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Question for Home Office Solos

Where do you meet with your clients? I really like working from home and there are no virtual offices like Regus in my area. The courthouses have a couple of meeting rooms but they aren't always available or accessible. I don't want to meet at my house or the client's house for safety concerns. Thanks in advance for your ideas!

Jodi Bagley

Starbucks. Their home. The local coffee shop. Pretty much any place that is convenient. I have met clients at court before as well. Borrow a conference room for a friend. Be creative!

Jonathan G. Stein

I use several exec. office suite locations around metro Atlanta. my main one is where my "address" is. I meet folks there in a furnished day office or a conference room. I also let people know that I can meet them at other locations, since Atlanta is pretty spread out and traffic can be bad. they seem to like that. also, our state bar building has rooms available downtown, though I have not had the need to use those. And, you can meet someone for lunch as well - they like that too - if you can have a place to reasonably discuss things (the situation will drive whether you can meet in public or not, have to be careful about confidentiality issues).

You can also meet folks, after screening, at their homes. for example, I'll meet a couple for some estate planning needs at one of my office suites. after the papers are prepared and we're ready to execute, I meet them at their home, and have them get two different neighbors/friends to come over for the witnessing. Why? It would be easier to do it at my regular place, but this gets me exposure to two more families that may need my services. They get a business card and a pen with my contact info. as well!

Not being tied down to "one office" gives me the freedom to serve my clients in ways they like it - and me too.

Joel R. Beck

Try your local bar association.

Micah G. Guilfoil, Attorney

Jodi,



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Do you have a local Chamber of Commerce or other organizations you could join that have a building? Also, local libraries sometimes have nice meeting rooms - depends on the environment of the library, though, as to whether that would be a reasonable option.

I have leased office space, but before I did, I met with a few clients at my home. Aside from the safety concerns, I didn't like having clients to my house, either. Even though one client was a dad with a son in my son's boy-scout den and we have social connections, I was still a little uncomfortable meeting at my house to review legal matters - with four children and a great dane, some degree of chaos is inevitable. With other clients I was very uncomfortable. I am one of those who believe that a law office should be a professional atmosphere, devoid of dirty dishes, dog hair and Polly Pocket shoes. Plus my house is very difficult to find. It just one of those sets of directions that confuses people no matter how it is explained (you have to turn onto a different road to stay on the same road, roads that keep going change names, etc.)

My local chamber has a conference room available for members' use, as well as a large meeting room. The downside is that I had to check with the Chamber to make sure they or another member was not using the available rooms when I wanted to meet with clients. It was a very nice building, very easy to find, and free (but for the Chamber membership fee). I met with a few clients there, too. One even commented on what a nice office I had and what a nice view! (overlooks river) - even though I explained that it was the Chamber's facility, and as a member I could use it when I needed.

Ultimately, though, I took office space in order to have a private, quite place available to work or meet with clients whenever needed. I was able to find a very contemporary building that had recently been sold (by the former biggest law firm in town, who move to the Big City) to a tenant who had more space than needed. They carved out a nice two room office for me at a fantastic price. Now I've got lighted signs on the main street in town AND office space for less than 1/4 the cost of a billboard ad.

That's my experience - I'm sure some other will have some great ideas for alternatives.

KevinW. Davidson

Try finding another local professional who has a conference room you can use. Look for accountants, insurance brokers, etc. Somebody will have space you could use, perhaps for free. You might pay a little, depending upon how much time you need it.

The benefit here is that you now have a new non-attorney source for possible referrals.

I'm a fan of the coffee shop meeting. But I worry that it makes me look unprofessional. And it can be hard to hear.

Andrew Flusche

Usually in a coffee shop or better yet, a diner as they have bigger tables and booths.

I have been meaning to walk into the local realty office down the street from me and introduce myself and ask if I could use some space there on an hourly basis -- I know the original owner recently passed away and his son still works there, but the place seems really slow lately (well, duh!) so I figure they could use both the bit of extra cash and the company occasionally!

I also often go to people's homes -- sales people always do this, not sure why I would be any different on the security area.

Amy Kleinpeter

I'm with Amy. I schedule meetings there at times where traffic is light (between lunch and dinner, right before dinner time) My local Diner has areas which are quiet. The proprietor already knows to seat me where other diners are not present. You can also meet at your client's house or place of business.

Jeena Belil

One of the local bar associations I belong to has a conference room that it makes available to members at very reasonable rates.

Lisa Solomon, Esq.

