

## Second Job

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I have been solo for 7 months. I see hope for the future income-wise, but in the mean time, I'm struggling to pay bills. I really want to get a second job waitressing or something, but some attorneys have said this may make me look unsuccessful. Is it really that bad to get an evening job to help make it during the beginning? Is that going to hurt my practice? I know small business owners in other professions who work night jobs and it doesn't seem to hurt their businesses. I'd love some feedback on this. Thanks!

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It is not uncommon to work at a side job. A few years back, the ABA Journal covered one young attorney, Bobbi-Sue Hazard Doyle, who waitressed while she tried to get her practice off the ground and explore other job opportunities.

[http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/new\\_lawyer\\_says\\_waitress\\_job\\_pays\\_more\\_than\\_small\\_law\\_firms/](http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/new_lawyer_says_waitress_job_pays_more_than_small_law_firms/)

Eventually, she landed an in-house counsel job - and following her on Twitter, it really seems as if her career has really taken off. I think that you are better off having a side stream of revenue and feeling less stressed out than taking on marginal cases.

It is too bad that the public has gotten the impression that all lawyers are rich and living high on the hog. About a year ago, on a school listserv for our local HS, the PTA head practically ordered the parents to sign a letter supporting raises for teachers. I am not opposed to teachers being well paid, but this directive came at a time when layoffs were high and many lawyers I knew were struggling to pay off loans and get their practices off the ground. So when I commented that a raise might not be justified right at that time, and cited the examples of struggling lawyers, I was met with comments about how I was privileged and out of touch with reality.

As the cost of law school increases and more lawyers start firms right out of school, I think that your situation of working two jobs will become far more common than you realize.

Carolyn Elefant, District of Columbia

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I think this depends in part on your practice areas. If you are doing family law or other consumer areas, I would think taking a second job would not hurt you much. Certainly not as much as having to give up solo practice because you can't pay your bills.

I say take a job. You have to give it time to build a client base. Steady income will buy you that time.

Dave Truman, Ohio

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I have always worked a second job...and don't plan to change that because I love it. My bachelors is in nursing. I work in my own office Monday thru Friday, and yes that is quite often a struggle since I'm on contingency fee. Most weekends, and some court holidays I work as an RN (22+yrs RN) at a local hospital. I do personal injury law which frequently involves litigation. This means that I am in the client's medical record and working closely with my client's treating physicians. I read x-rays, charts, MRIs... the works. I oppose the defense doctors who say my client is lying, and can go head to head with them because I "speak medicine" too. I blend my two jobs and love it. I find it easier for me to talk to court-shy doctors if I look like an RN sitting there instead of counsel (I even wore scrubs once because the guy was so nervous) So that's pretty much what I do.

My best friend loves concerts. He works as a state attorney and doesn't make a ton of money. His wife doesn't let him spend money to see every concert he wants. So he took a job with a security company that is contracted to provide security at concerts. He gets to "work" sometimes watching from the first row by the stage, he gets to go back stage to "protect" the performers, he's in hog heaven and sees 20+ cool rock concerts every year and gets paid to do so. FYI before he got that job he taught high school algebra for a year as a substitute teacher.

Another friend does estate planning and still works for a water rights protection group.

Those are just a few examples of second jobs that could be had.

Good luck

Carol

PS if you are worried about people seeing you working a second job...take a job across town where you won't run into your potential client base.

Carol L. Gurel

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Sounds like the 2nd job I had in Charlotte. I ushered for the Panthers as a volunteer for the local food bank. What they would have paid me was donated to the food bank.

It was neat I even was on the field when they beat Dallas in the playoffs.

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{John}

John A. Davidson, Pennsylvania

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I worked on a presidential campaign for eight months, but that really became the primary job and I could only do it because I had such a light caseload at the time. But, working on a campaign like did get me a great client referral.

Bridget Butler, New York

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If you plan on doing criminal or family wrong you can't go wrong with waitressing or bar tending. Don't be embarrassed to let your coworkers and customers know you are an attorney. They won't think less of you and your name will be on their mind when they need an attorney.

Kurt Valentine, Missouri

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I'm in my third month of solo practice, right out of law school, and have worked side gigs with a catering service, a holiday festival, and as a movie extra. If anything, it's a good way to meet people. I've found that people appreciate that I'm working hard to make ends meet while starting a business, and they also appreciate meeting a lawyer who doesn't fit the expensive downtown office stereotype.

