Lawyer Side Hustles: 6 Ways Attorneys Can Earn Extra Income

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The gig economy is no longer a novelty. Having multiple income streams of income is increasingly valuable, smart, and possible—even for legal professionals. These income streams can come in the form of lawyer side hustles—a job that you work on top of your main full-time job.

According to this recent Zapier survey, 34% of American adults have a side hustle, and 24% plan to start a side hustle in 2021. While some attorneys may balk at the idea, it's worth noting that the median annual salary for lawyers in the U.S. is around $145,760 (reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Despite this, many lawyers face financial challenges such as student loan debt, high living costs, or the desire to save more aggressively for the future. A lawyer side hustle can be a convenient, clever way to advance your career or financial position.

The right side hustle allows lawyers to capitalize on their hard-earned skills by providing a flexible way to supplement their income. With the right side hustle, lawyers can save money or pay down student debt more quickly. By choosing a side hustle in legal, lawyers can develop legal skills, build their brand, and further their expertise. Alternatively, a side hustle that's not legal specific can be a good way to earn additional income while allowing you to apply different skills.

One caveat: Lawyers need to consider their capacity when exploring side hustle options. Working as a lawyer is already stressful, so it's essential to avoid overwork. Consider a lawyer side hustle if it works in your specific situation. Working additional hours has benefits, but not if you're experiencing lawyer burnout.

However, if you have the capacity, skills to share, and motivation to earn additional income, a side hustle could work great for you. Begin by considering what type of side hustle appeals most to your current situation and interests. To help guide you, we've rounded up six types of side hustles for lawyers.

How can lawyers earn passive income while practicing law?

Lawyers can earn passive income while practicing law by exploring side hustles that require minimal ongoing effort. For instance, they can write and sell legal eBooks, create online courses or webinars, license legal templates, or invest in real estate and dividend-paying stocks. These ventures not only provide an additional income stream but also allow lawyers to leverage their expertise and interests in ways that complement their legal practice. By carefully managing their time and ensuring compliance with ethical rules, lawyers can successfully balance passive income opportunities with their primary work.

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6 Side hustles for lawyers to earn passive and additional income

1. Additional legal work

As an attorney, your most obvious and lucrative side-hustle assets are your education, skills, and experience as a lawyer. So, consider looking for ways to take on additional legal work in your field.

Before taking on extra legal work as a side hustle, ensure there are no conflicts with your current role and that you're properly insured. This guide to freelance lawyer work can offer tips on essential factors to consider.

To find additional legal work more easily, you can turn to technology and an established platform for help.

For example, UpCounsel, is an online legal services marketplace that lets lawyers choose the projects and clients. UpCounsel connects businesses with legal services and attorneys on demand, making finding legal work easier for you. As a result, clients can also find lawyers more easily.

2. Educational instruction

Do you have a lot of valuable advice for new lawyers or law students? Are there things that you wish you were taught in law school that you can pass onto the next generation of lawyers? Do you have experience or interest in teaching? If so, sharing your knowledge can be a rewarding side hustle—both intellectually and financially.

Here are a few lawyer side hustles that leverage your knowledge and experience:

- **Tutoring**. Law students preparing for the bar exam often need help. An experienced lawyer can help guide them through the process with paid tutoring services.
- **Teaching**. If you enjoy teaching, look for opportunities to work as a part-time instructor for a local college. Be prepared for an ongoing time commitment if you take on teaching a course. For example, do you want to lead a one-time course, or can you teach a weekly class over a semester?
- **Educational content creation**. From creating bar exam prep materials to law-related courses, you can create and sell courses on an online course delivery platform like Thinkific and Udemy. While developing course materials may require a more significant initial time investment, the one-time investment can continue to bring in income—and grow your reputation—over time.

3. Legal writing and research

If you have a talent and interest in legal writing or legal research, you can translate those skills into extra income.

Suppose you're adept at powerful, persuasive legal writing. In that case, you could write legal articles for legal publications, potentially government institutions, or even companies looking for legal content writing (like the Clio blog). Similarly, if you're great at conducting legal research, you could take on additional work through an online marketplace like Upwork. As with any legal-specific work, ensure there are no conflicts with your primary full-time job before taking on extra work in legal writing or research.

