

# Ask Pat

*Dear Pat:*

I will shortly be returning to the legal profession after having taken off work for a couple of years following the birth of our first child. I was an associate with a medium-sized law firm and would like to return to the same or similar work environment but work less than full time. Do you have suggestions as to how I can balance my personal needs and professional goal to still become a partner?

*Signed,  
Busy Betty*

*Dear BB:*

Your situation is not as unusual as it might first seem. First, decide exactly how much you want to work. Some firms have options, authorizing 2/3 pay for 2/3 time or 3/4 pay for 3/4 time, for example. Other firms will make an adjustment, paying some fraction less than the time that is worked, say 70% pay for working 75% time. Some firms allow a person to spend as much as five years part time, being temporarily taken off the partner track, but this may be negotiable. I know of at least one instance where the attorney has been practicing part time for eight years and has no desire to become a partner but would likely be granted partnership status immediately if she were to ask. Again, check and see if the firm has a policy.

Second, find out if the part time includes benefits. It may, and these are important considerations, particularly for a new family. Third, the “of counsel” position may be an option. There may be more flexibility in negotiating a contract as an “of counsel,”

including the potential for becoming a partner as an option. Fourth, ask if you can be placed in an associate “year group.” Even though you are part time, some firms allow “part-time” associates to be placed in a year group, even if it means deferral of a year or two.

Either one of these latter two options may make you eligible for a productivity bonus if you work more than your agreed-to amount or it may allow you to receive a discretionary bonus, if the firm awards those. Other firms base partnership on having met certain qualifications—irrespective of (or in addition to) specific quantifiable requirements—and, of course, you need to have the endorsement of the current partners.

In examining any of the options involved, the key is to be up front about your goals and expectations. And you need to explore what all of your options might be. Most firms will work with top quality people to reach an agreement that works well for everyone.

*Sincerely,  
Pat*

*Ask Pat, provided by the Committee on Women and the Profession, will answer questions about gender bias in the legal profession. Letters are loosely based on real events. Send comments or letters to “Ask Pat,” State Bar of New Mexico, PO Box 92860, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2860.*

## 2008 License and Dues Fees

- The 2008 license and dues forms have been mailed.
- License and dues fees are payable on Jan. 1, 2008 and are late after Feb. 1, 2008.
- Members who have not received the form by mid December should notify the State Bar office, (505) 797-6092 or (505) 797-6035.
- Fees may also be paid online through secured eCommerce at [www.nmbar.org](http://www.nmbar.org).
- License and disciplinary fees are mandatory and must be paid to maintain license status.
- Without exception, fees are due, whether or not you received your form.

**Late fees may be assessed if payment is not postmarked by Feb. 1, 2008.**

## 2008 State Bar Budget Disclosure

**Available online at  
[www.nmbar.org](http://www.nmbar.org)**

**For a printed copy,  
call (505) 797-6035**

**See the Nov. 5 Bar Bulletin**

**\*\* Holiday Deadline for Notices and Court Documents: Jan. 7 Issue—Deadline is Dec. 26\*\***