



Feature

Women Quitting the Legal Profession

There are a number of women who are quitting the legal profession because of various reasons. In fact, there is a significant exodus of women from the gamut of law jobs in spite of the fact that more and more women are graduating from law schools and institutions these days than men.

Women face more complex set of challenges as lawyers. Often, they have to sacrifice their personal needs to meet a never-ending stream of professional responsibilities. Women are more concerned about achieving professional success while still having a family. The long hours and complex issues make a lawyer's job a tough one. Many lawyers struggle with maintaining a sense of balance alongside a demanding career.

In fact, as the figures suggest, in British Columbia alone, there were almost 260 new female lawyers as compared to the figure of males out there, which was 231, according to the 2008 annual report of the British Columbia Law Society. The fact is that women represent a mere 34% of all lawyers in British Columbia alone and only 29% is present in full time private practice.

Although an equal number of women graduate from law school, over 70 percent of them have left the profession by the seventh year, says a report released by the National Association of Women Lawyers. Only 16 percent of those who remain in the field are accepted as equity partners in major law firms.

According to the reports of the law society, there are a lot of women who are not likely to achieve parity in this particular career field until the year 2008.

Law schools, law firms, and societies have mentioned that steps are being taken to curb the increasing number of drop outs in an effort towards retention. One of the primary challenges faced by female lawyers is family issues. A major aspect in that is having children. A lot of men as well as

women lawyers have substantial responsibilities to undertake in the family, although their goals are the same as that of men.

Often, female lawyers are unable to balance home and work. Another reason in the context is that law firms do not give them equal opportunities for growth. This is on account of gender bias which might be latent or unintended, according to the reports of a law society. One of the best practices that legal firms adopt to retain female lawyers is by pointing out that the female employees are indispensable to the interests of the firm. One of the remedies in correcting the rate of dropouts is by modifying the existing bias with the help of the following:

- Impartial evaluations
- Ensuring fair access to assignments
- Promoting flexibility of the work space
- Balancing life and work related responsibilities
- Encouraging professional networking

There are various other reasons why female legal experts quit their professions while still in practice. First, they are not well aware of the options that are available to them, and sometimes, in dire shortage of opportunities, they quit. Female law experts do not look into the alternative work related arrangements that are present in various legal ambiances. Lack of marketability is another aspect that female lawyers face. This is important if you are planning a shift of your area of focus. Ethical constraints and the emotional nature of personalities are some more reasons why women quit legal jobs.

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