

DON'T GO IT ALONE

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN STARTING YOUR LAW FIRM

August 15, 2021

The thought of starting your firm can appear overwhelming at first glance. What area of law will you practice? Are you missing a key element in your budget? How will you find clients? Law school prepares you to successfully represent and advise your clients not how to start your firm. When the rubber meets the road it's time to think like a business owner - not like a lawyer.

This guide is intended to walk you through the high-level points of starting your solo or small firm. Each section includes a list of action items to accomplish. We advise you to cross-check these recommendations with your local and state regulations as they will vary based on your location.

Action Items:

- Speak with a solo or small firm attorney in your community about their experience opening the firm.
- Outline your budget with allocated amounts for office space, furniture, technology, employees, insurance, and marketing.
- Conduct a self-assessment. How can the firm you are starting support your dream lifestyle and personal goals?

THE OPERATIONS

The long-term success of your firm is dependent on the key operational decisions you make in the very beginning months. Where do you want to be located? How much of your budget (if any) do you want to allocate to office space? Reference this portion of the guide for office, supplies, and technical guidance.

Find a place for your firm to call home: Post pandemic, it has become increasingly popular to conduct business from home, the office, and everywhere in between. Finding a home for your firm could look like working from a coworking space, private office, or from the kitchen table of your exotic beach house. The beauty of it is that you get to decide! We recommend launching from a legal suite such as Liberty Law Suites. These spaces help with stress reduction by providing socialization, networking, professional resources, and saves you on office administration costs. Our executive suites are fully equipped to help you proudly grow your book of business alongside a community of professionals doing the same.

Action Items:

- Find a co-working space in your hometown using our guide at <https://www.libertylawsuites.com/read-this-before-selecting-an-executive-suite-for-your-new-law-firm/>.
- Reach out today to see how you can become a member of Liberty Law Suites at <https://www.libertylawsuites.com/contact-us/>.

Optimize your workflow with technology: Did you know that lawyers spend an average of 2.3 hours per day on billable tasks (according to the [Clio Legal Trend Report](#))? The more you streamline the operational side of your firm - the better. Technology is here to help. If you would like additional technical support, LegalFuel hosts a free technology CLE course. View their course offerings at [https://www.legalfuel.com/filtered/?cle\[\]=technology&content\[\]=lct_cle](https://www.legalfuel.com/filtered/?cle[]=technology&content[]=lct_cle).

Action Items: Explore the following subscriptions for your firm.

- Bookkeeping and accounting software (Ex: Quickbooks)
- Billing and time tracking program (Ex: Clio)
- File and document storage (Ex: Dropbox, O365, Google Drive, NetDocuments)
- Graphic design and marketing material program (Ex: Canva)
- Project management and operational tool (Ex: ClickUp, Teams, Asana)
- Automation tools (Ex: Zapier)

Equip and design your space: In the words of Marie Kondo, the celebrity professional organizer, “the items you fill your space with should spark joy”. As you invest in furniture, artwork, and office supplies thoughtfully curate a space that inspires you.

Action Items: Reference the shopping list below.

- Pens, pencils, highlighters, and permanent markers
- Printer, printer paper, Ink
- Stationary with envelopes and stamps
- Notepad or journal
- Banker boxes
- Sticky notes
- Paper and binder clips
- Stapler
- Tape
- Rubber bands
- Desk
- Desk chair
- Lamp
- Two comfortable chairs for client seating
- Filing cabinet
- Framed diploma
- Artwork/Decor

Secure Insurance: Professional liability insurance protects service-based professionals such as lawyers, doctors, or accountants in the case of malpractice. Depending on your practice area, there may be additional coverage that would complete your protection plan.

Action Items:

- Speak with an insurance professional.
- Register for LegalFuel’s CLE Course on Professional Liability Insurance at <https://www.legalfuel.com/professional-liability-insurance-everything-you-need-to-ask/>.