4. Transcription

As a lawyer, your training and experience writing legal documents make you uniquely equipped to efficiently and effectively transcribe audio into well-written legal documents. These legal documents include legal pleadings, motions, or videoconferenced depositions and interviews.

Again, online platforms can take the work out of finding side hustle gigs: companies like SpeakWrite, E-Typist, and Cambridge Transcriptions offer remote work for legal transcription.

5. Writing an eBook

If you enjoy writing and you have unique knowledge that may be interesting or helpful to other legal professionals, writing an eBook is a way to monetize your experience while building your brand as a legal professional.

Why an eBook versus traditional print publishing? With an eBook, you can self-publish directly to Amazon's Kindle marketplace for free—which means a quick turnaround, no intermediary, and almost no overhead costs. Once written, an eBook serves as a passive income stream—you bring in more revenue over time, without additional work.

If you're thinking of writing an eBook, consider the following:

- **Choose a topic you already know well**. If writing an eBook is your side hustle, write about something that you already know a lot about instead of diving into a new topic. This lets you effectively sell your knowledge in an eBook.
- **Polish and proofread**. Publishing an eBook is incredibly easy to do nowadays, but it's still essential to resist the urge to publish right away. Ideally, you should hire a professional copyeditor and proofreader to polish and catch any typographical mistakes. Remember that your eBook will showcase your professionalism and personal brand. That's why it's crucial to put your best presentation forward and minimize distracting errors.

6. Low barrier of entry side hustles

Not all side hustles have to be in the legal industry. A side hustle that's unrelated to the legal space could be a welcome distraction from your regular legal work.

While side hustles that don't require specialized training pay less generally, they can motivate you to take breaks from the stress of legal work. Look at the non-lawyer tasks that you enjoy. Then, see if there's a way you could get paid for doing them.

If you love dogs and want to get more walks, for example, you could sign up for Rover to get paid to stretch your legs and take a dog for a walk. Or, if you like to ride your bike, you could take on food delivery as a side hustle. You can also look for ways to turn unused assets into income. Renting a spare room in your home on a short-term vacation site like Airbnb, for instance, can turn wasted space into a side hustle.

Effort vs. results

While you're considering your lawyer side hustle options, ensure that the level of time, effort, and personal interest required match your capacity. Consider what's worth your time and what you're interested in.

For example, writing an eBook on a legal topic requires lots of time and effort. However, taking on occasional legal transcription work on the weekend is a smaller commitment. If the stress of writing a book isn't something you're up for at the moment, relatively low-stress transcription work may be a better side hustle. On the other hand, if you find transcription work tedious or boring and have a passion for a topic you want to write a book about, the effort required to write a book may feel less strenuous. For additional inspiration, this Reddit thread offers excellent advice on lawyer side hustles.

A lawyer side hustle can have multiple benefits

From paying off student loans with extra income to building your brand by selling an eBook or course materials, there are many reasons why you may want to test out the gig economy with a lawyer side hustle.

Before taking on the extra work of a side hustle, ensure you can put more work on your plate. If money is your primary motivation, it's a good idea to ensure you've maximized the amount of money you can make as a lawyer at your current firm first.

However, with a little forethought and preparation, a lawyer side hustle can be a rewarding way to share or expand your skills—and get paid to do it.

Frequently asked questions

What is a good second career for a lawyer?

A law school education paves the way for many successful career opportunities. These include: legal course instructor, employee benefits manager, legal writer, entrepreneur, compliance officer, policy analyst, corporate privacy advisor, and immigration consultant, to name a few. Those with a legal education have the ability to explore several careers.

How do lawyers make passive income?

Investing in stocks, bonds, and real estate, are all opportunities for lawyers to earn a passive income. Affiliate marketing, social media marketing, writing a book, legal blogging and podcasting are also ways to earn additional income, though maybe not passively (not at the beginning, at least).

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