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SUSAN SALTONSTALL DUNCAN • TIPS & TACTICS FOR NEW LAWYERS

Reconnect with Your Dream

Many of you may be in a different place from the one you hoped for when you went to law school. You may love your work, but feel that something's missing. Or you may be unhappy, feeling you compromised your ideals. Especially in private practice, the more idealistic side of the profession often takes a backseat to billable hours. But you can bring back the spark.

Think back to your initial hopes and desires and what attracted you to the law in the first place. Identify what's missing today. Then look for ways to pursue your broader interests to achieve greater fulfillment. Here are possible interests and activities, many of which you can accomplish through your current job.

■ **Pro bono work.** From civil rights, community development and consumer protection, to disability, family and juvenile education and challenges, there are public interest organizations clamoring for volunteers. These forums also may offer you

opportunities for earlier and more direct interaction with clients, judges and policy makers. There is an organization for just about any interest or cause imaginable—and all are in need of bright, committed lawyers.

■ **Charitable activities.** Fund-raising events like Walk for the Cure, Habitat for Humanity projects, United Way initiatives, AIDS Action, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs all offer opportunities for firms and their lawyers and staffs to get involved, not just as sponsors but as active participants.

■ **Writing, speaking, teaching.** If you enjoy writing and almost pursued a career in journalism, talk to those in your firm who are responsible for marketing to see if you can help write collateral materials, client alerts, in-house newsletters or articles for outside publications. Look for opportunities to write op-ed pieces in your daily paper. If you enjoy public speaking, seek out colleges, law schools and industry and professional organizations that are looking for lawyers to speak to groups or teach courses.

■ **Politics and public policy.** You should have ample opportunities to get involved in local or national politics, campaigns or public policy issues. But you'll want to check first with your firm to ensure that your activities will not conflict with a position that the firm or a client of the firm has taken.

■ **Management.** Getting involved in management issues can make you feel more vested in your workplace. See if you can volunteer on a firm committee or join or start a task force in an area of interest to you—perhaps diversity in the workplace, recruiting, strategic planning or technology.

■ **Building in the time.** Once you've selected an activity or two to pursue, evaluate whether you can make time for these interests in your current work schedule. Many law firms are committed to pro bono programs and nonbillable professional time. And even those without formal programs should be willing to listen. If your firm allows you to build in 100 or so hours per year, that would be ideal.

■ **Recapturing the gusto.** Cast your net, do some research and learn what's out there, and then see how much you can accomplish with your employer's support and involvement. If you don't get the support you need from your employer, you may have to build some of this volunteer work into evenings or weekends. Or you may need to find a new employer that shares your commitment and interests and enables you to pursue your ideals.

Remember, you don't want to wake up one day many years from now regretting that you never reconnected with your dream. Pursue the aspects of the law that most attract and reward you! **LP**



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