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## Popular Threads on Solosez

### How Have Your Progeny Affected Your Productivity?

An article at Salon.com this morning piqued my interest.

[http://www.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/?last\\_story=/mwt/broadsheet/2008/03/25/billable\\_hours/](http://www.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/?last_story=/mwt/broadsheet/2008/03/25/billable_hours/)

And that led me to a blog post at

[http://legalblogwatch.typepad.com/legal\\_blog\\_watch/2008/03/the-impact-of-c.html](http://legalblogwatch.typepad.com/legal_blog_watch/2008/03/the-impact-of-c.html)

authored by none other than Carolyn Elefant. Which now leads me to presenting the discussion here. Now, I realize that surely there must be at least a handful on this list who'd gladly trade their progeny for increased productivity, but how do the presence of kids in your lives affect how much work you can accomplish?

jjr

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My kids affect my productivity tremendously. They slow down my mornings like you would not believe. I can't get out the door in the morning before 9 a.m., most of the time having to spend extra effort scrubbing the yogurt off of my clothes which my 2 year old has generously placed on them; and, once home at 5:30 p.m., my kids own my evenings until bedtime (8:30 p.m.). Throw in a few odd doctor appointments, emergency rides to dance practices, other odds and ends (this Friday I am filling in as a chaperone for my daughter's kindergarten class on a field trip to the Pittsburgh Aviary the moms are excited because now they have a man who can accompany the boys to the bathroom, which I am really thrilled about...) and it adds up to a significant amount of time. I could do so much more without them, personally and professionally. I would have more money, more time. However, I wouldn't trade it for the world. When I go home in 5 minutes from now and my 2 kids open the door for me, screaming "come in, daddy!", it makes it all worth it.

Doug Harhai

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Uh, I second that.....More specifically, they are like the zombies that eat your brain. But, unlike "real" zombies they are worth the brain pain. I, too, would not trade my brain eating kids for anything.

Dedric

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I run a very busy 6 lawyer Criminal defense and Constitutional law practice. We also employ 2 back office team members. About a year and a half ago my senior associate came to me and announced she was pregnant. She had been trying for years. She was in sheer joy, but was unsure if in our little office there would be a place for her when she returned to work. That was not an issue. I told her then that not only was I happy for her, but that she would not lose a day's time toward her partnership. It was a difficult pregnancy and she was high risk. She had to move to total hospital enforced bed rest for the 2 weeks before she finally gave birth. When she left I hired a young lawyer just out of school to make appearances and I handled her motion practice. Diane had earned a wonderful reputation in the courthouse so all the judges were great about rescheduling her docket, save one magistrate.

The Doctor could see Di was stressing and he told her his sister was a judge and could help. Turned out she was the trouble...lol anyway that finished the issue. She had Annabella in August a month earlier than expected. Diane returned to work in November. I could tell in my conversations with her that she both needed to be with the baby and needed to come back to work. Hence I made my office available to her so she could bring in a stroller and playpen. Bell is now a fixture in our office and often in court too. If clients can't deal with that, they need to go elsewhere. None have. Some are concerned when they walk into my office and see a jump swing hanging in the door way. On the other hand they see a whole different side of me when I am holding Bell. I swear that even when she is fussing she brings my blood pressure down 30 points. Diane is happy and as a whole I haven't seen a lot of negative. Everyone in the office babysits and actually they demand their time with her. Diane works from home once a week and takes off one day a week. We had a marketing meeting about a month ago. The guy who ran it showed great trepidation about both how serious we were about marketing and about how the meeting would run. After the day was over he said he couldn't believe how well it went and how having the baby there enhanced the day. It is not always convenient. But there are few days in the life of an infant. She needs to be around her mom as much as possible. Same goes for Mom. We pitch in to help, and it solidifies the team. (Watch 3 former footballers change a diaper, it is very funny). Mostly, it is and was the right thing to do.

Another of our Associates is thinking about starting her family. Before she asked I told her, she would have the same privileges as we afforded Diane and Bell. The loyalty it has engendered is worth any resulting diminish in work. Personally I think more gets done. And we all feel a little bit better about the day, when Bell graces us with a toothless smile or even sometimes a big wet kiss.

Yours,

TonyC.

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Wait until the children get older and can be in house computer experts. When I started working at home I only chose days my kids had off from school so I would be assured of having tech help when I needed it. Now

the technology has improved enough that I can survive with them only being available by cell phone for occasional assistance. So, the truth be told the presence of my kids improved my productivity!

