



Book review:

Balancing work and life: A practical guide for lawyers

LexisNexis

Authored by Julia Batchelor-Smith

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As I hurtle towards an ever-pressing deadline, I finally shun procrastination away and commit to begin reading *Balancing work and life: A practical guide for lawyers* by Julia Batchelor-Smith, which I assume is a satirical look at life as a lawyer, as surely any connection with the words 'balance' and the practice of law is an oxymoron! I am somewhat surprised to find that by the time I have read the authors note I am engaged. The author has managed to identify key areas, which if followed and put into practice, should be effective in helping you both at work and at home. Of course, any benefit rests with the individual and their commitment to change.

This book comprises of six topics, which cover areas that suggest ways in which to balance your work and home life; from progressing your career and suggesting effective practice management, whilst balancing the demands of home life.

Whilst none of the concepts are new, they are well-articulated and relevant in today's fast-paced and ever changing work and home landscape. I especially liked the concept of the 'blended work life', which with the development of technology is blurring the distinction between the office and home. This flexible working style where much work can be undertaken outside of the office, is being embraced by the younger generation, who are happy to work at times outside the traditional 1900 industrial revolution work model. Whilst the theory of flexible working arrangements can help a lawyer achieve a greater balance, the author does not examine in detail the barriers which may prevent such a 'blended life'. And as such, many lawyers find themselves taking on a greater work load and do not reap the benefits of flexibility, as this needs to be embraced by the firm's management and colleague's expectations.

The author, whilst referring to other academic theories, does not go into great depth with any concept that is discussed and at times I found myself wanting to explore in greater detail another author referenced in this book. But then again, this is a 'practical guide'—if the author became bogged down in a particular theory this book would lose its practicality.

This book is primarily focused on women and the balance they are attempting, especially when families have the demands of children as well. However, this is not a criticism of the author, rather an acknowledgement that even though men are now taking on a far greater role at home, the stay-at-home-Dad is still in the minority. Men still face career barriers if men seek to take on flexible working arrangements. This is not to say that only women should read this book, on the contrary, the first half of the book could be named a 'guide to



self-help for professionals'. The topics beg for self-reflection, which every person needs at some point. And the insightful chapters may just get you evaluating where you are in your practice or view of where you should be!

The real advantage of this book is the individual experiences that are provided at the end of each topic. The contributors range from judges to lawyers, senior or junior; private practice, government lawyers or in-house counsel. Each personal experience relates to the topic and the contributors are candid about the challenges they faced and the tools or changes that they made that helped them overcome those challenges.

Overall, I have found this book to be an enjoyable read. I found myself recommending the book to various people and some of those not even lawyers. Not all topics will be relevant to each person but other topics will strike a cord and give the reader content to think about.

Happy reading!



LAW SOCIETY NT 50th ANNIVERSARY

Celebratory Dinner

Alice Springs

Friday 31 August 2018

Darwin

Saturday 1 September 2018

