



Arghavan Gerami

B.A. (Hons.), M.A., J.D., LL.M.
Barrister, Solicitor and Notary Public

How to Start a Successful Law Practice

A Presentation to the Federal Court and
Federal Court of Appeal Law Clerks

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Lay a Foundation Now

- Get out there, meet the players and foster relationships
- Networking pays off
- Promote yourself
- Plant the seeds for future referrals

Learn the Basics

- Possibly interested in starting your own practice?
- Educate yourself on the steps involved
- Resources: LSUC, Law Pro, Mentors, Books, Articles
- Read “Guide to Opening Your Practice”, Law Society of Upper Canada, 2010, available online: <http://rc.lsuc.on.ca/jsp/home/practiceGuides.jsp>
- See also LSUC Practice Management Guidelines: <http://rc.lsuc.on.ca/jsp/pmg/executiveSummary.jsp>
- Check out Law Pro, Practice Pro for Practice Aids: <http://www.practicepro.ca/practice/default.asp>
 - retainer agreement precedents
 - tips on client relations and firm issues (such as conflict of interest, mentoring, practice finances)
 - ILA Checklist
 - Limitation period charts
- Speak to other lawyers in your practice areas of interest

Think Outside the Box

- Brainstorm: think through your vision, your voice and ideas
- Put your creativity to work
- Design your logo and slogan

Project Confidence and Build your Website

- First impressions matter: serious player with great potential
- Design a top notch website and say yes to content management
- IT is your friend, so you need to make friends with IT
- Add-ons for your website: online booking, paying invoices and twitter integration
- Build a mobile website

Build your Practice

- Choose your practice areas and learn them well
- Get access to legal databases
- Situate yourself strategically: stay downtown and close to the Court House
- Don't be shy to ask for help from mentors

Get Litigation Experience Early on

- Doesn't matter so much in certain practice areas
- But early litigation experience helps give you the edge
- The skills are transferable to other areas
- Criminal Defence is a great way to get litigation experience

Create an Inspiring Work Environment

- Demonstrate leadership to your team
- You can build a dedicated team when your employees feel this is also their business
- Recognize talent and give opportunities to bright, hardworking students
- Diversity matters
- A positive environment fosters creativity and confidence

Advertise

- Learn about Google places, google ads and analytics
- Be careful with SEO (search engine optimization)
- Quality website content is very important
- Promote yourself: blog, write papers, publish and present
- Build your profile and bring in more business

Continue Networking and Building your Connections

- Referrals from other lawyers and people in the community
- Join associations such as the CCLA, Advocates Society, Criminal Lawyers Association, etc. and others
- Continue to build and expand your connections

It's a Business: Invest and Be Patient

- Starting a practice is essentially starting a business
- You need to invest in it both financially and with your time
- You need to be patient and have a 2-3 year plan.
- Stay focused, determined and fearless and you will succeed