

With Some Very Busy Thumbs, Munger Tolles' Martin Estrada Manages His Day

The father of two boys says the key to making life run smoothly is lots of communication throughout the workday with his wife, Kerry O'Neill, an assistant U.S. attorney.

By Leigh Jones

How does Martin Estrada run a Big Law litigation practice, raise two young boys and maintain a healthy marriage with a federal prosecutor? Texting.

Estrada, a partner in the Los Angeles office of Munger, Tolles & Olson, says the key to making life run smoothly is lots of communication throughout the workday with his wife, Kerry O'Neill, an assistant U.S. attorney. "We're constantly texting and calling each other to make sure everything's covered, to make sure each of us is taken care of," said Estrada, 40.

That's not an easy task, given that the busy lawyers, who live in Venice, California, have David, 11, Gabriel, 6, and an albino gecko named Nitro, 1.

Estrada, a former federal prosecutor himself and a Stanford Law School graduate, handles high-profile cases that include LG Electronics' massive antitrust litigation and Wells Fargo litigation alleging unlawful sales practice allegations.

Still, getting home before his boys go to bed is an overriding objective for him. Here's how he makes it work:

Early Rise and Paddle Boarding I get up around 5:45 or 6. It's usually spontaneous, but we have back-up alarm if we don't wake up. The first thing almost always we're

on the phone checking emails that came in in the morning. I have clients in Asia and also the East Coast. I'll shoot off a response to the emails that can be responded to quickly. Sometimes I get up earlier, like at 5. I usually run four to five miles. I sometimes swim or do stand-up paddle board. My wife and I trade off. Sometimes she'll go to the gym or go for a walk. The kids will wake up between 6 and 6:30.

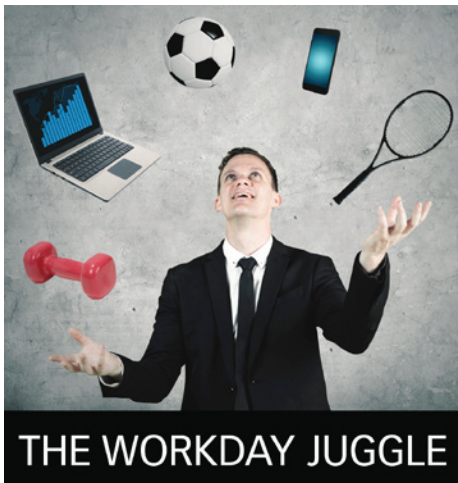
Banana Republic Man Getting them ready requires a lot of parental involvement. It's kind of like a relay race where you pass the baton. We have different approaches. My wife's is more toward the reasoning approach. I have more of the drillmaster approach. Both approaches work; they just require a lot of involvement. I wear a suit to work. In the government I was indoctrinated to wear a suit everyday. I also went to Catholic school, so I got used to wearing a uniform. I used to get my suits at a shop in the garment district in downtown LA. Now I tend to get them at Banana Republic, part of that's because it's easy to order online and for some reason they fit me perfectly. I don't have to tailor them.

Quick Bite and Out the Door We get them downstairs for breakfast by 7 at the



Kerry O'Neill, left, and Martin Estrada, right.

very latest because we have to be out the door at 7:20. I grew up eating cereal every day of my life, so I give them cereal, nothing fancy. I kind of regret that I never got in to coffee because my family's from Guatemala. Coffee's a big deal there. But my dad was never in to coffee. I just don't like the taste. My wife is always giving the full effort. Sometimes she'll cook them eggs or something a little different. Generally my wife takes them to school. I take them maybe one day a week. The person taking the kids to school will spend more time in the morning getting ready. If I'm taking the kids to school, I'm leaving school around 8:10, 8:15, and I get to work by 9.



Docked and Rolling First thing I do when I get to work is dock my computer and respond to some emails. When I'm not traveling, I tend to do a lot of depositions and hearings. Let's say it's a deposition day: I will respond to all the work I need to do. Get people rolling on that and then review and prepare for the deposition. If I don't have that, I try to compartmentalize my day because it will be filled with meetings and with calls. I normally keep the door closed because I have a lot of calls, and I use the speaker. Today I have a hearing. I've been doing this for a while, I have a lot of experience, so I'm not as nervous as I used to be. I've never been a procrastinator. I always create outlines and bullet points, so right now I'm just doing my last review. But sure, every time you go into court there's little adrenaline.

Secret Stash I usually eat lunch at around 12:30 or 1 o'clock. I'll go to Grand Central Market. It's like a foodie's dream. It's a bunch of small restaurants that have established themselves there. I go to this cheese store that has amazing salads. They have a farro salad and a kale salad. I'll usually get one of those. I also maintain a stash of cereal in my office. If it's really

bad, I'll just have cereal and keep working. I like Trader Joe's granola-style stuff. I'm a big Trader Joe's fan. I also have this box in a cabinet in my office. It's filled not only with cereal but with all kinds of nuts, so I'll graze basically all afternoon.

Stand-up Guy My whole day can be like meetings to calls to meetings to calls. I have a stand-up desk. It adjusts up and down. That sort of keeps me moving. Another thing I've gotten into lately is I have a balance board, and [the trend] has spread throughout my firm. We kind of have fun, but it also improves balance. I also have a table if I need to read something or prepare for a hearing or depo or call. I'll sit at the table and review materials.

Pickup Time If my wife gets the kids, and she generally is able to, I'll leave the office between 7 and 8 to try and get home before the kids go to bed. That's always my objective. Sometimes my wife has a board meeting or has to work late, then I'll get the kids and that will be around 4:30 or 5. They'll want to do something fun. We live in a cul-de-sac, so a lot of time they'll go play some basketball or soccer or something like that. I'll get them to unwind, get their dinner ready. I'll set up the laptop and do some work while they're eating, and then I'll put them to bed.

Trader Joe's at Home We'll have something relatively simple for dinner. A lot of times we'll order out. We'll order pizza, Whole Foods, Mexican. But not too much eating out. Eating out is kind of a rarity. We'll cook pasta and some chicken sausage. My wife likes to make a big batch of food over the weekend, like lentils. Sometimes we'll have Trader Joe's pot stickers or Chinese chicken. Whoever does the pickup of the kids will

cook. Generally, we cook for the kids and scrounge for ourselves.

Down for the Count The kids go to bed a lot of times at 8:30. After they have dinner, they'll do homework or watch TV. My youngest is now into chess, so I'll play with him. Then we have to get them to shower and brush their teeth, and that's always like the hardest task. We like to let them read a little bit to sort of quiet the mind.

Sweet Work Usually there's a little bit more work to do. A laptop is really essential for me and for my wife. I take mine home every day. She takes hers home every day, in order to be able to have some flexibility for the kids. Sometimes I'll leave early for my son's soccer or year-round baseball. To do that, I'll need to do more work once they go to bed. My wife does the same thing. If my wife picks up the kids, she'll need to go back on the computer to review some briefs or something like that. I'll do that as well. After the kids go to bed, we try not to have snacks, but I have a sweet tooth, so that's my big sin. As soon as the kids go to bed, I'll try to find something sweet—chocolate-covered pretzels or something like that.

Netflix at Night We also like to watch something, like a Netflix show together. We like different things. She usually wins. She likes lately "Grace and Frankie." Before that we watched "The Crown." I tend to like more crime drama. I used to do organized crime work, and I like watching the crime dramas. I'll watch those sometimes after she goes to bed. We go to bed generally between 10 and 11.

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