THE BRAND

Before starting your firm, you likely had little control of your previous employer's brand. A brand encompasses the name, colors, logo, fonts, and any other feature unique to how the brand is positioned. The brand guidelines are used to develop marketing collateral such as your website, business cards, and social media graphics. The firms that are committed to

carrying out their brand guidelines, continue to establish and build their reputation. For example, if you were walking down the street and saw a shirt with a small orange checkmark, you could safely assume that their shirt is from Nike. So how can you create a brand that emulates those principles?

Action Items:

- Download our "The Power of a Name: Choosing a Name For Your Law Firm" at <https://www.libertylawsuites.com/e-book/lorem-ipsum-is-simply-dummytext-of-the-printing-industry/> and name your firm.
- Read and stay in compliance with The Florida Bar's advertising rules at <https://www.floridabar.org/ethics/etad/>.
- Contract a local designer to develop brand guidelines.

If you are on a smaller budget, DIY your brand with the following recommendations:

- Choose your brand color palette. Need color inspiration? Utilize the free color generator, Coolers, at <https://coolers.co/>.
- Create your brand logo on Canva (but be sure it's something you can trademark in an effort to further protect your brand). View their templates at <https://www.canva.com/logos/templates/>.
- Determine your font suite. Learn more about how to pair fonts at <https://www.canva.com/learn/the-ultimate-guide-to-font-pairing/>.

Build your Website: With the virtual nature of business today, you will need a thoughtfully designed website. After all, your website is a 24/7 office for prospective clients to visit. At a minimum, your website should include an overview of your education, services, testimonials, and contact information. As you expand your book of business, invest in establishing your online presence with client testimonials, community involvement, and an extended explanation of the services you provide.

Action Items:

- Contract a website designer like [309 Marketing](#) to build your website two months before the launch.
- If you are launching your firm with a smaller budget, create your website using a Wix finance & law template. Browse the free templates at <https://www.wix.com/website/templates/html/business/finance-law>.

Design Marketing Collateral: Marketing collateral such as a brochure is a powerful way to communicate your specialty to potential clients as an extension of your brand. These materials must align with your predetermined brand colors, fonts, and graphics to portray a professional brand. At a minimum, your brochure should include your educational background, services, contact information, and testimonials.

Action Items:

- Design and print a Brochure
- Design and print business cards
- Design and order a banner
- Explore additional promotional materials such as pens, banners, shirts, or name tags. What's something you love to get? Maybe that's your big promo item. Think useful....

Set Up a Google My Business Profile: What does a prospective client do when seeking representation? They go to Google. Search-ability is key for solo and small firms establishing their clientele in the local community. The Google algorithm rewards longevity and consistency. The sooner you create your profile the better. This profile is where your future clients will write reviews and reference information such as your office hours, address, and office phone number.

Action Items:

- Create your Google My Business profile at <https://www.google.com/business/>.

Determine your client acquisition strategy: No one knows your community and practice area better than you. When it comes to getting the word out about your firm, how can you leverage your network and platform to build a book of business?

Action Items: Explore the following marketing and advertising strategies.

- Local community network groups such as the chamber of commerce or BNI
- Actively posting on social media platforms
- Sending a monthly email newsletter
- Signing up for lawyer referral services
- Engaging in paid advertising via television or radio
- Securing organic advertising opportunities via podcast interviews or thought leadership features

The fact of the matter is that opening your solo or small firm will be a challenging yet rewarding adventure. You will have full control of the creative direction, client projects, practice areas, and ultimately its future success. Lean on your community of fellow solo and startup lawyers by becoming a member at <https://www.libertylawsuites.com/our-memberships/>.

This Blog was written by Liberty Law Suites, Director of Operations, **Katelyn J. Dougherty, JD.**

DISCLAIMER: This blog is for educational purposes only and does not offer nor substitute legal advice. Additionally, this blog does not establish an attorney-client relationship and is not for advertising or solicitation purposes. Any of the content contained herein shall not be used to make any decision without first consulting an attorney. The hiring of an attorney is an important decision not to be based on advertisements, or blogs. Liberty Law Suites expressly disclaims any and all liability in regard to any actions, or lack thereof, based on any contents of this blog.