

# My flexibility story

## Moving to sole practice is often seen as an effective way to achieve work flexibility.

Family law practitioner Shannon Daykin, who founded her Daykin Family Law practice in July this year, agrees.

"I enjoy high flexibility," she said. "I work my own hours, see clients when it suits me and am able to work around my family commitments while still providing a high level of service to clients."

Shannon says that her family was the main reason for making the change. She has three children in primary school and wanted a lifestyle in which she had time for both work and her family, being able to be part of their day-to-day lives beyond breakfast and dinner.

"There are days when you must be in court or at a mediation but, on the whole, I have found that striking a balance between work and home life is absolutely achievable," she said.

"With technology these days, there is no reason why a practitioner has to be chained to a desk or office every day of the working week. Flexibility allows practitioners to have balance in their lives, and to make room for other pursuits and endeavours which promote the whole individual. This helps to keep stress levels low and gives people greater life and work satisfaction."

Previously, she has had "some good and some not-so-ideal experiences" in seeking flexibility.

"I had experience as a junior that working flexibly meant I was not always given the most challenging work," she said. "There was a perception that the ball might be dropped when I was not there, leaving aside the fact that there were many other full-time professionals more senior than me who could assist if something urgent arose.

"When I worked in more senior roles however, flexibility was easier to gain in some firms because of the greater control over matters that came with the role. Hand in hand with this though was an understanding that there would be constant contact with the office, even on days off, to make sure that no balls were dropped. This pressure often came from myself, not wanting to let the arrangement fail.

"Ultimately, my experience has been that working flexibly has been a trade-off. It is this trade-off however that has allowed me to progress in my career while enjoying flexibility in some roles I have held.

"Also, some firms acknowledge that, by providing flexibility, it will allow the practitioner to better manage all parts of their own lives, which will lead to greater work satisfaction, productivity and loyalty. However, I have had some experiences in which flexibility has been attempted but failed because it was

perceived by others in the firm to not be endorsed at the highest levels.

"In other words, flexibility needs to be embedded in the culture and filter down to everyone in the office for it to be able to work."

She said there was an outdated perception that clients expected their lawyers to be on call at their desk 24-7. However, self-care for the practitioner remained very important, particularly in family law, and there was no need with today's technology to still be chained to a desk.

Shannon said the main drawback she had encountered was ensuring that she could find designated times to 'switch off'.

"A risk with working flexibly is that you are never quite switched off, as there may not always be a consistent daily routine of when you are, and when you aren't, working," she said.

"That said though, I wouldn't change a thing. The benefits to my family and I have been enormous."

This story appears on behalf of the flexibility working group, an initiative of the Queensland Law Society and Women Lawyers Association of Queensland. The group needs your story – good or bad. Please contact [flexibility@qls.com.au](mailto:flexibility@qls.com.au) and share your experiences with flexibility in the legal profession.

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