What's in a name? Considerations when Choosing a Name for your Law Practice

When you are ready to open a law practice, one of the most important decisions you will make is choosing a name. Your firm name is your first introduction to the world. It conveys a message before you even open your mouth or practice one minute of law. When choosing a name for your practice, here are some important points for consideration.

What you want it to convey

When choosing a name, consider what image you want to convey to the public. Do you want to focus on your practice area or on yourself? There is a growing trend towards firm names that reflect a specific area of law, like Davis Employment Counsel, or Tucker Immigration Law. These names let potential clients know exactly what the focus of the firm is from the beginning.

Easy to remember

For marketing purposes, you want a name that is easy for potential clients to remember. When an individual contacts a law firm, it is usually because they are experiencing some level of crisis. While I would hope that these individuals are doing their research and choosing an attorney based on merit, I am convinced that a lot of these quick decisions are based on name recognition.

If the individual does a quick internet search or browse through the phone book, a name they recognize is far more likely to catch their eye.

Using your name or names

We've all seen the big law firms with seven surnames on their letterhead. While this may send a traditional and conservative message, it can become a problem at a growing firm where partner changes may occur regularly. Constant changes hurt your brand recognition and also send a message of instability… not to mention the cost of constantly changing your letterhead, signage and business cards.

Ethical considerations

State bars have numerous rules about law practice names and what is appropriate. For example, some states do not allow words like "specialists" or "experts" to appear in the name of your firm. In some states, you must be careful about using terms like "associates" or "group" if you are a solo practitioner. "Offices" may cause an issue if you only maintain a single office location. Be sure to reference the regulations of your state bar association when choosing a name to ensure that you are in compliance with the rules.

What's in a name? A lot, especially the name you choose for your law practice. Make this a thoughtful decision and consider all of the positive and negative consequences that can follow from your choice. With a little consideration, you can come up with a name that will proudly represent your practice for years to come.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to TimeSolv and a variety of other publications.