In addition to the other great suggestions (courthouse, bar association, conference rooms of friends' offices, etc.) I've met with a couple clients at (1) their church and (2) the local catholic charities/community center. For me it depends upon the client and the need, but when you think outside the box, I'd bet there are places that would happily accommodate you (I've yet to pay for meeting space, though I'd be more than willing if I really needed space).

Lynette A. Whitfield

I offer clients several options, and 9 out of 10 times they choose Starbucks or Panera. Older clients prefer more privacy, typically, so I'll reserve a conference room at the local library. Also, some smaller law firms will gladly rent their conference room. A couple of clients are referred from a CPA, so I'll meet them in the CPA's conference room.

Julie Mills

Thank you everyone for the EXCELLENT suggestions. I will definitely be looking into them. I checked my local library rules and they state that their meeting rooms are not to be used for commercial purposes. Maybe

I'll contact them and see if they will rent the rooms.

I have a couple of questions for those meeting at restaurants and coffee houses. Does the present of other people not void the attorney-client privilege? Also, do your clients expect you to buy their food / drink?

Thanks again for the great ideas!

Jodi

Jodi

I was curious about Bellvue and checked it out and that saw it had a population of about 50,000 and figured that a city that size would have something like Regus. On google I found the Business Service Center which might work for you <http://www.bscbellevue.com/>

If that doesn't work check out (as others have said) bar associations, the Chamber of Commerce, and other professionals (not just lawyers) who may have a conference room they could make available to you at times. Banks, real estate companies and title companies also sometimes have rooms they might make available

Lew Wiener

I was so confused as to how I didn't find that company when I did my own search when I realized that that company is located in Bellevue, Washington, not Bellevue, Nebraska! Thank you for doing the search- I really appreciate it. I did find some business centers in Omaha, which is really close, but I am always looking to save gas money by meeting locally.

Jodi

Re: do clients expect you to buy their food/drink?

My clients haven't expected that. Of course, I typically arrive before them and already have my coffee in hand when they get there.

But I certainly wouldn't mind buying a cup of coffee or a soda for a good client (or good potential client).

Andrew Flusche

Check with the bank(s) you deal with and see if they have an available conference room to reserve on occasion. If you have business clients, they love it. If you have a criminal practice, Never Mind. Emily Littella

Ronald Stephen Hansell

Jodi,

As far as buying a cup of coffee, I pay. Because I schedule Diner meetings at between meal times, I pretty much have the place to myself.

Jeena

Another suggestion that I didn't read on this thread would be to meet with clients at the public library or if you have a local college or university that has a library. Our public library has great private meeting rooms that you can book for a minimal fee.

I have a home based solo practice, and I usually meet with my clients online through my web-based virtual law office, but I have agreed to meet a couple small business clients in person and the library has worked well for that. The rooms are private and quiet. They have free parking and Internet access. Just another idea.

Stephanie L. Kimbro, Esq.

"Web-based virtual law office" -- OK, you cannot just through that out there without more explanation. I am imagining I could meet some clients at 10 p.m. that way -- perfect for me and them!

Amy Kleinpeter

Yes, actually, I do most of my work after 9:00pm when my young daughter has gone to bed and early in the morning. The web-based virtual law office allows me to be flexible with my work hours but still put in a typical attorney's work week. I can see on my VLO when my clients are registering and working online and they are also usually doing it after regular business hours and on the weekends. So it's probably more convenient for them as well.

There are other solos practicing law with web-based VLOs. Frame Legal is a solo VLO in SC that just opened (www.framelegal.com) and Cassie Craze (www.crazelaw.com) is another VLO in VA. We're not supposed to plug our "other" companies on this listserv, but if you would like to read more about virtual law practice for solos in general, I published an ebook entitled Practicing Law Online: Creating a Web-based Virtual Law Office. It discusses this form of web-based law practice in general and examines the technology and ethics considerations involved in this form of law practice. If you are interested, the link is here:

<http://www.vlotech.com/ebooks/PracticingLawOnline.pdf>

Stephanie L. Kimbro

There are *many* tools that you can use to meet people online. www.GoToMeeting.com is a popular one, and it works pretty good. Many people use it for product demos and tech support, but it works great for any meeting where you want to teleconference and look at documents together. There are also FREE ones like www.DimDim.com,

www.vyew.com, and many others.

Many of these also allow you to view each other through your webcam. Or you can use the video conferencing abilities in www.skype.com. The sky really is the limit for online meetings these days. You don't need fancy telepresence equipment. A computer, an internet connection, and an optional webcam.

Andrew Flusche

This has been a really instructive thread. Wow. Thanks to all for the insights.

Kathryn Bellman

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