

Successful Small Firm Practice Course

District of Columbia Bar

September 20, 2021

Session Two

Nuts & Bolts / The Launch

**Lawyers often focus
intensely on:**

The firm name

The firm entity

The firm business card

**To make the launch
meaningful &
efficient:**

**Focus on the client & the problem
you solve, then proceed ahead**

It's not the kite, it's the air.

The law firm name

Rules 7.1 & 7.5

DC Rules of Professional Conduct

Don't mislead, don't confuse, don't
sound like something you are not

If the firm is me, *me*
is not a *Group* & not
Associates

But *me* can be a *Firm*

[Legal Ethics Opinion 332](#)

The Mills Family Law Firm

**Be cautious about the
unique name**

Panovia Group LLP

Startup naming concepts

**Test drive
the firm name**

How to Choose a Name for a Law Firm

Consider a logo

99.designs.com

Best Law Firm Logos

Logo basics



Whose problems does this firm solve?

Avoid . . .



The small firm's office

How, when & where you will solve
your clients' problems drives the
need for an office

DC does not have a
physical presence
requirement

But if you are working from an office
(home) where you are not barred, you may
need a professional address in DC.

Carr WorkPlaces is a DC
Bar member benefit

OSI Offices has nearly 1000 tenants &
about half are lawyers

1629 K Street Suite 300

Washington, DC 20006

Avoid UPL

DC Rule 5.5 bars a DC Bar member
from the unauthorized practice of
law in another jurisdiction

The entity

Know why you need an entity

Sole proprietor is an option

Resources on forming a business in DC

Useful information from DCRA

Know about estimated taxes

DC recognizes PLLC

Your firm needs an EIN

Apply to the IRS for an Employer
Identification Number

Use your firm's EIN to open its
business checking account and to
issue 1099s

Small firm bank accounts

- The business or operating account
- The DC IOLTA, assuming there are IOLTA eligible funds
- The Trust Account for a single client or case, if needed

Firm communication

Your out-going obligation

Be an active listener

Use an identifiable phone number

Use a professional email address

Have an appropriate address

Be responsive

Malpractice Insurance

It is not mandatory in DC

An entity will not protect you

It is best to have coverage

[USI Affinity is our member benefit](#)

Small Firm Tools



Sara Kropf • 1st

Defending executives and businesses in federal criminal investigations and business...

1d • 

I'm going to let you in on a little secret. <whispers> It isn't very hard to start your own law firm. Here's all you need:

1. A computer
2. A domain name for email and website
3. A website (use a template to start)
4. Malpractice insurance
5. A corporate entity
6. An operating and IOLTA account
7. Basic software (Office365/G Suite; Adobe)
8. A telephone number

That's it.

I'm exaggerating a bit, of course, but the logistics of starting a law firm are easier than ever. Post-pandemic, you definitely do not need an office.

Of course, there is one very important thing you'll also need: confidence. A lot of it. You need to be confident that you can bring in clients. Maybe you have already had success as your prior firm. (I didn't.) Or maybe you are just sure that someone somewhere will hire you. (I was.)

If you need a pep talk to take the plunge, get in touch.

Estimated expenses

The annual range:

Low - no staff & office-on-demand

\$10,000 - \$20,000

High - staff & office space

\$115,000 - \$175,000

Funding sources

Personal funds - the more, the better

Family & friends - be careful

Credit cards - be even more careful

Bank & SBA

Business incubator program

[Rule 5.4\(b\)](#) is NOT for a lender

Funding guidelines

Create funding milestones

Bootstrapping is better

Do a cash-flow analysis

Estimate revenue realistically

Know fixed & variable costs

Use GAAP

Tie the Plan to funding

Marketing

Educate, inform, network

A good, professional photo

A presence in social media

A good business card

Make it easy to be found

Focus on the problem you solve

[Michelle C. Thomas](#)



www.eliturner.com

Michelle C. Thomas



Kim Keheley Frye



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Look for ways to market.
Create a signature block
for email.

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www.linkedin.com/in/sharondnelson

<https://amazon.com/author/sharonnelson>

<https://ridethelighting.senseient.com> (security blog)

<https://youritconsultant.senseient.com> (information technology blog)

<https://senseient.com/digital-forensics-dispatch> (digital forensics blog)



Resources from the DC Bar

[Free and confidential ethics guidance](#)

[Help with business issues from the Practice Management Advisory Service](#)

[Help with stress, addiction & personal issues from the Lawyer Assistance Program](#)

[Fee dispute resolution with the Attorney Client Arbitration Board](#)

Networking Opportunities

October 14 – What Small Firm Lawyers Need to Know About Malpractice and Cyber Insurance

[Register here](#)

2nd Friday at Fireworks Pizza, 2350 Clarendon Blvd. (Clarendon Metro) in Arlington at 12:30 pm. RSVP to steven@stevenkriegerlaw.com

Last Friday at *Café Oaxaca*, 4905 Fairmont Ave., Bethesda at Noon. RSVP to mark@markdelbianco.com

Here is the
[PMAS Newsletter](#)

You may sign up at the
above link.

Backup systems for the small firm

Backup your data either to a safe, encrypted external hard drive, and/or

[Backblaze](#) [Carbonite](#) or similar service.

To be really safe, [clone your hard drive](#).

[Glyph are best](#).

Get a backup for yourself; avoid DC App. R. XI, Section 15(a); comply with [R. 1.3, Comment 5](#)

Use [Being Prepared](#) – see the eManual

Ask for the *Agreement for Emergency Backup Services* from PMAS@DCBar.org

How do small firms increase revenue?

- By adding clients
- By increasing fees
- By selling more services to
current clients
- By adding lawyers to increase
bandwidth

**The small firm lawyer
is a business owner**

You depend on your community.

Be a good citizen.

Growth Formula

**The magnitude of the
challenge**

X

**The intensity of your
effort =**

Your rate of growth

Our next session is September 27 Ethics & Small Firm Management

The new assignment:

Create a concept map of your
relationships;

Draft Section IV of the
Business Plan on Services
(page 6 of the template)