

work *with Me*

Huma Ahsan

An immigration lawyer makes the case for better work-life balance

They may be trained negotiators, but historically, lawyers haven't been the best at negotiating a healthy work-life balance. Theirs is a professional culture that pushes for grueling work hours while putting personal lives on hold in order to scale the career ladder. That is, unless you start playing by your own rules—which is exactly what Huma Ahsan has done.

Determined to buck the 80-hour work-week trend, Ahsan, who's been practicing for more than a decade, opened her own firm, Madison Immigration Law, in 2010. A mother of three, she's used the firm to not only create a more balanced working life for herself, she's honed her focus on immigration, an issue of personal and professional passion.

What is your connection to the immigration process? I was born in America but my parents came from Bihar, India. I also married an immigrant and watched him go through that process. After I had kids I realized that I wanted to do something more meaningful with my life, which led me into working in immigration. **What's it been like owning your own firm?** It's a one-woman show right now, but so far it's great. It turned out to be the right decision. The firm has continued to grow since opening and I see clients from all over the world. **What's the biggest challenge local immigrants face?** The wait. Many have the expectation that it's going to be over in a few months, but there can be a huge wait. **In the immigration reform being debated in the U.S. Congress, what changes would you like to see for local immigrants?** The biggest impact could be on those wanting a temporary worker visa (H-1B visa). H-1B visas are available only to workers in occupations requiring highly specialized knowledge—generally with a bachelor's degree or substantial experience. This year the cap on H-1B visas was met in about five days. Legislators have proposed increasing visas in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.



Photo by Shanna Wolf