Nancy

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I have a very familiar situation but I don't want to seem too noble. My associate is my daughter so I get to see my grandchildren a lot more than any grandparent has a right to hope or expect. With the advent of C.D.s and online research my office now has more baby toys than law books. I think my daughter still has video of me on the floor of my office complaining at length to my (then 3 month old) granddaughter who smiled at me with rapt attention while I vented for five minutes about some Judge who had just denied my case. Talk about instant stress relief and perspective.

Ken

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I grew up in family run businesses. My Grandfather had 3 fruit and veggie stands and an Italian grocery store which I lived above. At four, he would take me to the market and all of his 8 kids and 2 grandchildren worked in the stores. My sister could ring a register as fast as any adult by the time we were 5. Moreover, we learned to speak German, which was the language of our neighbors. At lunch time, Grandpa would come and get my sister and I and take us to his house. He would feed us lunch and then he would reheat the coffee he had made in the morning add a shot of Anisette (an Italian liquor not as strong as Sambucca) and the three of us would sleep. As I go older, my dad ran a construction company, and all of my uncles and cousins (the boys) worked in the construction company my dad owned. These were fun times. Sure all of the work was hard, but we talk about all the fun. That is what we remember. When I had my boys, I spent too little time with them. The culture was not forward thinking enough to allow them to come with me. Their mom had been my secretary, it should have been a natural to bring them all in to work. My oldest has been coming in and clerking since he was 13. He will soon be 20 and can do the work of a third year law student. (In fact he does better work than most). I find myself to be most at ease when he is around to depend on (although he can get on my nerves. He is after all still a teenager). He wants to work in the firm when he graduates from law school. My younger one, doesn't seem to have the same interest. He is 16 and not too interested in the work I do. He wants a more corporate world. Nonetheless, I like to have him with me, when I can coax him in. Though I didn't get to spend a lot of time with them in their infancy, I demand of myself a lot of time with them now. They are far more than kids, they are colleagues and friends I like to be around. I think the concept of Family and Team are important to the small law office. Hence I have made it clear to all of my employees and partners, that this is a place that is family friendly. As for those of you who think I am noble, I too deny the allegation. Trust me I get far more from the situation both in satisfaction and in work result for my "good deeds". That is both a byproduct and by design. I am looking forward to a long line of little ones in the office. Another positive byproduct of the baby in the office is nap time.

Every day, mom rolls Bell into my room, we close the light and she sleeps in her stroller. I nap at my desk. Our little Siesta's take about 20 minutes. After that Her mom wakes us up, Bell to a bottle, me to a coffee. I miss the Anisette. As Bell gets older, she will move on to daycare and then school. I hope oneday we have enough little ones to need to make daycare a perk and have it in the building. Watching these young families grow is fun for me. I feellike I am giving them an opportunity thatis well earned. Long gone is the day when most lawyers are the richest men in town. But there are many ways to be rich. I think there are very few whowould not trade the income to have the opportunity to work in ourenviornment.In the meantime, the only downfall is when I get frustrated and need to let off steam. Bell cries. It cramps my style. So if you see me in the parkinglot yelling at my car, please just let me vocalize, I am not crazy, it is probably just Bell's nap time.

TonyC.

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If you are as fortunate as I am to have a good relationship with your children, the answer to Carolyn's query is that the "presence of kids" in my life never ceases to, and in fact has an increasing effect on my productivity. My baby is 37. She is bright, active, self reliant, self sufficient, stay at home mom, but her presence means her presence, and that of her husband, and their 7 year old, and their 4 year old twins. My older daughter is 39, equally capable, busy General Counsel of a NY stock exchange company. She works full time. Her presence means her, and her husband, and their 2 year old. They all crave connection and ongoing assistance, which it is our pleasure to provide. The busyness of their lives seems to result in the situation that they would do anything if asked, but so long as we are able, we are still the parents supporting them (no longer financially, thank goodness). It is as if they know that at some point that responsibility will shift.I would change what Doug said only slightly. I could do so much more without them, personally and professionally. I would have more money, more time. However, I wouldn't trade it for the world. When a capable adult child asks for help, it validates the worth of a parent's life. When a grandchild sees me coming and runs into my arms with this big smile yelling, "Poppa", it makes it all worth it.

