

How to Write and Implement a Law Office Business Plan

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The purpose of business planning is to establish a common focus for action. This is done by:

1. Clarifying goals
2. Establishing measures of results
3. Assessing resource distribution needs
4. Unifying the firm to commit to a course of action.

Following are the most important steps to take in preparing to write your business plan:

Get the Process Organized

- Why do it
- What is it
- Who will do what
- Evaluation of the planning process

Evaluate Your Competitiveness

- Who are our existing clients
- What is our fee history
- Are we using outside services
- Are we recognizing opportunities for cross-selling
- How much do we really collect
- What are we capable of
- What are our internal resources
- Who are our competitors
- What is our market
- Why are they our competitors (experience, price, speed, etc.)
- How do they affect our clients
- What do we do for their clients
- What is our technology situation
 1. What type of systems do we use
 2. What can we use our systems for
 3. Do we need to upgrade
- Are there any trends developing which may affect our clients - changing laws, economy, etc.
- Are there any developments affecting current structure of our firm

Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Consider the following:

- What is our professional reputation
- How do we deliver legal services
- What kind of staff do we want in our firm and how do we train them
- What type of office environment (physical location, appearance, etc.) do we want
- What is our culture
- How do we manage our practice
- Who are the firm leaders and why
- What kind of support services do we have

- What are the firm's finances

Reassess Your Strategy

- Define primary mission
- Set goals
- Review your strategy

Evaluate Your Resources Objectively

- Office organization and structure
- What kind of leadership and management skills do we have
- What kind of tools are we using - i.e. technology, support systems, standardized forms, etc.
- How do we identify the skills we need to recruit, how do we allocate the work among attorneys, paralegals, etc.
- How are we doing financially, do we collect everything we bill, do we need additional capital

Business Projection

- What kind of revenue and volume of business do we project - to work at capacity
- What is our payroll expense now and what will it be in the future
- How much space do we need
- What type of technology do we need
- What kind of transactional expenses are we expecting
- What are our projected expenses relating to office relocation, computer conversion, etc.
- What is our capital projection (capital sources less capital needs = net income)

Prepare Your Financial Plan

- Balance Sheet
- Income Statement
- Cash Flow Statement
- Policies for financial management
- Financing plan

Prepare Your Business Plan Document

- Executive Summary
- Business and Revenue Forecast
- Professional Staffing Plan
- Support Staff Requirements
- Technology Forecast
- Space Requirements
- Organization and Management Plan
- Financial Plan - Operations and Capital

How to Successfully Implement "The Plan"

- Establish a common will and consensus to the plan
- Keep focused on the goals
- Recognize established leadership of the organization
- Make the commitment to proper resource allocation
- Expect to give and receive accountability for results
- Reward motivation

- Overcome inertia and avoid complacency
- Measure and evaluate results and - if necessary, readjust the plan to coincide with new developments