

Ten practice management tips for starting your own law office

So, you want to hang out your shingle and start your own law practice? While a successful firm requires that you skill and knowledge about the law, it is also vitally important that you also understand the business and management side of running a law firm. Without adequate practice management, you may quickly find yourself closing the doors on your fledgling law practice. The following are ten practice management tips to consider before you hang your shingle and start representing clients.

1. A business plan – Every successful business starts with a business plan. How can you reach your goal of running a successful law office if you have no plan to guide your steps. As explained by the [New York City Bar](#), creating a business plan forces you to carefully consider important elements of running a law practice that you may not otherwise think about ahead of time. A typical plan includes various sections, such as:

- Executive Summary
- Services Offered
- Financial Plan
- Management and Organization
- Marketing Plan

A comprehensive business plan identifies the goals of your firm and provides a recipe for meeting those goals. It also helps you anticipate potential problems that may arise in the management of your law office. Taking the time to consider these challenges ahead of time can better equip you to effectively handle them should they ever actually arise.

2. Find your niche – Successful law practices are increasingly embracing specific practice niches. This means that, instead of practicing generalized law, they focus their representation on particular types of disputes. There are numerous advantages to establishing a niche. For one, it allows you to

fully develop your knowledge and experience in a specific area, which helps to establish you as an expert among other attorneys. A niche can also help you become the go-to person for other attorneys in your locality who may not be as knowledgeable in your particular practice area. Use your interests and prior experiences to guide you in choosing the right niche for your practice. The ABA Solo, Small Firm, and General Practice Division also offers some guidance on choosing the right niche in this [article](#).

3. Marketing plan – A marketing plan is essential for getting your new firm in front of potential clients. Determine how you are going to market your practice, based on your practice goals and budget. Remember that your marketing plan can entail numerous elements, including your website and social media presence. Consider what will be most effective at getting you in front of your ideal client. For example, many attorneys have done away with their print media marketing efforts. However, if your practice area focuses on a specific industry, a print advertisement in an industry newsletter or trade journal can prove extremely valuable for getting clients through the door..

4. Low overhead expenses – When starting your law office, try to keep your overhead expenses low. To do this, you may think about an office sharing arrangement or find a space that includes utilities costs in the rent. You can also minimize costs by limiting your staffing to the bare minimum. You may even want to consider working with contract legal assistants and paralegals to help with the workload. Also, carefully shop around and compare prices when choosing your service providers, including your internet provider, custodial services, etc.

5. Cloud based systems – Having a personal server in your office can be expensive and inefficient. It requires a dedicated area of your space, which may necessitate a bigger space than you would otherwise need. Installation can be extremely expensive, along with regular updates and service calls when something goes wrong. Cloud-based storage is much more cost-effective and convenient in today's mobile world. Stay clear of law office management systems that require a dedicated server. Instead, opt for more innovative cloud-based systems.

6. Comprehensive time tracking and billing – Speaking of cloud-based systems, be sure to choose a time tracking and billing system that

encompasses this technology. TimeSolv is a legal billing system that provides your office with highly secured and innovative time tracking and billing capabilities. Not only is the system easy to use, but it also promotes accurate time tracking and comprehensive invoicing that your clients will appreciate. Learn more about TimeSolv with a free no-obligation [trial](#).

7. Consider contract work – The first couple of years can be rough for a new practice as you struggle to find clients and establish your practice among the more seasoned attorneys in your area. Contract work is providing other attorneys with particular tasks. For example, a larger law firm may contract you to review trial documents or make court appearances. These arrangements can be useful for bringing in some money, but they can also help you gain valuable experience and may even lead to your own firm clients.

8. Find a mentor – Don't try to go it alone. The practice of law is extremely challenging, but an experienced mentor can provide insight that makes these challenges significantly easier to handle. Many state and local bars have mentoring programs to assist attorneys. Take advantage of these resources right from the start of your practice.

9. Insurance – When calculating your costs and expenses, don't forget about your insurance needs. From liability coverage to health insurance, it is imperative that you maintain insurance for your own good, as well as the protection of your clients. Take the time to compare coverage options and costs. A reliable and established insurance agent can be valuable in helping you make the right insurance decisions.

10. Take care of you – Remember that the most important aspect of your new practice is you. Depression and anxiety is much too common among attorneys. Start your practice off right by taking the time to care for yourself. Limit the amount of hours you put in at the office. Establish strict business hours and stick to them. Allow yourself time for physical activity, as well as spending time with your family or friends. By making these efforts now, you can establish positive habits that will help you maintain your mental and physical health for years to come.

Opening a law practice is no easy task. Make sure you get a strong grip on the management side of this new endeavor, so you can focus your efforts

on building and helping your clients.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.