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Go Forth with an Open Mind and Be Passionate About What You Do

A self-described “Type A planner,” Christina views her busy life as a constant motion involving the juggling of five balls: work, family, health, friends, and spirit. Being especially busy during her residency training, she came up with strategies to ensure that all of these important balls stayed in the air. As a millennial, it is no surprise that Christina’s strategies involved the use of technology, including ASHP’s Connect platform to network with her professional colleagues. An advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) rotation during her last year as a student pharmacist ignited her interest in association management as a career path and led to her current role at ASHP.

Christina Y. Martin is currently Director of Membership Forums at ASHP. Before joining the ASHP staff, Christina was Pharmacy Supervisor at Ann B. Barshinger Cancer Institute at Lancaster General Health in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She received her PharmD degree at the University of Pittsburgh and a MS in Pharmacy Practice Management at the University of Kansas, where she also completed a combined postgraduate year (PGY) 1 and PGY2 residency in health-system pharmacy administration. She is an active member of the American Society of Association Executives, currently serving on the Young Professionals Committee. Outside of pharmacy, Christina practices Bikram yoga and enjoys home brewing with her husband.

Christina advises: ***Go forth with an open mind, be passionate about what you do, and share your strategies about how to juggle those five balls.***



Dear Young Pharmacist,

Although my current responsibilities as an association executive no longer deem me an essential employee, it is still essential that I continue to juggle the balls of work, family, health, friends, and spirit. The transition from residency

to workforce was especially difficult to manage, and I would have benefitted immensely from the career transition resources that are now available to students and residency graduates. I am excited that we are more transparent in our conversations and more honest about those transitions.

More than 4,000 residents are transitioning into the workforce each year. We jokingly call the first post-residency job a “PGY3” (postgraduate year 3) and spend weeks to months (the first 90 days) exploring how we start juggling those five balls again. One strategy that worked for me, as a Type A planner, was to schedule the activities corresponding to those five balls on my work calendar. Scheduling a 5:15 p.m. yoga class on my work calendar held me accountable to leaving the hospital by 4:50 p.m. I shouldn’t neglect mentioning that there were exceptions to the rule—drug shortages that required immediate attention, picking up a staffing shift during peak flu season, and unscheduled disruptions to information system interfaces—but integrating family picnics or happy hours with friends into my calendar helped keep the juggling act in motion.

Similarly, I scheduled local chapter meetings and ASHP advisory group conference calls on my work calendar. Some employers perceive volunteer organizational involvement as part of the work day, while others view it as an extracurricular activity. It is important to clarify which stance your employer (or future employer) holds on organizational involvement. For me, I’ve worked for both, but I didn’t let that deter my decisions to attend a state society meeting or skip lunch so that I could participate in a committee conference call. The intangible benefits of participating in a conference call, learning from my peers, and having an opportunity to ask a practice issue question to a seasoned practitioner overfilled my bucket more so than a 30-minute lunch break.

I am frequently asked if I miss direct patient care activities and if I will return to pharmacy practice. I’m still at a point where I’ve been in association management for fewer years than I practiced as a licensed pharmacist. My earliest pharmacy experiences were as a pharmacy technician in a chain grocery store pharmacy for 3 years before working and learning in a community teaching hospital. I thrived on the “every day presents new challenges” phenomenon as a pharmacy intern and immediately knew that hospital and health-system pharmacy was my desired end-point. I enjoyed taking ownership of operational responsibilities while fulfilling inpatient pharmacy technician responsibilities, as well as incorporating didactic training into clinically oriented projects with our inpatient pharmacists and clinical specialists.

In reflecting on the satisfaction and motivation that those earliest health-system experiences afforded me, it is not surprising that *responsibility* and *input* are my top two strengths (per the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment). I enjoy all aspects