

## **ABA Journal Indelicate Balance**

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By [Stephanie Francis Ward](#)

Before lawyers feared they'd be laid off, they worried about the time demands of law practice.

Deborah Epstein Henry, founder of consulting firm Flex-Time Lawyers—with chapters in New York City and Philadelphia—thinks there's a solution for both concerns. She calls it Balanomics, and it's based on the premise that layoffs and attrition of lawyers may cause problems for legal service providers, including disruption of client relationships and loss of institutional knowledge.

If alternative work plans like telecommuting and reduced schedules were allowed, Henry theorizes, then firms could save money and lawyers might find job satisfaction. "This is a chance to capitalize on a down market, afford more flexibility to lawyers and save money," she says.

Since introducing her plan in January, six law firms, two corporate law departments and 12 professional legal organizations have signed on to Balanomics' statement of support.

The director of corporate social responsibility for one signatory—Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, which recently laid off attorneys—sees some traction for Henry's concept. "When you have any sort of crisis, that's also an opportunity to be innovative," says Tania Shah, who works out of the firm's San Francisco office. "There will probably be some trials and errors, but people will try different things."

Mitch Bornstein, a Wellesley, Mass., consultant whose work focuses on associate retention, has suggested to partners that they trade a few billable hours and a little less revenue to help elevate job satisfaction.

"Instead of making \$1.5 million a year, they'd make \$1.2 million," Bornstein says. "Of course, they said, 'No, we want to make as much money as we can.' "