Moral of the story: Do it, and bring business cards with you.

Andrew Legrand

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I've relied on my political background and have knocked doors, organized phone banks, etc. as side jobs while working as a solo. Hope I won't need to do it again, but hey! It's an even numbered-year, which is always promising ....

-- Lisa Babcock, Michigan

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This thread came at a very good time for me. As I've talked about before, I was driving a cab when I got licensed to practice, and kept doing so for a number of weeks before I decided I wanted to go all in and dedicate myself to practice full-time.

But since the recent holidays, things have slowed down quite a bit, and now that I have at least some semblance of knowing what I'm doing, minor tasks don't take as much work and I'm thinking of going back to driving. Maybe I can get away with just doing it on the weekends.

I'll echo what others have said about people not caring that you're an attorney with a side hustle. If your target market is blue-collar folk, they won't mind at all, just as they probably won't mind if you're not wearing a tie when you meet them (or comparable office wear for women).

I'm also kicking around the idea of developing this into some kind of marketing niche: i.e. a traffic practice? Now, if I could just conquer the monumental task of becoming an expert in DUI/traffic law....

Robert A. Switzer

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Hmm, anybody have any thoughts on good venues to work in on the side for a disability lawyer (veterans and social security)?

Margaret Wadsworth

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Doctor's office. Medical supply store. Pharmacy.

Go where the patients are.

Andrew

Andrew Flusche, Virginia

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I'd like to offer a contrarian view for a moment. Not with regard to the side job--take it if you need it, by all means--but with regard to marketing your law job while you're on the side job, particularly if your second job is of the minimum or low wage variety. If you do it at all, I think it needs to be done very carefully.

I'll be honest: if my waiter or barista let drop that their other job was as a lawyer, I'd feel sorry for them that they had to take a second job, but I really don't know that I'd be inclined to send them business. The fact that they are in that job says quite plainly that they can't earn enough money as a lawyer to get by without moonlighting, and that in turn implies that as a lawyer they are either (a) not very good, or (b) not very experienced. Not necessarily true, of course, but the second job, I think, automatically raises the issue.

Look, I don't think you need to wear thousand dollar suits and never be seen in public without looking like a million bucks. People don't necessarily want to think that their legal fees are paying for marbled floors and fancy cars. But by the same token, when something as important as a divorce or a criminal matter is at stake, people want to feel comfortable that their lawyer knows what he or she is doing. It's hard to project that image when you're asking someone if they want extra cream in their mocha frappuccino.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

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I know a couple of (now successful) attorneys who started out painting houses on the side.

Veronica M. Schnidrig, Oregon

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I understand your concern.

Image matters.

If the second job is something that is related to your work or a passion of your then I do not think that it looks bad.

I am a wine & spirits consultant a few night a week. There are colleagues and even former clients who have been puzzled by seeing me there. Yes, depending on the relationship, it can be uncomfortable. But if I care enough (sometimes I don't) I meet the blatant, puzzled looks on their faces

with a quick explanation that I have been doing this part-time job as a means of staying close to something I enjoy - and giving me a great contrast to what I do all day. Which is true, Working alone at your desk all day long is isolating and I love being in my store teaching people about wine and chatting about their plans. Will some still walk away thinking that I must be desperate? Sure. Nothing I can do about that. But I do love what I do in my second job and the fact that I am able to make money doing it is worth it.

Tanya Robinson, New York

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before law school, i was a full time real estate broker. i had my solo practice full time and it was hard. 2yrs into my practice i received an offer to work for a county housing agency in maryland. it was my real estate background that sealed the deal for the attorney position. although i share with my friends that i had a full time job, i am still asked by old clients to help them with their real estate transactions...i weigh them carefully, depending upon how much time i think will be involved and usually work weekends and some evenings if necessary. I still have a small law practice...i usually handle probates, wills, uncontested guardianships, and some contracts. i have several small business clients who came to me because they needed a contract written or reviewed and could not afford a lot of money for legal services. it has worked out fine. i dont think i will give up my real estate practice because even though i may only do 2 or 3 transactions a year, the commission is quite nice in the DC, MD housing market.

Joyce Williams

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Thanks everyone. Off to apply to some jobs!

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