

freshout

SUSAN SALTONSTALL DUNCAN ■ TIPS & TACTICS FOR NEW LAWYERS

Create Focus and Balance

A major challenge for new lawyers is learning to balance the professional with the personal. New lawyers typically put in long hours, and for many that fact won't change as they progress to more senior positions. To avoid burnout and dissatisfaction, establish balance at the start of your career.

Set your goals. Begin by confirming that your long-term goals are in line with your values. Make a chart with five columns. Leave the far-left column blank. Title the next three columns "10 Years from Now," "5 Years from Now" and "12 Months from Now." Title the far-right column "Amount of Time Needed." Now, down the left side list the major areas in your life: Professional, Financial, Family and Relationships, Health, Relaxation and other categories of importance to you, such as Civic and Spiritual. Fill in each square with specific, measurable goals. Then write in the number of hours you hope to devote to each area per year.

Identify impediments. Looking at your 12-month goals, assess where you anticipate conflicts. You'll need to make some deliberate choices and sacrifices. If your professional goals don't align with your firm's expectations, or some personal goals look out of sync with the firm's work-life balance options, you may want to discuss

the variances with a supervising partner. Don't assume that you'll work things out down the road—that leads to misunderstanding and resentment.

Devise specific steps. If you don't attach concrete steps and allot time for achieving them, many of your goals will be pushed aside. So make a separate chart of just your 12-month goals. Next to each, list action steps and deadlines for them. Taking into account the time you must devote to the firm and to clients, look for ways in which your goals, strategies and interests could coincide with those of your colleagues and clients. Lastly, allocate an amount of time to devote to each objective on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Be there are really enough hours in the day!

Be flexible but resolute. You'll need to be able to adjust your goals during the year—and from year to year—as circumstances or opportunities change. But make it a process *you* initiate and control: Don't let outside pressures, people or events take precedence. While you have to be flexible and juggle conflicting priorities, stay focused on your values and the steps you've set for achieving your goals. ■



Susan Saltonstall Duncan (sduncan@rainmakingoasis.com) is President of RainMaking Oasis, Inc., a marketing and management firm that provides planning, consulting and training tools to lawyers and law firms. She can be reached at (203) 318-0083.

Checklist

How to Maintain Perspective

- Write an annual plan that aligns your values, goals and priorities.
- Keep your written plan in front of you. Set aside a little time each day to review your plan and consider your progress.
- Take at least one step each day to further your goals through specific actions.
- Take time to stay connected to your outside relationships and activities.
- Schedule time for exercise, relaxation, reflection and regular vacations.
- If you need to adjust your goals and priorities midyear, do so. But always stay focused on your values and the steps you must take to achieve the goals you set for yourself.
- Remember to maintain balance as circumstances change. Almost no one looks back after retirement and says, "I wish I'd worked longer hours or spent more time at the office." Make time for achieving your non-work goals.