A Day in the Life of an Immigration Lawyer

Presented by:
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Juggling Your Three Roles as Lawyer, Manager, Entrepreneur

- How to be the best Immigration Lawyer that you can be
- How to manage your immigration law practice
- How to consistently bring in business and grow your practice
It’s an exciting time to be an Immigration Lawyer

“If I had to do it all over again, I would be an immigration lawyer.”

~ Hon. Clyde W. Waite
Yale Law School ‘71
Challenges in this New Era of Immigration

• Anti-immigrant policies (that are not committed to writing)

• Change in the USCIS’ mission statement: America is no longer a “nation of immigrants”

• Re-writing the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and other government guidance without actual regulatory changes

• Poor adjudications due to budget cuts and staffing shortages

• Delayed processing times

• Age of unpredictability
What kind of Immigration Lawyer?

• What aspect of immigration law?
• Who is my ideal client?
• In what setting do I want to practice immigration law?
Being an Immigration Lawyer is Unique

- Practice in Immigration Court, and before federal agencies (USCIS, DHS, DOL, DOS)
- Immigration bar is very collegial
- You can find your niche in immigration, e.g. “crimmigration”
- Con: can be isolated from other lawyers in the local bar since no state court practice
Family-based Immigration

Humanitarian work: Asylum, SIJS, VAWA, U, T
Employment-based Immigration

Represent US employers and help them get the skilled workers they need to grow their businesses.
Work with undocumented clients to help keep them from being removed (deported).
EOIR: The Immigration Courts

- DC Residents and Virginia residents: Arlington Immigration Court
- Maryland residents: Baltimore Immigration Court
- Immigration Court Practice Manual
- Remember to file EOIR-28
Avoid Common Mistakes & Pitfalls

Attorney competence

Don’t dabble in immigration: What you don’t know will hurt your clients. (e.g. Remember to file Form G-28, noting your appearance as attorney)

Ethical dilemmas

Cross-cultural issues

Client communication
Be a Competent Immigration Lawyer

• Know the Law
  - INA, 8 CFR, 20 CFR, Case Law, FAM, AFM, Agency Policy Memos
• Immigration lawyer’s “bible”: Kurzban’s Immigration Law Sourcebook
• American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)
  - Daily updates in the law
• Conferences, seminars and webinars
• Mentorship
• Networking
How Do I Manage an Immigration Law Practice?

Questions to Consider:
1. How will I keep up on all the changes in law?
2. What is a good case management system?
3. How will I communicate with my clients?
4. Would I be better off working with or for someone else?
Case Management System

• Adapt a Case Management System used by other lawyers (e.g. MyCase or Clio)
• You also need a system that is specific to immigration law, e.g.
  • INSZoom
  • LawLogix
  • Cerenade eImmigrationAir
  • Immigration Tracker
• Other technology, e.g. translation programs
Marketing & Business Development

• Who is your target client base?

• How will your ideal client know you or find you?

• Who is your competition?
  • Other immigration lawyers
  • Self-filers / pro se applicants
  • Notarios / “immigration consultants” / UPL
  • Online legal services

• What is the solution? Distinguish yourself!

• You must know more and be more than just a “forms preparer”
Opportunities for Pro Bono Service

Catholic Charities

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

ProBono Resource Center

AYUDA