Henry R. Reckler

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My kids negatively affect my productivity tremendously.? Two boys...17 and 14.? They text message me all day long (even though they're at school) with "mom, I need 'x'" or "mom, can I [fill in the blank] after school?".? Additionally, my 14 year old is involved in lots of extra curricular things after school and always needs to be picked up/dropped off/picked back up somewhere.? Add to all of that doctor/orthodontist appointments...and my productivity on any given day is haphazard at best .I often think that when the kids are out of the house, I'll be so much more productive (read: make so much more \$\$) because I can work without so much interruption, can work longer hours, etc. But, my two boys (and husband) are ABSOLUTELY, UNEQUIVOCALLY, THE JOY OF MY LIFE.? So, when they're out of the house (my oldest goes off to college in August), the truth is that I'm going to miss them.? So, I wouldn't trade my

pesky teenagers for all the increased productivity in the world.

Traci

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Actually, when my son was a teenager he helped my productivity by working in my office answering the phones.

Marion

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My son has helped, and hurt my productivity. I would have replied to this sooner, but I've been busy with the kid. ;) My wife returned to work in January and since that time I have become a stay-at-home parent. From 6:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. it's just my son and I around the house. I fit in some work when he naps (even fit in a nap myself) and then when the wife comes home we go through a "shift change" and then I start in on my work day, from about 5:30 until 11 or so. Then it's off to bed until the kid wakes me up for food at 1 or 2, then back to sleep until 6. This is the routine Monday through Friday. So, I find myself less productive during the day yet more productive overall. Before my wife returned to work I often "worked" a 12-hour day... maybe only eight hours of actual work and four of goofing off (game playing, splitting wood, going for a walk, etc). Now that I take care of my son during the day I find that at night I tend to be more focused on my work and less inclined to goof off. I tend to work smarter and faster now. If I had to give one of them up, I would give up the practice of law to spend more time with my son (can't afford it though), but no matter what case I may settle or what deal I may close for a client, the best part of the day is making my son laugh and giggle, and I can't think of anything more productive than that.

Russ F.

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Do kids affect productivity? Let me tell you the cr\*p my 6-year-old pulled today. He woke up and announced that he was sick. I correct him and say that he is "allegedly" sick, and that his contentions have not been proven. I take his temperature, which is 100.9. He tells me again that he is sick and claims he can not go to school. Wimp. So I tell him that I have a day full of appointments, and that I will be losing approximately 7 billable hours. He runs to his room, and gets his piggy bank, and hands me \$1.93. I tell him "not good enough." After all, it's not my problem that he is sick. I didn't cause it. And I still have bills to pay. He's costing me big time, and somewhere there is a lesson for him to learn. I inform him that if he wants me to stay home with him (I'm a single parent), he'll have to pay my hourly rate. I'm not a total jerk, so I did give him a 5% family discount. He again tries to hand me the \$1.93, but I refuse to accept it, telling him that I will simply take out the 7 billable hours from his college fund. I dictated a confirming letter to him, but I'm not sure if I can bill him for that. But what is he going to do, turn me into the bar? So I billed him for the letter, plus postage. If he wants to go to the doctor, that's extra. And he will be paying my travel costs @ .50 per mile. And if there's a co-pay, let him try to give the doctor the \$1.93 and see if he takes it. If he doesn't, that can come out of his college fund, too. No free ride here. I've done

enough pro bono work this year with truly needy clients. And with a little planning, my son could have been sick on a Saturday rather than on a work day. Sickness is one way kids affect productivity.

Anthony

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P.S. My son did it to me again. He is student of the month, and I will have to attend the assembly. The subject for this month is "Respect, Caring and Compassion." That will cost him at least 1 billable hour, plus travel costs.

A.

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P.P.S. In all seriousness, I would rather be the proud parent of my amazing redheaded son than to be a solo lawyer. When the two clash, being a parent wins. I can't hardly wait until the Student of the Month Assembly. That subject means more to me than just about any other. I am so proud of him!!!! I could have been really, really upset about Victor's illness today, and 10 years ago I would have been (I have really changed). But there is nothing I can do about it. Getting upset doesn't help. In a couple hours I will take Victor to the office (I live 60 seconds from my office), run in and pick up a box of work, and come home. I'll probably get 2 billable hours in, but that's o.k. I get to spend the day with my son.

A.

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I TOTALLY LOVE THIS THREAD!! All of you are amazing. And here's 3 cheers to all of our kids and/or significant others who make life so full of meaning! Have a great weekend, folks.

