

Step-by-Step Guide to Negotiating Flexible Hours

and Other Taboo Work Arrangements

Empowerment Guide

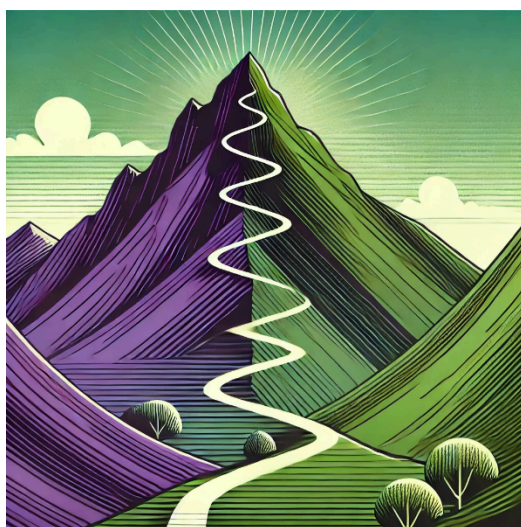


TOUCHSTONE
LEGAL RESOURCES

Step-by-Step Guide to Negotiating Flexible Hours and Other Taboo Work Arrangements

In 2024, women attorneys in private practice still face challenges when it comes to negotiating flexible work arrangements. These challenges often arise from outdated societal expectations, leaving many to juggle professional duties with personal commitments like childcare and eldercare.

The fact is...you have the power to shape your career and thrive in private practice. Use this guide to take proactive steps toward negotiating the flexibility you need, helping you achieve a prioritized life where professional success and personal fulfillment coexist on the way to **your Top of the Mountain**.



Before You Get Started: Key Tips for Success

- ✓ ***Keep the Focus on One Topic***
When negotiating, it's crucial to stay on point. Choose one aspect of flexibility to focus on, whether it's remote work, adjusted hours, or another specific arrangement. This helps prevent the conversation from becoming overwhelming or unfocused.
- ✓ ***Stay Solution-Oriented***
Frame your request as a solution, not a problem. Highlight how the flexibility you're seeking can lead to improved outcomes for both you and the firm.
- ✓ ***Anticipate Pushback***
Prepare for objections or concerns by thinking through the firm's perspective. This will allow you to respond thoughtfully and keep the conversation productive.

✓ **Be Ready to Listen – Really Listen**

Negotiation is a two-way street. Be prepared to listen to feedback and consider it thoughtfully. You're committed to finding a mutually beneficial arrangement.

✓ **Set Clear Boundaries**

Decide in advance what is non-negotiable for you and where you're willing to compromise. Don't share this information, but know it. This will keep you grounded and confident during the discussion.

You Can Do This! Solo or Brainstorm with Me

This guide provides a step-by-step approach to negotiating a flexible work arrangement—or any other professional request—with confidence and clarity. We both know you're more than capable of using these steps on your own. But if you'd like to bounce ideas around or refine your strategy, I'm here to help. Schedule a free 30-minute brainstorming session with me, and we can tackle it together. Whether you choose to go solo or to brainstorm with me, you're positioning yourself for success. **Don't settle!**

Take Charge and Navigate Your Career



Step 1: Recognize the Importance of Flexible Work Arrangements

Why?

Flexible work arrangements are not just about balancing your personal life; they are essential for optimizing your productivity and ensuring long-term success. A rigid schedule can feel like a vise, squeezing out the joy that initially drew you to the practice of law.

Action!

- ✓ Reflect on how your current work schedule affects your personal life and well-being.

- ✓ Identify specific instances.
- ✓ Write down these instances to use in your negotiation where flexibility could enhance both your productivity and personal satisfaction.

◉ Step 2: Understand Your Value

Why?

Your skills, contributions, and perspective make you indispensable to your firm. Seeking flexibility doesn't make you less dedicated; it highlights your commitment to delivering your best work sustainably.

Action!

- ✓ List your key contributions to your firm's success, including recent wins, client feedback, or specific skills.
- ✓ Reflect on how these contributions make you an asset to the firm.
- ✓ Use this list to build your case for why flexibility will not only benefit you but also enhance your performance and the firm's success.

◉ Step 3: Align Your Request with Firm Goals

Why?

Firm leaders are interested in retaining talented attorneys and are more open to supporting flexible arrangements when they align with the firm's goals. Your negotiation is an opportunity to frame your needs as mutually beneficial.

