# Best Practice Areas for Solo Attorneys: A Guide

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Deciding to go solo is one thing. But the next step—choosing which legal practice area to focus on—is another challenge entirely. What are the best practice areas for solo attorneys? Should you follow your passion … or follow the money?

When you're building a new solo practice, choosing the best legal areas to focus on can be overwhelming. But with the right planning, research, and tools, you can make more strategic decisions to set yourself up for success.

Below, we'll review important considerations when selecting law practice areas as a solo attorney. We'll also take a look at some of the possible legal practice areas for solo attorneys. And, we'll explore why they're good choices for solos in particular to consider.

### What are the best areas of law to practice?

While there are many complexities to consider when choosing your solo practice's focus—it's important to say this from the start: The best area of law for you is an area that you are interested in, that you have an aptitude for, and that you're excited about.

There's no one-size-fits-all best solution when it comes to the legal practice areas. The "best" practice areas look totally different for different attorneys. Focusing on an area that you think will make the most money—but bores you to tears or that doesn't align with your values—will likely leave you unhappy and won't motivate you to go after the success you originally envisioned.

## What to consider when choosing the best practice areas as a solo attorney

### Think about what's important to you

One of the main draws of going solo is a desire for freedom—whether that means freedom over your time or over the workload you take on. With this in mind, it's key to define what you want from your practice before you select a focus.

Take some time to consider your strengths, temperament, and interests. This can narrow the field to the areas that are best suited to you. Do you thrive in a high-pressure, high-emotion environment? Acknowledging that may guide you towards practice areas like family law—where thriving amidst personal drama can be a strength. Are you happiest digging into detailed documents? You might be drawn towards real estate law.

Keep in mind that your capacity, marketing budget, and client base won't be as robust as a big firm's when you start as a solo. Choosing a legal niche that you care about lets you stand out from competitors—which can translate into more business and higher rates for your solo firm.

## Consider if it is the right time to start a solo practice

As eager as you might be to start a solo practice, it's important to take a hard look at if now is the right time to do it. Consider the economy, your family situation, and your personal financials before you take the leap.

## Determine the tools you need to start on the right foot

If you're concerned about starting on your own without the resources of a larger firm, tools and technology can help. Leveraging tech like legal practice management software can improve your efficiency—saving you time and money that you'll need for your solo operation.

Clio's cloud-based software helps solo practitioners more easily manage the business of running a law firm. By leveraging legal-specific software like Clio, you can streamline client intake and automate time-consuming administrative tasks. Legal practice management software like Clio also helps you better manage and organize cases and documents.

With the right tools to help you be your most efficient, you can remove certain time limitations and barriers that might otherwise hold you back from focusing on certain legal practice areas as a solo.

## Be sure to plan, plan, plan!

No matter which legal practice areas are the best fit for you, start with a plan. While it certainly won't hurt, you don't necessarily need a lot (or any) money to start a law firm—but you do need a realistic strategy. Here are some important things to consider:

### 1. Your law firm business plan

Even if you haven't yet decided which practice area you want to focus on, spend some time drafting your law firm business plan. Key elements—like defining your firm's values, researching a market analysis, and considering financial factors like your start-up budget—might provide insights on the law practice areas best suited to your situation.

### 2. Your law firm budget

While you might not yet be able to finalize it, you should also start thinking about and drafting your law firm budget. By working out your cash flow and expense expectations, you'll have a more clear-eyed vision of what you need to do—which might also help your consideration of legal practice areas.

### 3. Marketing

As a solo law firm, your business will depend on getting your name out there, and the job of marketing will fall on you. Will you specialize or choose a niche to set yourself apart? How will you make sure you have a great law firm website?

This episode of Adriana Linares's *Legal Talk Network* podcast offers some tips on smart marketing and SEO for solo lawyers.

## The best practice areas for solo attorneys: Areas to consider

If it's the right time, you've got a plan, and you're set up with the right tools, then it's time to choose which law practice areas are best for your situation. Let's review some of the legal practice areas that tend to be best suited to solos—and why.

## Bankruptcy Law

If you have an aptitude for numbers and financials, you have the empathy to work with clients during a high-stress time, and you aren't itching for a ton of court time, bankruptcy law could be for you.

Bankruptcy law lends particularly well to solo practitioners because solo lawyers are often able to give more personalized, one-on-one attention to client's cases from start to finish. Instead of dealing with support staff at a larger firm, many bankruptcy law clients look for a

lawyer who can focus on their unique situation—offering assistance as both a lawyer and an advisor during trying financial times.

