

How To Choose An Attorney

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Summary:

Finding an attorney is something most individuals and business owners need to do at some time or other. But because the need for a lawyer is infrequent, most people don't know what to look for when they need legal help. These guidelines will help make choosing an attorney easier.

Everyone needs an attorney at some point. It may be that you need an attorney to prepare a prenuptial agreement before you get married, or to collect money from a client who has not paid you for services you provided. Maybe you were injured in a car accident or you or a family member was the victim of medical malpractice and you don't know what to do now that your injuries have prevented you from working. It could be that you're contemplating getting a divorce or that you're already divorced, but need to change your child custody arrangements. The list goes on and on, as you already know. But the question is, once you decide that you need a lawyer, how do you decide which lawyer is best for you?

We all know that there are plenty of attorneys out there and it's easy enough to get the name of a lawyer from the internet, the yellow pages or through word of mouth, but how do you know if you're choosing the right lawyer for your particular situation? Below are seven tips to help you choose the attorney who is best for you:

- Be aware that your relationship with your attorney is just that...a relationship. You must feel comfortable with the attorney you will be using. This part of the equation is often based solely on personality. You need someone with whom you will feel comfortable speaking. The most important components of the attorney client relationship are trust and honesty. If you are not comfortable with your attorney, trust and complete, detailed honesty are not likely to be achieved.
- Meet the attorney in person. This is the best way to determine if the attorney is right for you. As we all know, there are certain subtleties that cannot be picked up over the phone.
- Prior to meeting the attorney, do some research. If the attorney was referred to by someone you know, ask some questions. What did the recommender like about the attorney? How quickly did the attorney return phone calls or e-mails? Did the attorney solve the problem in a satisfactory and timely manner?
- Look the attorney up on the internet. Look at his/her website. Make sure that the problem that you are consulting the attorney about is listed as one of the attorney's practice areas.
- When you meet with the attorney and you tell him/her your problem, they should listen to you. If the attorney does not have time to listen to you the first time that you meet, it is unlikely that the attorney will listen to you after he/she is retained. An attorney is only able to effectively represent you if they fully understand your problem and if they do not listen to you, full comprehension of your problem is impossible.
- What is the attorney's plan to solve your problem? An experienced attorney will be able to tell you how he/she will handle your problem in order to achieve the quickest and most satisfactory resolution.
- What are the attorney's fees? The attorney should tell you what his/her fees are and when and how you will be billed. The attorney's fee should not be a surprise to be found out after he/she has already commenced work. You should sign a written retainer agreement that is clear and understandable to

you. The retainer agreement should contain any particulars about your fee arrangement with the attorney to which you agreed.

If you follow the above guidelines, you should be able to choose an experienced, competent attorney that you trust and who will solve your problem to your satisfaction.

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