Action!

- ✓ Research your firm's mission, vision, and strategic goals.
- ✓ Identify how your role and contributions support these goals.
- ✓ Frame your request for flexibility in a way that shows how it aligns with the firm's objectives, such as improving productivity, increasing client satisfaction, or enhancing team morale.

◉ Step 4: Prepare for Your Negotiation

Why?

Preparation is your strategic edge. By approaching your negotiation with a clear, confident plan, you can navigate the conversation effectively and anticipate potential objections.

Action!

- ✓ Understand your firm's existing policies on flexible work arrangements.

- ✓ Create a detailed proposal that outlines your desired work arrangement, how it aligns with firm goals, and how you plan to maintain or even improve your performance.
- ✓ Anticipate objections your firm might have and prepare thoughtful responses that address these concerns.

⦿ Step 5: Practice Your Negotiation

Why?

Role-playing your negotiation builds confidence and helps you refine your approach. The more you practice, the more comfortable you'll feel presenting your case and responding to feedback.

Action!

- ✓ Practice your negotiation with a trusted friend, colleague, or mentor who can provide constructive, on-the-spot feedback.
- ✓ Focus on delivering your key points clearly and confidently.
- ✓ Pay attention to your tone, body language, and responses to potential pushback.
- ✓ Adjust as needed to ensure your approach feels authentic and compelling.

⦿ Step 6: Develop Alternative Plans

Why?

Just like in a game of chess, having multiple strategies ensures you're prepared for any outcome. Flexibility in your approach keeps you resilient and ready to adapt.

Action!

- ✓ Outline several potential flexible work arrangements that could work for you, ranging from remote workdays to adjusted hours or compressed work weeks.
- ✓ Consider fallback plans if your first proposal isn't entirely accepted.
- ✓ Be ready to negotiate and adapt your request based on the feedback you receive, knowing that even partial flexibility is a step toward your prioritized life.

⦿ Step 7: Initiate the Conversation

Why?

The conversation is where your preparation meets action. By approaching it confidently and strategically, you're advocating for a work environment that supports your thriving both personally and professionally.

Action!



- ✓ Schedule a meeting with the most relevant decision-maker regarding your request.
- ✓ Present your proposal with confidence, highlighting your value, the alignment with firm goals, and your commitment to delivering excellent work.
- ✓ Listen actively to feedback and be ready to discuss alternatives if needed.

What If You Learn That Your Firm Can't Meet Your Needs?

Not all negotiations result in the outcome we hope for, and that's okay. It's important to acknowledge that your firm may not be able to meet your needs, no matter how effectively you pitch your request. While this can be disappointing, it's also incredibly valuable. You now have the information you need to make informed decisions about your career.



Consider Your Next Step



Stay in a Less-Than-Optimal Situation? Use this opportunity to reset and recommit with a clear understanding of this firm's limitations.



Find a Different Firm That Will Meet Your Needs? Knowing precisely what you need and having taken the steps to address it where you are means you can move forward with confidence. You've given your current employer the first opportunity to make adjustments, so you'll feel much better about exploring other options.

Remember, no matter the outcome of your negotiation, you win. You've managed your career proactively, and you're empowered with new data points and clarity about your next move.



If You're at a Crossroads or Seeking to Reset, Realign, and Recommit to Your Career in Private Practice

Navigating these decisions can be daunting, especially when you're ready to go to market to find the firm that meets the needs your current firm can't. If you need more comprehensive support beyond the negotiation, consider my *Thrive in Private Practice: Empowering Women Attorneys for Success and Well-Being* program. I've designed this holistic, one-on-one career coaching program specifically for women attorneys in private practice. Over eight months, we'll work together to create a personalized, step-by-step strategy that aligns with your career ambitions and core values, whether it involves navigating your next steps in your current environment or finding the right firm for your current and future needs.

Remember, there's no reason to settle for less than what you really, really want. Whether you're negotiating your current role or exploring new opportunities, I'm here to help you thrive in private practice.

Let's have a confidential, complimentary exploratory call to discuss how we can work together to jumpstart your personal and professional happiness.

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Tracy Callahan, Career Coach for Women Attorneys, Touchstone Legal Resources LLC
720.318.9719 | tracy@touchstonelegalresources.com | www.touchstonelegalresources.com



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