Bankruptcy law is also well-suited for carving out a niche in order to more easily market your services as a solo attorney—and a niche could be necessary to success, as it can be a very competitive field. Consider specializing in a particular type of bankruptcy law, or pairing bankruptcy law with a related field, like tax law. In doing so, you can expand your client base as a solo—becoming the expert for clients dealing with bankruptcy law and tax law issues, for example.

## Business and Compliance

As long as there are businesses, business and compliance lawyers will be in demand—hiring a business lawyer is essential to any successful business. However, as a solo lawyer, it's important to have a strategy if you want to focus on business and compliance law.

Business and compliance attorneys find clients among businesses, corporations, and organizations. As a solo practice, the strategic planning side of business law (helping organizations with navigating their legal transactions and planning their growth) could be a good area if you focus on small business clients or a specialized niche. After all, solo business and compliance attorneys understand the challenges that small business owners face themselves.

## Civil Litigation Law

If you thrive in a busy environment, are up to the challenge of arguing, and aren't afraid of taking on conflict on behalf of your clients, taking on civil litigation work can be an exciting and engaging field. Civil litigation is suited to solo lawyers who excel at organization and juggling multiple aspects of cases. Your time will be devoted to managing clients' cases, court dates, procedures, and reacting to your opposing counsels' various maneuvers.

## Employment Law

Employment lawyers focus on assisting clients with their relationships with their employers—whether that means evaluating employment contracts, filing discriminations complaints, negotiating settlements, or representing clients in court.

This is a good focus for a solo attorney who has skills and an interest in negotiation and mediation. In addition to advocating for your clients' employment legal issues, you'll also need to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in statute and case law—while practicing empathy and managing sensitive client relationships.

# Estate Planning Law

Estate planning law—working with wills and trusts—can be a successful practice area for solo attorneys who are detail-oriented and able to deal with complex family and financial situations on behalf of clients. Remember: As an estate planning lawyer, your clients' legacies are in your hands.

With competition from other lawyers (as well as from people turning to template and online solutions for estate planning like wills), you may want to consider combining with a related practice area (like tax law) or find a niche or specialization.

# Family Law

As a solo attorney, family law uses an aptitude for empathy, conflict-resolution, and counselling by working one-on-one with clients during high-stakes legal issues—those related to family. From divorce to child custody to adoptions, family law means helping people face the most difficult and emotional challenges of their lives. While the weight of this reality can heighten the stress of working with this practice area, it can also be rewarding to make a difference in people's lives.

And, for a new solo attorney starting out without an existing client base, family law offers a wide net for finding new clients as family law issues are (unfortunately for your potential clients) incredibly common.

# Immigration Law

From helping clients through marriage visa applications, working to keep families together, or fighting deportations, immigration law requires a high degree of empathy for clients' stressful personal and family situations. You'll also need an ability to manage important details on documents and forms. If you're bi-lingual or multi-lingual, this can be a big asset for marketing to and communicating with new clients as a solo attorney.

# Intellectual Property Law

From preparing patents to prosecuting, intellectual property law puts the onus on you to protect your clients' rights and obligations when it comes to intellectual capital. For solo attorneys, this means working with complex copyright, patent, and trademark cases. This can be a great way to put a scientific or engineering background to use.

Intellectual property law requires a high degree of technical and scientific knowledge for success. It is also among the most financially rewarding. According to the most recent *Legal Trends Report*, Intellectual Property lawyers charge $414 per hour—making it one of the practice areas with the highest average rates.

## Personal Injury Law

Being a personal injury attorney puts a unique frame on legal work. Many of your clients will also be dealing with the physical, emotional, and psychological repercussions of an accident or injury. Therefore, helping clients navigate the claims process during a recovery requires a high level of empathy and patience. You'll also need to have a level of comfort with reviewing medical information. If you have these attributes as a solo attorney, you can help clients navigate difficult legal issues. This can be a challenge for clients who are dealing with pain and trauma.

## Real Estate Law

Real estate attorneys focus on legal matters related to property. They also cover property sale and purchase transactions, mortgage documents, title issues, and even landlord and tenant disputes.

For a solo attorney, this is a smart legal practice area to consider if you're detail oriented. You'll be dealing with a lot of documents that must be correct. This is also a great niche if you enjoy more transactional legal work.

## What are the best practice areas for solo attorneys? Whatever's best for you

Choosing the best law practice areas for solo attorneys can be a complex process, and there are no easy answers. However, take the time to think through and plan before starting a solo practice. You can then guide yourself to the best legal practice areas for you. These could be areas that you find exciting, that play to your skills and strengths. Or they could be areas that can sustain your solo practice. With the help of the right technology and marketing, you can build a solo practice that's successful and sustainable.

## About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.