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Working Mother Names 2009 Best BigLaw Firms for Women

Posted by [ink](#) • August 14, 2009 • [Printer-friendly](#)

I've blogged before that there's a silver lining to the struggling economy: the potential for mega interest in flexibility as a cost-savings tool within the law. I'm talking cost-savings that translates into meaningful work/life balance options for lawyers, like telecommuting, "real" part-time work, and creative talent retention strategies. The newly released [2009 Best Law Firms for Women](#) by *Working Mother* Magazine and Deborah Epstein Henry's [Flex-Time Lawyers](#), shows that BIG firms might be catching on.

Note, I insert BIG here because as much as I admire this annual list, I think it's critical that lawyers, working women, and law firms keep well aware that this is a list of surveyed BigLaw firms (at least [50](#) lawyers). And, while the survey reports that these firms are "leading the charge for change", it's important to remember that there are lots, maybe hundreds or more-- I simply don't know the exact number--of other (small and mid-size) law firms that have seen the value in flexibility for years. Many just haven't yet had the spotlight shine on them, though some have received recognition for their family/parent friendly approaches (e.g., benefits, flex-hours, job share offerings, policies, compensation, part-time partner tracks), like those firms honored this past Spring by the [Palm Beach Chapter of FAWL](#).

Importantly, however, this year's list--which [looks different than last year's list](#) (some firms have fallen completely off the list)--is good evidence of what's to come in the new economy: that creative cost savings approaches and flexibility aren't going to go away any time soon within the legal profession. For lawyers and firms (and clients), this is a win-win.

What will this win-win look like? More work/life options for female and male lawyers, like increased telecommuting options (Working Mother's List found [62%](#) of surveyed firms allowed full-time telecommuting) - hey, there's a reason why virtual law practice is the latest buzz, the law is portable and why the need for overpriced office furniture or overhead when a cozy chair in a home office or beach lounge works just as well), reduced hours that still allow for benefits retention like health and retirement contributions), "hourly" gigs, contract-lawyer substitutes to cover maternity-leaves, sabbaticals, and alternative billing structures like flat-rates.

Meaningful, mutually-beneficial (lawyers/law firms) change is happening in the law. Let's keep the positive changes rolling.

Flexible lawyering is finally in.