

Weil Now Lets Associates Work From Home Weekly

Third-years and up can start working one day a week from home under the new policy, which the firm said recognizes that millennial expectations are “different.”

By Meghan Tribe
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Earlier this year, Weil, Gotshal & Manges announced it would shorten its partner track by two years in an attempt to retain its younger talent. The New York-based firm is now doubling down on efforts to win over associates by instituting a formal work-from-home policy that launched earlier this month.

The new policy, which officially launched Nov. 5, allows all of Weil’s third-year and more senior associates in the U.S. to work from home up to one day a week. First- and second-year associates can occasionally work remotely with the advanced approval of their supervising partners or counsel.

The idea for the work-from-home program was just one of several generated by a task force of partners at Weil who were charged in 2016 with tackling the issue of work-life balance. The shortened partner track also emanated from the task force.

Prior to the work-from-home policy’s rollout earlier this month, Weil ran a six-month trial of its



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remote working policy in New York to iron out some of the logistics and the generational kinks.

“There are differences in the generations,” said Barry Wolf, the firm’s executive partner and chair of its management committee. “Millennials are a terrific generation ... but they’re different.”

Associates aren’t looking to work less hard, he said. Rather, they’re just looking for some flexibility in the workplace. But working outside of the office

is very different from the experiences of the older generation, which had to spend sometimes six to seven days a week in the office.

“That’s what they’re used to,” Wolf said. “So it naturally would take some learning, some trying, some adapting for people now to understand that now you can work as efficiently and as well if someone is at home.”

As the war for talent heats up, many law firms have turned to work-from-home policies to cater to associates’ desires for flexibility in the workplace.

The American Lawyer’s 2017 Midlevel Associates Survey noted that work-life balance was the main motivator in whether associates might consider leaving their current firm. Last spring, Baker McKenzie, Jackson Lewis and Morgan, Lewis & Bockius all announced their own remote working policies, among many others.

But do remote working policies really build loyalty? One-third of global employees always or very often work remotely, but a recent study by Harvard

Business Review found that remote workers are much less likely to stay at their companies long-term.

The study found that only 5 percent of remote workers see themselves working at their company for their entire career, although the study is not necessarily applicable in Weil’s case, because the firm caps the number of days each week a lawyer can work remotely. The firm is convinced that its work-from-home policy, in addition to its new partner track, will help it keep and develop its younger talent.

“We’re in a professional services business and our assets are our people,” Wolf said. “You need to attract and retain the best and brightest, and this is all in that effort.”

***Meghan Tribe** is a reporter covering the changing face of Big Law, from lateral moves and work-from-home programs to diversity initiatives. Contact her at mtribe@alm.com. On Twitter: @TribeMeghan*