Should You Start Your Own Law Firm?

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“Should I start my own law firm?” is a question that many solicitors and legal professionals consider at some point in their careers.

The prospect of being your own boss, setting your own schedule, and choosing cases you’re passionate about can be highly appealing. Yet, for every advantage, there are challenges-such as managing business operations, compliance, and client acquisition, all while delivering excellent legal services.

Thinking about starting your own firm?

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What to consider before starting your own law firm

Starting a law firm is a significant step for any solicitor or legal practitioner. The volume of tasks – client intake, compliance, document management, and invoicing – can be daunting, especially for first-time law firm owners. After onboarding your first client, responsibilities multiply: managing communications, ensuring invoices are paid, and keeping up with regulatory requirements.

Given this forewarning, it might seem unlikely that many lawyers would still willingly take up the challenge of running a solo law firm. Yet many still do. Regardless of previous experience, consider that as of April 2025. 16% of lawyers in the United Kingdom are sole practitioners.

Before diving into entrepreneurship, make sure you understand exactly what you’re getting into.

Think about the why

Before you start your own law firm, it’s essential to think about and understand the “why.”

There’s no right or wrong reason to want to become a solo practitioner, so long as you do it for a sustainable, long-term reason. For example, if you need a more flexible schedule, there are other ways of achieving that without diving into the responsibilities

of entrepreneurship.

Consider what attracts you to being a law firm owner. If you need a career change, consider an alternative legal career. Knowing why you want to start your firm will help carry you through the hard times and make the good times much more rewarding.

Consider timing

Maybe you've had an entrepreneurial spirit instilled in you for a long time, and being a solo practitioner has always been your dream. Dreams can come true, but it helps if you understand what they entail.

Is now the right time to start your own law firm? Or is it something you can plan for soon? For example, if you've just had a child or are expanding your family soon, waiting might be wise. Being a business owner while practising law is already stressful enough without juggling the responsibilities of new family members.

On the other hand, depending on your practice area and jurisdiction, you may find that right now is the perfect time to start a law firm. With the rise of remote work, lower overhead costs, and increasing accessibility, the barrier to entry to being a solo practitioner is lower than ever before.

While there are many steps you need to complete to start your law firm officially, you don't have to do it alone. Download Clio's complete 10-step Guide to Starting Your Own Law Firm supported by insights and advice from legal experts and successful founding partners.

Benefits of starting your own law firm

Becoming a solo practitioner may not be easy, but for most, it's worth it. In fact, 85% of sole practitioners consider their firm successful and thriving. For these law firm owners, the benefits far outweigh the costs; some may even find the hard work and hustle required to be challenging and motivating.

Fuel your entrepreneurial spirit

Starting your law firm has many rewards, especially the challenge and learning opportunities. For some lawyers, there's nothing more rewarding than starting a business from scratch and watching it grow. Taking on the ownership role pushes you to succeed in ways that aren't possible when working for another law firm.

You'll also earn the respect of owning your own law firm. One study that surveyed satisfaction among small business owners found that 81% of respondents said the entrepreneurial portion makes them happy.

Increased flexibility and control

While sole practitioners will have to work hard at the beginning to establish their firm, the payoff can be huge.

Setting your hours, fees, fee structures, and dictating which clients and projects you want to take on—all of these aspects of starting a law firm are under your control as the law firm owner. At first, you may accept every client that comes your way. But as your firm becomes more reputable, you can pick and choose your cases.

You may be unhappy with how specific processes and workflows were established at your previous law firm. Now, you can have the final say in how those processes are created. Even if you're a student and thinking of forgoing working in a firm to become a solo practitioner right out of law school, you can still research how others grow their firm and ultimately control the direction of your business.

Read more: The Rise of the Consultant Lawyer: Why 33% of Lawyers Could Join the Model by 2026

Legal technology can make it easier to start your own firm

Modern law firms rely on **legal practice management software** to manage cases, automate workflows, and streamline billing. With Clio, you can centralise client information, manage documents, and automate administrative tasks, freeing up more time to focus on clients and grow your practice. Cloud-based solutions also lower startup costs and enable remote work, making it easier for new law firms to compete.

Clio's software is trusted by over 150,000 legal professionals worldwide and offers everything a modern law firm needs:

- Case and matter management
- Client intake and relationship management
- Scheduling and calendaring
- Time recording
- Legal billing
- Document management and e-signatures
- Workflow automation
- Secure client communications

When starting, you can sink hundreds of unbillable hours on manual administrative tasks. Cloud-based legal technology has made it easier than ever for new sole practitioners. From cutting your workload through automated tasks to lowering startup costs with streamlined workflows, legal practice management software is a worthwhile tool to invest in.

Artificial intelligence (AI) can help your new law firm succeed

Prospective clients believe AI can help lawyers provide better, more affordable services. According to the *Legal Trends Report*, thirty-eight percent of prospective clients believe that lawyers who use AI-powered software can offer more affordable services than those who don't (compared to 31% of lawyers in small firms and 34% of solo lawyers), while 32% believe that lawyers can provide higher-quality services with AI software (compared to only 23% of small firms and 19% of solo lawyers). As a result, firms that adopt and market their use of AI-powered software may have a competitive advantage from a marketing standpoint.

Accepting online payments gives your firm a competitive edge

Clio Payments enables law firms to accept credit card, debit card, eCheck, and mobile payments directly from clients. You can reduce late payments and improve cash flow with automated payment reminders and real-time financial reporting. Secure, PCI-compliant payment processing ensures client data is protected, and trust accounting features keep you compliant with SRA and IOLTA regulations.

40% of consumers say they would never hire a solicitor who doesn't accept card payments-offering online payments helps you win more clients and get paid faster.

Why starting a law firm may not be right for you

Despite the potential long-term benefits, becoming a solo practitioner is not for everyone. For some, starting a law firm may not actually be realistic—and that's okay. For example;

You prefer to focus on your caseload

It takes a lot of time, patience, and skill to juggle being a business owner while practising law. Being a business owner also means being an accountant, a marketer, a salesperson, a compliance officer and more. This type of high-stress environment isn't the right fit for everybody.

Some lawyers also prefer to do their casework and leave the running of the business portion to the employers. After all, practising law is usually the most enjoyable part of being a lawyer.

You could be in the driver's seat

Ultimately, the answer to the question "Should I start my own law firm?" is "It depends."

Undoubtedly, you need an exceptional force of will and sheer desire for the success of any new law firm. Lawyers need the right business management savvy, ambition, and passion to be successful solo practitioners.

After reading this blog post and considering your options more carefully, you may also decide that being a solo practitioner is not for you. However, if you're willing to commit to seeing the journey through, finding ways to work harder and smarter for your clients, and are passionate about being a law firm owner, starting your own practice can be rewarding and fulfilling.

Curious about the trends shaping the world of solo practitioners? Check out the *2025 Solo and Small Legal Trends Report*.

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FAQs

How many billable hours do most law firms require?

Most law firms set annual billable hour targets between 1,700 and 2,300 hours for associates, depending on firm size, area of law, and seniority.

Is Clio a billing software?

Yes, Clio has a leading law firm billing software that helps law firms automate billing, manage invoices, accept online payments, and streamline their law firm billing process.

What is the 6-minute billing increment?

The 6-minute billing increment divides one hour into ten parts. Each increment is 0.1 hours (6 minutes), allowing precise billing for short tasks and making time tracking more manageable.

How do law firms charge their clients?

Law firms typically charge clients using hourly rates, fixed fees, contingency fees, or retainers. However, firms are increasingly offering alternative billing arrangements to suit client needs and improve transparency.

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.