

I had the pleasure this week of attending my first Lawyers Connect event at the [New York City Bar](#), and it really was the first time I was out and about talking with other attorneys or recent law grads about where I've come from and how I've moved my solo practice along. And the one thing a lot of recent law grads asked me was: weren't you scared? And to be honest, I never really thought about it, because if you really do love the practice of law, which I do, then you'll do anything to get back into a court room and practice.

I know many others have done this, but I wanted to do a little FAQ about what I needed to do to get a solo practice going.

How do I even begin to start a firm?

Now, although there are a bunch of side things to worry about (malpractice insurance, New York State DOS filings, taxes, etc.), ultimately you don't actually need to do anything to start a firm, but simply be a sworn attorney admitted to the bar in the state they want to practice law. In terms of everything else - office, staff, advertising, law library, or company car - none of these are needed to actually start your firm.

If a client or family/friend says to you "I need a lawyer for something" then you need only say "ok, tell me more" and you have a firm going. You're not having the case given to you by a superior. You're not getting this client because they're on retainer with the firm. They came to you because they need a lawyer, and you just may be able to help them. Now, go figure out what they need to have done and do it, and bam - you have a case under your belt as a solo attorney.

Don't I need a lot of money to get a whole firm going?

Does money help build it faster? Of course. Will it help generate leads and advertising on a larger level? It can't hurt. But, is having a large amount of money saved up a prerequisite to starting a firm? Not at all. One of the first cases I took as a solo practitioner was a DWI case. My client essentially just needed me to represent him in court for the hearings. If he needed to contact me he called my personal cell phone. If he needed to e-mail me, I had my personal e-mail address. I didn't need any law books to read - everything I needed was available in some online database, whether it was through [FindLaw](#) or [NYSBA](#) or through [NOLO](#). But I didn't

have to spend one penny to get this client, nor spend anything beyond transportation costs to help win his case. Neither do you.

Well how much DO I have to invest to get something going?

You can get Lawyers.com to build you a [website](#) and list you on their directory for \$300 a month. Once you get that website going, you can then figure out how much you have to spend left over each month and how much you need to invest. Sites such as [JDSupra](#) and [Nolo](#) are great for the next steps - trend reports, client referrals, document sharing, etc. You can also get tips and hints from other solo/small firm lawyers at sites such as [Lawyerist](#). After my website was created, I have bookmarked pretty much every single site, both legally focused and social media/marketing focused that I've used to help grow my firm. You can find them all bookmarked on my [Delicious](#) account.

I didn't have a concentration in law school, so what areas should I concentrate on?

Nobody really has a "concentration" in law school. And most of what you learned in law school was more applicable to answering long questions on the Bar exam than that client who just asked you to do their Bankruptcy case, where you have no idea how to do a Bankruptcy. But think back to your internships / clerkships / prior jobs, and think about how much you knew about what you were doing before you started doing it. Usually....none, right? We learn best by just "doing." You know how you learn how to do a Bankruptcy without having taken a Bankruptcy course? You go to the [US Bankruptcy Courts page](#), you read the instruction booklet, and you start filling out the documents. Need to do a divorce? Everything you need to know and how to do it you can find [online](#).

The fact is, you'll never learn it better than by doing it yourself, and once you do it yourself, you'll be that much more "seasoned" on the topic and ready for the next divorce or bankruptcy client to contact you.

That's not too bad.

No, it's not too bad at all. So, for those attorneys who are:

- Unemployed.
- Underemployed.
- Not happy working in a big firm.
- Ready to take charge and do things on their own.

Then you're all set to start your own solo practice. See, there's no reason to be scared.