

Law Firm Tips: 8 Tips to Start Your Own Virtual Law Firm

It's a time of unprecedented change within the legal industry, and in response, many attorneys are making major career changes. From seasoned attorneys branching out independently to new attorneys entering the profession in the middle of a pandemic – increasing numbers of legal professionals are opening their own practices. But in the midst of these precarious times, physical office space may not be the best option. Done correctly, a virtual office arrangement can be just as effective while providing an extra layer of precaution.

This post will explore the necessities of launching and setting up a virtual law firm. From the administrative considerations to securing necessary resources, keep reading for 8 tips to starting your own virtual practice.

Tip #1 Make a Business Plan

Any successful endeavour needs a plan of action, and your new virtual law office is no exception. Whether you are opening a brand-new practice or transitioning from a physical office, take some time to write a detailed business plan that walks you through the entire process and proactively address challenges. Your plan should include various components, such as:

- An Executive Summary that includes your mission statement, a general firm description, and financial information.
- A market analysis that considers the supply and demand for your legal services within your practice and geographical area(s).

- An organization chart that lays out the structure of the firm, including each of the positions within the practice.
- A service description of your firm's practice areas, including hourly rates and fee schedules.
- A marketing plan that lays out what efforts will be made to market the firm, attract potential clients, and secure new matters.
- A financial projections section that lists the financial goals of the firm, as well as earnings and cost projections.

Tip #2 Establish a Workspace

You may not have a brick-and-mortar office, but you still need a physical location to complete your professional tasks each day. Decide where you want to locate your workspace. Do you have a dedicated office within your home or will you multipurpose another area of the house? Whatever the case, think about what you will need to make this workspace a productive one. Some of those considerations include:

- Your desk and chair
- Lighting
- Storage space for office supplies
- Privacy and client confidentiality
- Internet access
- Your surroundings for virtual meetings

Tip #3 Establish Your Processes

Efficient and effective flow within a law office is critical for success. Without the right processes in place, firm members can waste substantial hours trying to reinvent the wheel and figure out administrative duties. Even more challenging is the fact that within a virtual environment, firm members are not within the same space to easily share ideas and information. For this reason, it is extremely important to have clearly defined administrative processes in place right from the start of your new firm.

Think about how you and your staff will handle situations such as:

- Potential client consultations
- New client intakes
- Mail distribution
- Document storage
- Internal communications
- External communications
- Time tracking
- Client invoicing

Once you have made these important decisions, reduce them to writing by creating firm manuals and standards of operations.

Tip # 4 Promote a United Firm Culture

With firm members working from various locations, it can be difficult to establish a unified firm culture. When working from home, some employees experience feelings of isolation and depression. Work against these risks by creating activities and practices that foster a unified culture and include every firm member. Virtual events like team competitions, lunch chats, and book clubs can promote cohesive and positive virtual work environments.

Tip #5 Think About Your Clients

You and your firm members are not the only ones experiencing your firm in a new or different way. Your clients are also having to deal with situations that are far from their expectations about working with a lawyer. Make sure that the virtual nature of your firm does not diminish the client experience or your firm's ability to provide clients with stellar legal services. Consider circumstances like:

- How you will hold client meetings
- How documents will be securely delivered to clients
- How will you keep clients updated consistently?

- What technical resources do you need to meet client needs within a virtual environment?

Tip #6 Use Effective Technology

Technology is important within any law office, but it becomes crucial for law firms operating virtually. You need tools in place that can be accessed and utilized by appropriate members of the firm as they work from various locations. Some common legal tech options include:

- Practice management software
- Cloud-based document storage
- Online research tools
- Time tracking software
- Cloud-based legal billing platform
- Client Management software

TimeSolv legal billing software offers a variety of features to help law firm leaders manage their practices, track time, create invoices, and collect payments efficiently. With its cloud-based technology and numerous integrations, TimeSolv helps virtual law firms stay on track and profitable.

Tip #7 Internal & External Communications

If your new virtual law office will include a team of attorneys and support staff, you will need internal communications tools that allow all members to interact with one another quickly and easily throughout the day. The rise of virtual work environments has ushered in a variety of communications options, including chat apps like Slack and collaboration tools like Microsoft Meetings. Do a little research to find the best option for your firm.

It's also important to consider what tools you will use for external communications with clients and other legal professionals. With everyone working from different locations, the use of various home and cell phones

can make a law firm appear unprofessional to potential and existing clients.

VoIP technologies allow law firms to seamlessly communicate with their clients and colleagues within a virtual environment. Calls are routed over internet protocol networks. Therefore, regardless of where firm members initiate calls, the recipient sees one consistent telephone number for the firm. In addition, when clients call into the firm, they use one standard number that can be routed to firm members no matter where they are physically working.

A client portal can also assist with external communications by providing a tool for disseminating information and updates to clients in a secure and virtual manner. With this technology, your clients can independently log into their secure accounts to view updates, review invoices, and pay their legal bills.

Tip #8 Online Payment Options

A virtual law firm needs tools in place for collecting online payments. In the age of social distancing, many consumers prefer online transactions because they don't have travel to an office or put a check in the mail. Whether you accept payments through your client portal or include a payment button on your website, online payment options translate to quicker compensation for your firm and fewer resources spent on collecting unpaid invoices. Your law firm staff simply sends out invoices electronically and clients can pay them upon receipt.

Use These Tips to Plan and Set Up Your Virtual Law Firm

If starting a virtual law firm is on your to-do list, use these tips and strategies to turn your dream into a reality. To learn more about all that TimeSolv has to offer virtual law firms, click [this website link](#) for a free, no-obligation trial.