

[Jump to Navigation](#) | [Jump to Content](#)

## Popular Threads on Solosez

### IF YOU WERE PLANNING A CAREER AS A SOLO, WHAT ROUTE WOULD YOU TAKE?

I'm preparing a response to a reader question at [MyShingle](#), and wanted to throw this out for discussion: if you wanted to start a firm at some point in your career, what track would you take to get there? Assume that post graduate options include AmLaw 100 firms, clerkship, small firm and DA's office as well as solo practice. And, you have student loans. Which path would you take and why (in making suggestions, don't assume one job pre starting a firm - one option could be AmLaw 100 to DA to solo practice or some such variation) Would your advice differ depending upon location?

I am sure those who read this list long enough know where I come out. My own feeling (which is dogmatic, I'm sure), is if palatable, take a biglaw job for a year or two and save as much as you can and take advantage of every seminar and training program they'll send you to, as well as pro bonol Then open a firm directly, or go to an agency DAs office or small firm for more experience. If biglaw's not an option because you can't stand it or can't find a job there, then I'd say to choose a good, solid small firm over a DA just because you can start networking and building contacts more effectively. But I'd advise DA over working for an overworked, unstable or abusive solo or small firm which won't pay for training and is too busy to give you feedback.

That's just me - what do think the best path is?

Carolyn Elefant

---

My response is tailored for my career -- litigator in primarily state and bankruptcy court.

I really really really wish I had done a clerkship, preferably in as low level a court as possible so as to get as much practical knowledge as possible of civil procedure (the reality, not the theory) and just for the chance to get that insight into how a court works. If you blow that chance after law school, it is not something that really comes around again, and while I am not a person who has a lot of regrets, this is one.

After the clerkship, working at a tiny law practice (3-4 attorneys) was the best experience I could have gotten. I worked at my last job for 3 years and learned tons because with that few people -- one partner and 2-3 associates -- you have no choice but to sink or swim. It is similar to being a solo with the "jump into the deep end" type of work, except there is a



### Subscribe to Solosez

**First Name**

**Last Name**

**E-mail Address**

Submit (input element)



### Unsubscribe from Solosez

**E-mail Address**

Submit (input element)



### Books

Click on the book for more info



person at the end of the hall to ask questions of plus you usually have more staff than a new solo.

Also -- I would advise someone to start accumulating reference books and guides. Just because I am grabby and don't like sharing, I had already bought a Rutter Guide to Civil Procedure Before Trial for my own as well as a few other books and those were expenses I did not have (except for updates) when I was going solo.

If you have space, keep an eye out for office furniture -- file cabinets, desk, chair, etc. My house is tiny and had no space, but I know many young families have these humongous houses that are practically empty so this suggestion would be for them.

Finally -- take a dang accounting class or start a fund to hire a bookkeeper for yourself

-- Amy Kleinpeter

---

I went solo as soon as I was licensed (a little over a year now) and looking back, I think it would have been a little easier if I had gone into a small firm for a few years first. The smaller the better. Of course, it could not be one of those overworked/unstable/abusive small firms (what would be the point of avoiding biglaw then?). There are many small firms that work 40 hour weeks and train their new associates in many different aspects.

Grace Cho

---

That's just me - what do think the best path is?

It depends on your situation. I, and several of my law school compadres, have made go's of solo practices out of law school. On the other hand, all of us are, if not over the hill, we can see the top of the hill from wherre we are. None of us graduated from a top school; though I got an honors degree and was on law review, I just couldn't get a job.

As far as working for someone else, it depends; I've known friends to go to work for large firms, and ten years later they still haven't been in court; I had a friend who worked as DA for 3 years, jumped to small civil firm, and while he got lots of expeiences in courtroom as DA, he ddn't know squat about the mechanics of pleading on the civil side, he had to relearn everything; after a couple of years there he jumped to partnership in small crim defense/business litigation firm.

Point is, I don't think there's a 'best path' that can be identified for everyone; it depends on your situation. If you can get a job out of law school, you're likely to learn something, whether or not it is relevant to what you want to solo practice in. If you can't, then you're stuck either going solo out of law school or doing something nonlegal for a living.

Ronald Jones

---

Carolyn, you had to know I would chime in on this one!

I agree that there is no one right path. Just the path that is right for you. If your personality is such that you choose employment before going solo, then you will seek out the best opportunity presented. What is presented, however, may not be as good as you had hoped or given you what you expected in terms of mentorship or knowledge. You need to be prepared to go solo sooner rather than later because you never know when you will be unexpectedly self-employed.

If you know you want to go solo right after passing the bar then you need to be planning while you are in law school, taking the courses that give you the most practical knowledge, legal clinics, externships or even paid positions with law firms...move up your learning curve and get supervised experiences and placements that give you what you want while you are in the position to choose through law school programs that screen these opportunities for maximum benefit to you.

Law school loans can be handled quite effectively the first years out so they do not present undue financial hardship while you are getting up and running.

The best path for a solo...'solo' is an individual experience as the word implies.

Susan Cartier Liebel

---

I would do a clerkship or deputy AG, or staff position at federal or state level. Several years often lead to good opportunities in a niche field. Then do a couple years Biglaw if you need to cement a reputation.

Then open the office, as solo or small firm.

Ted Waggoner

---

[Back to Popular Threads](#)

[Back to Top](#)