Sincerely,

MA

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13 years ago when I was on trial and 9 months pregnant (working 15 hours a day), I took a day off from the office when the jury was deliberating. I told my secretary to call me when the verdict came in and I would make it downtown in time to hear the verdict. I was reprimanded by the senior partner for not being committed enough to the firm. After that, I managed to stay at the firm for one more year and then quit. I left the practice of law and now 13 years later (and six children) I am returning. I will be opening an office two miles from my home with a place for my last child, now three, to play and my other children to do homework if needed. It's so great to hear from so many that have it right with regard to family and the practice of law.

Lynda Roundtree

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Lynda, I had a somewhat related experience when I was pregnant with my last child. The managing partner came into my office in my 3rd trimester to tell me that the partners were concerned about my commitment to the

firm because I had been coming in late (9am) and leaving early (5:30pm).? He acknowledged that I was still putting in a full day, but I wasn't working longer hours like I used to.? I was sick everyday, my feet and hands were swollen, my back was hurting, I had gained 85 pounds and was HUGE....and this man, whose wife stayed home had the nerve to question my commitment to the firm because I wasn't? working 12 hours a day in my 3rd trimester!!!?But I'm not bitter, I'm over it.

Traci

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Excellent, Anthony! Nothing like having a child to whack your out of level paradigm back into shape. While I finished my undergrad, the kids were either in school or old enough to stay by themselves for a couple of hours. This was pre cell phone days. Somebody would have to find me if the kids called, so I told them the criteria: blood actively flowing, fire (get out first), or. Well, that was it. "I can't find my hair brush" would not qualify. We had to establish a habit to writing notes to remind us what we needed to talk about at dinner permission slips, birthday parties, can I get off the bus at Carly's. Later, when I had an office, they'd call to ask if they could godown the road to a friend's, lest I call home and wonder if they were dead or just messing with me by not answering the phone. I intended to go solo when I went into law school. I intended to avoid the firm billable hour requirement. My kids were 12 and 15 when I graduated. We had already spent six years of undergrad and law school learning how strong each of us was. The kids went from assembling edible ingredients without turning on the stove to having a hot meal ready to serve when I got home. They went from needing a wrangler to get their homework done to doing theirs while I did mine. They were proud of me for doing this career change from at home mom to lawyer. I was proud of them for taking such good care of me while I was out of my mind. As for productivity, because my children had proven track records, I didn't have to worry about them. 'Course they were older than Anthony's. I worked from about 8:30 to 5:00. I figured the kids would be grown and gone but family law clients are always around. Sure enough, each entered the military after high school. So never put off until tomorrow. (Unless it's a hearing for which you want a continuance.)

cj

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I am loving this discussion. At 34 weeks pregnant with my first (a girl, all key parts located and proclaimed healthy by the coolest ultrasound ever last week), 15 years into my career, and 10 years into heading my own firm with 2 associates and 5 staff, you're addressing my biggest fears! (I'm not worried about home, as I have a fabulous husband who is anxious for me to understand that he wants to be Independent Dad, and I need to \*not\* be trying to do it all.) My office, however, is a different story. So, thanks for this discussion! Its giving me perspective, and some foresight into what is reasonable and unreasonable to expect.

Mary L. C. Daniel

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Let's see, How did the kids effect my work this week... Well, on Monday I "had" to take the whole afternoon off to go the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to see the older guy perform (you can watch a great jazz performance here)

[http://www.kennedy\\_center.org/programs/millennium/artist\\_detail.cfm?artist\\_id=LOSGRINGOS](http://www.kennedy_center.org/programs/millennium/artist_detail.cfm?artist_id=LOSGRINGOS)

My guy is the tenor sax player standing next to the trombone player in front of the piano. While in DC I got to network with some friends and found a local counsel for a case I have down there... (Great I get to bill for the afternoon!!) Then over the weekend, I had to stay in NY while the same kid raised 3k for the Scleroderma Foundation by singing in and producing the multi college accapella effort entitled THE UNITED STATES OF ACCAPELLE program in Washington DC. It had singing groups from 5 different schools. They raised money on behalf of a disease that has crippled my wife, and for a group whose Board of Directors I served on for most of his teen years. I had to miss it though (and stay up really late) to pick up my younger son after he won the State Forensic Championships in JV Extemporaneous Speech! While waiting for that bus, a couple of the parents spoke to me about a case I had that got a lot of media attention. The result was that today(SUNDAY!!) I signed up two new cases!! I also have been smiling soooo hard and wide all week that my FACE hurts... Darn kids!

Proudly,

TonyC.

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