

**I PLEDGE TO KEEP FIGHTING FOR
a world where everyone has time for work AND
family, community, and other life passions**

ThirdPath has learned so much about why this is possible, and why it benefits people and businesses. Clearly this is worth fighting for!

I want it for myself ... I also know it isn't always easy. In fact, I have been a little out of balance myself for the last 15 months as I managed a growing organization alongside some unexpected life events. In today's newsletter I share a few insights about this period of imbalance.

I want it for every workplace ... In today's newsletter we also provide an inspirational example of an organization that is doing things differently - a law firm that understands people want to do a good job at work, earn income, while also having time for life. Want to jump ahead to read this story? [Click here](#).

I want it for everyone, all across the life cycle ... This is an everyone issue. Whether you are just starting your career, expecting your first child, caring for an aging parent, or phasing into retirement - we CAN create organizations that support an integrated approach to work and life and we CAN construct public policy that makes this possible for everyone. When we do this, I also truly believe the world will be a better place.

Here's to continuing the journey in 2017!

Thanks for being part of our growing, vibrant, inspiring ThirdPath community!
/Jessica and the ThirdPath team

PS - Still looking for that inspirational organization to make an annual contribution to? It's not too late to donate to our end of year appeal. Help expand our reach, donate today.

15 Months of Overwork ... and One More to Go

In this commentary, Jessica DeGroot talks about why even the experts sometimes fail when it comes to work/life balance.

I've found the last 15 months to be very challenging, not just because of some unexpected life events, but also because our organization is growing.

Growth is a good thing. We want to reach more people with our exciting and important mission. But the trick is figuring out how to have growth happen at approximately the same rate as our capacity to manage this growth.

We very purposefully build in slower periods of work over the summers at ThirdPath so we can make changes to address these types of issues. This summer we put a great plan in place to manage this growth. However, hiring and training people takes time, so my chronic overwork continued through the end of this year and I'm hoping it will finally be behind me in the next month (or two).

Nevertheless, there is a silver lining. I now have a better understanding of what it feels like - and how I start behaving - when I'm chronically overworked. I also know that too many professionals in today's 24/7 business environment are chronically overworked. So this past year has given me greater insight into what their lives must feel like.

I like to tell people to think of their capacity for work as a glass of water. Is your glass filled to the brim? Overflowing? Or do you have a little wiggle room at the top of the glass?

When managing my capacity for work, I've learned to very intentionally plan around busier and less busy periods of work - or continuing with the glass analogy - to plan for the times when my glass is filled to the brim and spilling over, versus when I have a little extra room at the top. If I've done a good job preparing for the busy periods, I have created extra support and good personal habits to handle this peak period more effectively.

During slower periods, I use the "extra room" in my glass to make changes that will improve how I work going forward. I systematize processes, re-prioritize tasks, and decide what to delegate so that I have more time for what I am uniquely qualified to do.

However, this Fall, I could tell living with this on-going level of stress - a glass that was constantly full or flowing over - wasn't good for me.

In October, my husband and I planned a long weekend away to celebrate my birthday. I pride myself in my ability to turn off work while on vacation, and I was able to do so during this trip. But even with this break, when I got back to work, I was shocked to see how quickly I returned to the same stressed perspective I had before vacation.

Once again there was a task that needed to get done that was going to require more time than I had available. And just like before vacation, it pushed me immediately into a

stressed response, instead of being able to step back and imagine a more creative solution. [Click here](#) to read more.

Does this sound familiar? Check out our free handout - [Key Integration Practices](#) - to push back at overwork.

We Need Time AND Money

Ben Applegate founded his law firm, Applegate Thorne-Thomsen, on the counter cultural decision that instead of requiring excessive work hours to meet an inflated bottom line, their firm would value time for life alongside earning "enough" money.

Here's what Ben had to say about why this approach has been good for the people he works with AND good for the bottom line.

"Our mission statement has always been to be the best at what we do on a nationwide basis while balancing profitability and lifestyle for all of our employees."

"Anytime we bring someone into the firm we talk about our shared vision - to make a good living, but not necessarily the greatest of livings. That filter has served us very well. If we get a sense that someone who we are interviewing is only negotiating hard on salary, we know it's not going to be a good fit.

"When we started we had 4 lawyers, now we have 30 lawyers. I'm not sure if all of our success is do with our shared vision, or if it's also to do with being a mission driven law firm doing community development work. **But I do know that we never have to recruit, and we have a waiting list of people who are willing to abandon the "golden handcuffs" at their big firm positions to work with us.**

"At many big firms the target is now 2,000 billable hours in order for you to get your bonus, and you may not even get your base salary if you don't hit that target. **We have been able to build our firm on a 1700 target. It's a good trade-off. The discount on their salary is made up with more time for life.**

"It doesn't always work that way. We go through periods of 'episodic overwork' - when things pick up. But when this becomes 'chronic overwork' we know it's time to hire more people."

To learn more about Ben's firm, [click here](#) .

Or join us Thursday 1/12/17 at 1pm ET, when **Ben Applegate** and **Brigid Schulte** - author of *Overwhelmed, Work Love and Play When No One Has the Time* - help explore the forces behind our epidemic of overwork, and how to push back at them so we can reclaim our lives.