



JUST ASKING

BY MARY KLEST

How do you balance personal and professional life while managing a business from home?

I asked Michael Beightol, CEO of Coyote Marsh & Associates, a public relations firm based in North Barrington.

Index cards help. Beightol used the cards to give his family a heads up when noise reduction was required. "I would tape a card to the wall in the kids' playroom that read: Conference call from 2 - 3 p.m. today." They got the message. When home is also the office, cooperation is critical. After 10 years Beightol still prefers working from home. He doesn't miss the lakefront view from his former Michigan Avenue offices or looking out from LaSalle Street to the Board of Trade. On his property is a marsh where coyote roam. "I raise my head from the desk and look out at the marsh and feel inspired." Thus the name of his company, Coyote Marsh.



Beightol started his business at home within a week of taking a buyout from the company where he had worked. Skilled associates were invited to work as a team. He described his dad as a serial entrepreneur who started companies from a card table in the living room. As a son and father, he understands that business building not only affects the CEO but Mom and kids, too. "They've always supported and trusted me to get things done. My wife, Cassidy, never said no."

His office has a separate entrance and a wall of windows that fills the space with natural light. His client list grew and so did his family. Easy accessibility to work is a plus at times and a minus at other times. "I work more hours than I ever did. But I can shift that time around." The flexibility to coach his daughters' soccer team at 3 p.m., or wrestle with his sons when they got home, was a big advantage.

Preserving capital is important for business owners. Home is an affordable place. Technology easily connects him with clients and associates. Beightol ends his business day with a workout at the YMCA. Sometimes he's joined by daughter Jennifer who also works in public relations and lives at home. The transition to family time follows the workout.

Beightol assumes the role of 2011 volunteer chairman at the Barrington Area Chamber of Commerce beginning January 1. Of his work from home status, he said: "There are a lot of us in the area. Work is being redefined and evolving. It may no longer be scheduled from 9 to 5 p.m. or require going to the train station five days a week." What is required, and what Beightol is glad to see in his grown children, is commitment to the task at hand. Even when that means conference calls at 10 p.m.

* Mary Klest is a Barrington-based writer and owner of Klest Communications, a content solutions company. For more information, visit www.maryklest.com.

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