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Montage Legal Group

How to Become a Freelance Lawyer: Rates, Contracts, Legal Ethics and More

Faculty

Erin Giglia is co-owner and founder of Montage Legal Group. Erin graduated from Wellesley College and from the University of San Diego School of Law. She practiced law at Brobeck and at Snell & Wilmer, LLP. She founded Montage Legal Group in 2009 with her business partner, Laurie Rowen.

Montage is an exclusive freelance attorney network that assists law firms with legal projects on an hourly or project basis. Montage has been featured in numerous articles and publications including Forbes.com, ABA Journal, The Huffington Post, Above the Law, and The Atlantic among others. Montage Legal Group’s unique business model has been discussed in various books, including Life After Law (2013), Overwhelmed (2015) and Lawyer Interrupted (2016). For more information, see www.montagelegal.com.
How to Become a Freelance Lawyer:
Rates, Contracts, Legal Ethics and More

- What is Freelance Legal Work?
- Who Can Freelance and Why?
- How Do Freelance Lawyers Find Work?
- What do you Need to Get Started?
- Setting Your Rates
- Legal Ethics – Top 8 Considerations
- Be careful of “Of Counsel” Titles
- Best Practices
- Pitfalls to Avoid
- Questions?

What is Freelance Legal Work?

- Lawyer working for another lawyer/firm
- Contract v. Freelance Lawyers
- Usually remote
- Hourly or project basis v. salary

Who Can Freelance and Why?

- New lawyers
- Lawyers seeking work-life balance
- Solo practitioners
- Entrepreneur lawyers (legal or non-legal businesses)
- Lawyers entering retirement
How Do Freelance Lawyers Find Work?

- Network in person
- Network online (Linkedin)
- Email attorney contacts
- Apply with a staffing company (doc review) or freelance network (high level work)

What Do You Need to Get Started?

- Contract with the law firm
- Professional email address
- Computer, scanner, internet connection, phone
- Optional:
  - Business cards
  - Website
  - Lexis/Westlaw
  - Malpractice insurance

Setting Your Rates

- Depends on:
  - Experience level
  - Project (doc review vs. substantive)
  - Area of law
- Rate flexibility = likely more work
- Rate Range:
  - Doc review - $25-30
  - New lawyers - $30-50
  - Experienced lawyers – wide range, $75-$250+
Legal Ethics – Top 8 Considerations

- (1) conflicts of interest
- (2) aiding and abetting the unauthorized practice of law
- (3) the duty of competence
- (4) the duty to disclose to a client
- (5) alloweable fees
- (6) the duty to maintain client confidences
- (7) fee-splitting
- (8) malpractice insurance


Be careful of “Of Counsel” Titles

- American Bar Association Formal Opinion 90-357 defines the term “of counsel” as a “close, personal, continuous, and regular relationship”
  - Holding multiple "of counsel" positions simultaneously is permissible, but should be avoided from a practical standpoint
  - Automatic "de facto" imputed conflicts of interest in CA and many states

Best Practices

- Be responsive!
- Turn projects around quickly
- Set time expectations up front
- Be honest and communicate frequently with firms
Pitfalls to Avoid

- “Take all the time you need” is usually false
- Turning in timesheets late (shoot for last day of the month)
- Taking too long to respond to emails
- Failing to set rates or time estimates up front
- Over-promising/under-delivering

Questions?

*Please contact info@montagelegal.com or see www.montagelegal.com for additional questions. We are always happy to answer your questions!

Upcoming Career Advice Series Webinars

- Friday, September 8, 2017, 1-2pm ET, Choosing a Destination: Proactively Managing Your Career as a Midlevel Associate
Upcoming Career Choice Series Webinar

- Friday, August 25, 2017, 1-1:30pm ET, Lawyer Professional Responsibility and Loss Prevention

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