



Beyond the Billable Hour – Balancing the Act of Work and Home

Many accountants live impossibly busy lives. Striking a balance between career and home without sacrificing professional success can be a daunting task, even for the most gifted and accomplished professional.

For people who have dedicated themselves to a career in public accounting, it's understood that they'll be working some evenings and weekends during tax season or "Busy Season." During busy season, it becomes even harder to balance work and family when you're working longer hours. In short, it can be overwhelming.

However, in the local accounting industry, there's a paradigm that exists at one firm that assumes work and personal lives are not conflicting priorities, rather they're complementary. It's the philosophy adopted by Freed Maxick & Battaglia, CPAs, Western New York's largest public accounting firm.

Freed Maxick offers a unique work/life balance for employees, which has helped the Firm meet increasing labor demands. In an industry where employee retention and client service continuity are crucial to success, Freed Maxick proves a model firm. In 2005, they were named to the list of the "Top 100 Public Accounting Firms in the U.S.," as ranked by the *Public Accounting Report* and *Inside Public Accounting*, both reputable, national publications serving the accounting industry. The Firm's robust growth is evidence that Freed Maxick develops and retains the best and brightest talent in the market. According to Julie Becht, director of Freed Maxick's human resources, "The Firm recognizes that while candidates place high importance on compensation, work-life benefits are often the deciding factor in accepting an employment offer."

With the close proximity of the Firm's client base in Western New York, and locations in downtown Buffalo, Batavia and Rochester, Freed Maxick can offer greater flexibility for professional employees to achieve a better work/life balance through less travel, reasonable hours and organized activities outside of the workplace. Many activities are geared towards spending time with family. "We want our employees to have a passion outside of accounting so they can bring a renewed energy into the workplace," Julie explains.

The Firm's unique sociable culture focuses on family, as evident at annual events like the summer family picnic, the family holiday party, Corporate Challenge run in Delaware Park and end of tax season celebrations. In addition, the Firm purchases employee tickets for Buffalo Bills and Sabres games. There are Firm softball and bowling teams, too. "We work hard together, it's important that we take some time to have fun with our families." says Ron Soluri, vice chairman of Freed Maxick.

The result? The employee retention rate at Freed Maxick is high by industry standards, giving the Firm the ability to maintain solid growth and attract some of the most well-known companies in Western New York as clients. Freed Maxick believes that just as every business deserves the best possible accounting advice, every accountant deserves dedicated support by their Firm in accomplishing his or her most important professional and life goals.

Tips for Identifying a Firm with a Healthy Work/Life Balance.

How can you tell a Firm affords a healthy work/life balance? Here are some tips:

Does the Firm allow you meet & interview with more than just an HR representative and a hiring manager? It's an important point when you consider that companies generally wouldn't allow job candidates access to "un-happy" employees. Freed Maxick recruits with a transparent "Team Approach," where job candidates meet a cross-section of people with different levels of experience and perspectives. A candidate can judge for themselves whether peer-level employees are happy working at the firm.

Does the Firm have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)? Finding a balance between work and life used to be considered an individual issue, not a business issue. But at Freed Maxick, employees and their immediate family receive automatic coverage in the Firm's Employee Assistance Program. This confidential support service assists employees with the issues that affect them most, including: prenatal planning, care giving, adoption, parenting skills, relocation, community resources, schooling, legal advice and personal illness or disabilities.

Does the Firm offer upward mobility? Employees are more content when they can broaden their career horizons. Freed Maxick offers upward career mobility, diverse opportunities and attractive salaries. Upward career mobility in the past five years has led to over 65 promotions for employees.

For more information about a career at Freed Maxick & Battaglia, CPAs, visit them on the web at www.freedmaxick.com.