

My flexibility story

Placing a value on family as well as work can help retain top staff, foster loyalty and increase productivity, as this practitioner's story shows.

Kylee Ghodsi, pictured, has been with Mitchells Solicitors in Brisbane for 16 years and is a senior associate.

Kylee obtained a number of qualifications before entering the workforce full-time: a Bachelor of Laws at Queensland University of Technology, Bachelor of Modern Asian Studies at Griffith University, Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice and a Master of Laws.

She joined Mitchell Solicitors in January 1999, and in her first eight years full-time the majority of her work was practising in family law, with a little conveyancing and estates work. At that time, she said, she would have considered herself a family lawyer.

After she fell pregnant with her first child she negotiated, initially, to take a year's leave without pay.

"The firm was able to find a replacement for me to handle the family law and the conveyancing, but had difficulty securing someone to look after a relatively small caseload in estate administration," she said. "I offered to continue working on the estate administration files if I could do that work online from home.

"Estate administration proved to be an excellent fit for this arrangement, because there is less of a requirement to see clients face-to-face, and there are no court appearances. This arrangement proved very successful – so much so, that although it was initially intended to be for only 12 months it continued for eight years, during which time I had my second child."

With both of her children in school, Kylee returned to the Mitchells office in October last year, working two to three days a week during school hours with a flexible start time, which gives her the opportunity to participate in early morning school activities. She also works online from home outside of those office hours and on school holidays.

"After the children have gone to bed I can log on and complete any tasks required on any day. This flexible arrangement has worked very well for me. It enabled me to participate in the lives of my children as much as possible before they started school, to the extent that I had no need to place them in care.

"The arrangement has also worked for Mitchells Solicitors, enabling them to maintain an experienced and knowledgeable workforce.

"The firm is a small one, with a principal, five lawyers, two of whom have flexible work arrangements, and three law clerks, and it is open and supportive of flexible working arrangements. As a result, I think the employees are very loyal to the firm and are focused on making the business successful.

"At the time of making our arrangement, estate administration formed a very small part of the practice's work. Now, however, it is a much larger part of the business, and one that could have been lost to the business if I hadn't been able to do the work from home. I am now completing a Masters of Succession Law with the College of Law."

Principal of Mitchells Solicitors Bryan Mitchell said: "Some areas of the law, like estate planning and estate administration, can easily accommodate a flexible work arrangement, retaining high-quality employees and maintaining productivity. I believe in this flexible arrangement because it's important to place a value on family, community and loyalty, and because Kylee is a terrific lawyer."

Kylee believes the key to making this type of flexible arrangement work is to be organised and have the necessary technology and information systems in place.

"It also helps to have online files named in a clearly identifiable way for ease of access when I am outside of the office.

"I'm also very grateful for the high-quality support staff who work at Mitchells. The flexible arrangements in the office are made smooth and stress-free by our excellent support staff."



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 and share your experiences with flexibility in the legal profession.