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## o work in the office or not ...

**Martini:** It is so intriguing that a question that would have seemed so easy to answer pre-COVID is now one of the toughest to figure out. The answer is it depends on numerous factors, including who you are, where you work and the level of flexibility in your job.

It also matters whether your preference is in alignment with your employer's choices or not.

I work at a firm where we have adopted a hybrid approach and my preference is in alignment with that model. I am an introvert, and while some have called COVID an introvert's dream, I could not work 100% remotely without significantly losing elements of my job that I love. The most important is being with people and connecting in person. This is after spending months working fully remotely after nearly three years since the onset of COVID. I have had enough of working fully remote.

**Susler:** For lawyers, especially greener lawyers, associates, new in-house attorneys, it is critical to work in the office a few days a week. For those in their first several years of practice, it is essential to be in the office with more senior attorneys. It is incumbent upon senior attorneys to help train the next generation.

Yes, there is much we can do just as well remotely as in the office. However, there is no substitute for what we can learn simply by being present in the same room. The subtleties of body language, energy, and nuances in language or body posture, are simply lost on little video screens. Learning how to conduct yourself in different settings requires doing so in person to truly master it.

You cannot overstate the value of simply being present to get access to new opportunities. Oftentimes, a senior lawyer or business leader needs help at that instant and will grab someone who is simply physically near them. You miss those opportunities when you are not in the office and those ultimately are the drivers of closer relationships and career advancement.

### Emotional well-being and relating to others — striking the right balance

**Martini:** Striking the balance is something that can shift from day to day, week to week. It's important to see people in person, get out of the routine of rolling out of bed and working from home. But there are times when I have a lot of in-person meetings or I'm traveling and,



## LIFE WITH ENDEMIC COVID

Walk the line of working for yourself, clients and company

By CHRISTINA L. MARTINI and DAVID G. SUSLER

after several days, I just want to work from home to balance it out.

Just as we all may feel these tugs and pulls from others, we need to understand that others experience them as well. The challenge is to not only strike the right balance for yourself but to also respect how others are making these choices while working within the framework of our employers.

**Susler:** The rules of the road today are patience and flexibility. Everyone is navigating COVID as best they can and in their own way. Some people are comfortable being out and about, some not yet at all comfortable and other are just starting to take baby steps. None of us know what challenges others are dealing with so be patient, flexible and accommodating.

### How is productivity affected by where you are working?

**Martini:** It has become clear productivity is more of a state of mind than dependent on where I work. If I create an environment where I am able to focus and can remove distractions, I am able to be productive. Lack of productivity can be caused by a variety of things such as pets and family members and socializing with colleagues and commuting if I at the office.

I try to frame each day in a way where I maximize my productivity with the understand-

ing that toggling from meeting to meeting while trying to get client work done can be difficult. It is important to structure my day acknowledging this fact and create a schedule for success.

**Susler:** It depends on how you define productivity. If that means cranking out work product, I am more productive at home. But if productivity includes enhancing creativity and relationships with coworkers, then I am more productive in the office.

The sense of communal purpose is important for overall job satisfaction and productivity. We all need at least a few days a week together in the office to achieve that.

But like many, COVID changed everything for me. As much as I enjoy the office, working at home one or two days a week enhances my overall productivity. [CL](#)

**Christina L. Martini** is a practicing attorney, author and columnist. She is a partner with McDermott Will & Emery and focuses her practice on domestic and international trademark, copyright, domain name, internet, advertising and unfair competition law.

Martini's husband, **David G. Susler**, is associate general counsel with National Material L.P., a manufacturing company primarily engaged in steel processing and aluminum extrusion. He has a general practice, providing advice, counseling and training to all business sectors and operation. To submit a question, e-mail [questions.insideout@gmail.com](mailto:questions.insideout@gmail.com)