

Different Fields Of Lawyers

Every lawyer is not alike. And contrary to the images we see in the movies and on TV, they certainly are not all running to trial every week to win a new case. Lawyers work in various capacities (legal and non-legal) and often specialize in particular areas. The following addresses the more traditional career paths taken by lawyers. Many lawyers eventually specialize in a particular area. Lawyers may specialize in trial law (civil or criminal), appellate law (helping clients who seek to reverse or to uphold lower court decisions), bankruptcy law, trusts and estates, tax law, corporate law, environmental law, intellectual property, communication law, elder law, employment and labor law, entertainment law, health care law, education law, international law, etc. The list of specializations is almost endless and is always changing in response to new laws and novel legal issues. Moreover, it is not uncommon for a lawyer to launch a career as one type of lawyer and wind up practicing in a different area. Lawyers not only have a wide variety of specializations from which to choose, they also work in a variety of settings. Some of the most common legal work settings are described below. The majority of lawyers work in private practice. Some work as solo practitioners, others in small or "boutique" law firms. Many work in firms that have several hundred lawyers in cities across the world. Lawyers usually join firms as "associates" and work toward becoming "partners."

The road to partnership is long and full of hurdles. In recent years it has become increasingly common for associates to join a law firm with the expectation that they will gain experience for a number of years but not stick around for a partnership decision. To retain more lawyers, some law firms now allow for "non-equity partnerships" or promote a few attorneys to non-partnership "of counsel" or "special counsel" positions. Life at a law firm, especially a large law firm, is influenced by "billable hours." Each lawyer has a "billable rate" that is used to charge clients for time spent on client matters. In order to bill clients and to get credit for work performed, firm lawyers keep track of the activities they perform each day. Sometimes lawyers record their activities in increments of time as short as six minutes. Other attorneys are employed by a single client and work "in-house" for that client, usually a large corporation. An in-house attorney advises the company on legal activities related to the company's business. Large companies often have correspondingly large legal departments and a number of in-house attorneys who specialize in specific issues. For example, one might supervise litigation being handled by an outside firm, another might address the company's employment issues, and a third might work as a lobbyist who monitors and tries to influence legislation related to the company's business.

About the Author

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