

## Commentary: Being an 'Anywhere Attorney' Has Its Benefits

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A little after four in the morning, I clicked "send" on an e-mail with the last draft of a brief attached. There was no need to shut off the light, though, for I was neither in my office nor at home. I was also not in an airport, although I had traveled through three different airports in the previous 24 hours. I was also not in a hotel.

I was in a hospital, and, while my laptop sat balanced on my knee, my baby nephew slept within reach. As I sat watching over him, tubes, wires, whispering nurses and the steady beep of heart monitors marked the few remaining hours until morning.

When I was a law clerk, freshly out from law school, I thought it was a noble trait of our profession that we are always attorneys, wherever we may be. Like a doctor, I was pleased by the notion that my knowledge would allow me to practice law outside the four walls of my office. Then began associate life and the perpetual seeking of free legal advice from family, friends and distant acquaintances, and the drawbacks to accessibility became more apparent.

Since starting the practice of law less than a decade ago, I have also witnessed the transformation that BlackBerrys, cell phones and laptops have had on our profession. As they have increased our accessibility dramatically, so too has the sensation increased among attorneys that we are never truly "off the clock."

Of course, this accessibility affects more than just the practitioner. Plans with my wife and family have had to change on occasion because of my easy accessibility.

When my nephew was rushed to a hospital in Maine, however, I was reminded of the beneficial aspects inherent in our professional mobility. At 4 a.m. on that particular morning in early January, I was grateful that I could practice law on the move. In particular, I was grateful that I could perform my job there, in that hospital room, 600 miles from my physical office. My brother and sister-in-law had not slept in a week. After an incident with a careless nurse, they would not leave my nephew unattended by a family member.

From my office in Washington, D.C., I had flown to southern Virginia for a hearing, then to Portland, Maine, to offer what assistance I could. I had a brief due to be filed in Florida the following day, but my brother needed me. Without a laptop, wireless Internet, my BlackBerry and a cell phone, I would have been forced to choose between them.

As it was, I finished my brief that night and sent it on its way while just a few feet away lay my tiny nephew, illuminated by the glow from the screens of my laptop and his heart monitor. He was just 4 months old, a fresh scar from emergency heart surgery arcing across his tiny back. It had been only a week since his ambulance rush to the hospital, only a day since we began to believe he would survive and smile once again. Because of my laptop, cell phone and BlackBerry, I did not need to choose between my work and my family. Instead, I laid down my laptop and picked up my nephew to give him the bottle he was just barely healthy enough to want.

Some days, it is a burden that we are always lawyers, always accessible, always able to connect and practice wherever we may be. Sometimes, though, it is a blessing.

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