How to Create a Professional Email Address for Your Law Firm

Written by Willie Peacock

What's tackier than wearing white ankle-high athletic socks with a black business suit? Not having set up professional email for your law firm. Using an MSN, Yahoo, Hotmail, or AOL email address, or even the more recent and trendy email providers like Outlook and Gmail, all look a bit tacky, don't they?

Think about it. Which looks more professional: johnsonfamilylaw@hotmail.com or jim@johnsonfamilylaw.com? If those look the same to you, just know that to many, it is similar to the difference between using a professional mailing address and a P.O. Box: one screams rookie startup that may not survive. The only bigger faux pas I've seen lately was someone using Comic Sans in her email signature.

How to get a professional email address for your law firm

So, how do you get an @yourlawfirm.com email address? There are a few ways, which vary in complexity and cost.

1. Ask Your Domain Name Registrar

When you're about to set up professional email addresses, the quickest way is to simply to ask the company that you used to register your website domain name, or your hosting company, if they provide it—most do. For example, I use GoDaddy for domain name registration and for web hosting: email is yet another service they provide, if you need it.

This method will likely be the easiest and quickest to set up. After all, your domain name registrar or host will gladly sell you another service and have a lot of incentive to help you get it set up. The drawbacks? Don't expect great spam filtering—these companies don't have the resources that the bigger companies do. Also, don't expect a web browser interface that is as easy as Gmail or Outlook: most hosting providers will have an interface, but they are typically basic and dated. Instead, you'll want to get the login information from your provider and input it in Outlook and/or your smartphone's email app.

If you are in a hurry, this will probably take only a single phone call or few clicks. Otherwise, consider the other options, as they are better in every other regard and may be the same price or even cheaper.

2. Zoho Mail (Robust Features, Free)

There was a time where Google and Microsoft provided free @yourlawfirm.com email services. That time has passed, however, so if your goal is as little office overhead as possible, your fate lies with Zoho, and Zoho alone.

That's not necessarily a bad thing: Their list of services, many of which are free, rival those of Microsoft and Google. For example, the company not only provides email, but also has online office programs (akin to Microsoft's Word and Excel or Google's Docs and Sheets), even in their free offering.

The benefit here is obvious: free (for up to ten users) email accounts that are @yourlawfirm.com. They also have two mobile apps to access your email on the go (plus IMAP access if you want to use Outlook or any Android or Apple mail app). The drawbacks include limited storage space (5 gigabytes, which to be fair, my seven-year-old, packrat of a Gmail inbox hasn't even reached yet) and rate limits on how many messages you can send or receive a day (no mass-emailing to hundreds of people per day, but for regular office correspondence, it should suffice).

3. Google Apps (Robust Features, Integrates with Clio)

Google Apps is the go-to for many reasons: it has the best email in the business (Google Mail/Gmail), it has arguably the best collaborative online office suite (Google Docs, Sheets, Slides), and of course, it integrates with Clio. Clio can store your client documents in Google Drive and sync your calendar with Google Calendar.

It's seamless, it's robust, and it costs money: $5/user/month for the base package and $10/user/month if you want unlimited storage and Vault features (automatic email archiving for eDiscovery or litigation hold purposes).

The benefits? It integrates with nearly everything, including Clio. Plus, Google is at the forefront of innovation (and tech startup acquisition), so you'll rarely look at other companies' offerings with envy. The drawbacks: it's a pain to sync with older versions of desktop Outlook and … that's about it.

4. Microsoft Office 365 for Business (Robust Features, Familiarity, Integrates with Clio)

Microsoft's equivalent to Google Apps is tied in to its Office 365 offering. Their pricing is far more complicated, however, due to Office 365 coming in at least nine editions, including six meant for business, some of which come with desktop and mobile access to Microsoft's ubiquitous Office suite, and some of which do not.

To keep things simple, we'll look at the business offerings: email and Office Online is $6/user/month (or $60/user/year), while a bundle with the full Office desktop suite (which nearly every lawyer on earth uses) comes out to $15/user/month (or $150/user/year).

If you're buying Microsoft Office 365 anyway, this isn't an additional expense. And if, like the rest of the working world, you grew up using Microsoft Office, all of the online and offline versions of Microsoft Office and Outlook email will be very familiar—an invaluable consideration if your office has lawyer luddites lurking. And, it works with Clio. The drawbacks include the convoluted pricing and credible arguments that the online version of Google's office suite beats Microsoft's.

Law firm email address examples

When setting up your attorney email, consistency and professionalism are key. Here are some common formats used by law firms:

Personalized professional emails:

- john@smithlaw.com
- sarah.johnson@johnsonlegalgroup.com

Department-specific emails:

- intake@smithlaw.com (For new client inquiries)
- billing@johnsonlegalgroup.com (For invoice-related communication)

Practice area-specific emails:

- familylaw@smithlaw.com
- corporate@johnsonlegalgroup.com

General Firm Emails:

- contact@smithlaw.com
- info@johnsonlegalgroup.com

Choosing the right format depends on your firm's structure and branding. Using customized, branded emails like these makes your communication more polished, reliable, and aligned with your law firm's identity.

So, how should you set up a professional email for your law firm?

To tie it all up:

- Your domain name/hosting company is quick;
- Zoho is free for up to 10 users;
- Google Apps integrates with Clio and nearly every other startup service;
- Microsoft Office 365 is the service you (and the senior partner) know and love—and now also integrates with Clio.

All will come with instructions for linking the email provider to your domain, which typically involves copying and pasting a few servers into your domain registrar's configuration page.

Be sure to read through the privacy policies of each provider to make sure it complies with your duty of confidentiality. The rules for this are much more nuanced than you might think for each jurisdiction.

Once you're done, your emails will come from a personalized, professional email address rather than a tacky free email account. Regardless of your choice, your contacts can be seamlessly synced into your Clio practice management platform, and contact made with them via Clio for Clients, or invoices sent to them via Clio Payments, and more. What are you waiting for, springsteenrocks67@hotmail.com?

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.