-Life Balance Symposium entitled, “Career Perspective: Taking leave, the logistics and implications of taking a leave of absence or negotiating a flex schedule” which featured a diverse panel and perspectives focusing on an employee’s rights to take leave to take care of a child, family member, or for disability.

Talukdar said that the importance of seeking and using support cannot be exaggerated. All too often, we create multiple to-do-lists which give us a brief sense of accomplishment, only to have a meltdown later because of things not going as expected. One way of achieving balance is by sharing roles and responsibilities and by getting support when you can, at home and at work.

However, this brings us to the big question – how do we do this without jeopardizing our career prospects? One area of focus for the committee would be supporting professionals who are required to take time off from the workforce or be on alternative work schedules due to the demands of being a new parent or caregiver to an elderly family member or owing to health issues. Though ideally one should be able to take time off or negotiate a flex schedule without hesitation under such pressing circumstances, reality is far from it.

Working mothers who struggle to balance their roles at home and work face the constant threat of being perceived as less committed to their jobs than their peers who may be without similar family responsibilities. Talukdar added, “I am a new mom, and amazing as it is, it does involve a lot of learning on a daily basis. I am also a relatively new attorney here in the United States, and therefore these formative years are really important to hone my skills and learn my craft. Additionally, I also have other roles - I am a wife, a daughter, a sister, a friend, and so forth. Balancing these roles is not easy. I am looking forward to discussing and sharing ideas and strategies for managing work-life challenges with the fellow committee members and benefiting from our shared experience.” The committee is designed to be a go-to group for exchanging thoughts and resources ranging anywhere from advice on negotiating a flextime with your boss to having a directory of good nanny services.

Finally, Talukdar said, it is important to take time to care for yourself to feel relaxed and effective. The committee will provide a platform to share ideas of creating and insisting on “me time” and encourage professionals to rest when they need to so that they can go full throttle when it counts most. The Committee will also work with employers by encouraging them to adopt progressive work/life management policies and practices so that talented women can be retained in the legal profession.

Sreelekha Haridas Maruthur is a member of Lawyers club.

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