



WOMEN IN THE LAW SECTION NEWSLETTER
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FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

A monthly series featuring women from different points of view, sharing their thoughts on career and life *from their perspective*.

Life-Size Firm Life is a Beach

Curtains hang in my boutique employment law firm. They share space with walls painted in ocean hues. Our water-colored paradise is populated with networked computers, sophisticated practice management software and all manner of legal reference materials detailing the ins and outs of defending and avoiding discrimination and retaliation claims, wage and hour issues, documenting employee performance and discipline, drafting employment contracts, employee handbooks and job descriptions, conducting workplace investigations, dealing with electronic discovery, and many other topics designed to keep us at the top of our profession. It also proudly displays mementos of our “other lives” – home and family.

Yet these reminders are unnecessary. In a “life-size” (a more apt description than “small”) firm, the professional and personal intertwine in an ever-changing balance. Practicing in a life-size firm

is like a walk on the beach. There is a continuous shifting. It does not suit all and is often more difficult than you had imagined it would be. Each day is different, just as each beach/firm is different. And, if you do not prepare adequately, you may get burned. These settings, though, offer vast expanses in which to explore your visions.

More so than large firms, it seems to me life-size firms tend to attract those with an entrepreneurial spirit. Individuals can and do have a greater impact on the personality and direction of a life-size firm. Life-size firms can be more responsive to changing needs. Decisions and directions are streamlined. There is more room for experimentation. And, flexibility is not just welcome at a life-size firm – it is essential! Every member must adapt to the ebb and flow of work and be willing to accept roles that are disjointed in larger firms.

As rewarding as a life-size firm practice can be, though, there are many challenges. Vivian Kist, Senior Executive

coach and Partner at Baker & Daboll, LLC offers the following: “Owners of small organizations do not have a large support structure and should proactively look for reliable techniques to target and understand their strengths and limitations. This will allow them to quickly focus on the areas they do best and have flexibility when deciding if they should modify their approach or surround themselves with supporting resources.”

In a life-size firm, you must be aware of your strengths and know when to get outside help. You must also understand the strengths of those with whom you share the firm and whether your strengths complement each other. Your journey on the beach is often more pleasant when you share it. It can be disastrous if you share that walk with the wrong companion. Learn enough about yourself before you embark on that journey. Article by: Michelle “Shelley” Pierce Stronczner, founding member of Pierce Stronczner Law, LLC