

Popular Threads on Solosez

Should I Rent A Small Office?

Hi all, I am thinking about renting an office so that I have a place to go to during the week instead of going slightly stir crazy in my home office. I am looking at office rent of \$550, plus buying furniture for that office, getting phone lines installed. I will have a receptionist answering my phones from 9-2:45 M-F, which will be nice. I guess I am a little nervous at taking on the extra overhead, however, I think I would be more productive if I left the house and went to work for 8 hours a day (or less!). What do you solo's think? Thanks.

Michael Blake

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I think you need an office. I don't know what your real estate market is like, but I paid \$300 month for my first office, which consisted of one small 10 X 10 waiting room, and a large 12 X 20 office/conference room. I stuck my desk at one end, and a 6 foot library table I used as a conference table (bought used for \$200) at the end. I got a 4 waiting room chairs, and 4 chairs for the conference table. I was there 2 years. Look into used furniture for some of the stuff.

Ronald A. Jones, Florida

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Mike, where are you located, I have an extra office for rent! I opened an office on my own from my very first day of practice. Knowing that my home office would be the dank spare bedroom or the kitchen table, I knew I would not get any work done whatsoever. Getting into the office everyday helps to keep a routine and keeps me moving. When I'm at the office, I know that it is work time, which means I can surf the internet only so much. The initial costs are steep, but just try to do it piecemeal at a time. You can get a lot accomplished with a staples catalog and a thousand dollars.

Shane L. Jimison, Richmond, Virginia

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Yes, you should, but shop around. There are many offices available at low cost in many markets. I'd bet you can find a furnished office with conference room access for \$250 or less. You will likely not have access to a receptionist. Check with some of the consulting engineers in your immediate geographic area to see if they have or know of space. A lot of those firms in this area have downsized and have excellent space available for reasonable costs.

Mike Phillips, North Carolina



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I am in Milford, CT, near the shore. So, rent is not going to be very cheap around here.

Michael A. Blake, Milford, Connecticut

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I would look at it in a different way: do you think that having an office will result in revenues greater than the costs you're incurring? I would add up all of the expenses (rent, salary, phone, furniture, stationary changes, etc.) and think hard about whether you'll be able to generate at least that much in new billings by having an office, as opposed to not. If you're reasonably confident that your revenues will go up by at least that much in a reasonable time period then I'd go for it.

Bernie Dietz

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I have to agree with Bernie. For me the answer has been yes, because I chose to open my office in an executive suite, not a stand-alone office. The rent is about 50% higher than I would be paying in a solo office, but there are lots of small business owners along with a handful of lawyers and accountants in the suite. I've gotten lots of new business and referrals due to this. I would look to locate your office in a building or suite that houses a source of business for you. Cheap is a relative term. Peter Turai, Freehold, New Jersey

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I take the opposite approach. I work out of the house and love it. Of course, I have two major factors:

1 - In my area, space is going for \$3.00 per foot and no one wants to talk about anything less than 1,500 sf. I have looked into office sharing arrangements and space sharing, but those are in the city of Sacramento, and I do not want to have an office there. I like the suburban setting and telling my clients I am local since most of my clients are local.

2 - I worked out of the house as an adjuster for 4 years so I am used to it and get my work done.

Jonathan G. Stein, Elk Grove, California

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I think that it's definitely worth it. I worked out of home for about 6 to 9 months when I initially went on my own. I looked at several offices. Chose one that's a bit larger (649 sq. ft.) that was already divided into 2 office areas and a large reception area. Got furniture for the reception area & my office at Office Depot about this time last year when they had a 33% off sale. Then got 2 nice rattan loveseats for the reception area at the Salvation Army across the street for about \$75/each (the Salvation Army

here gets lots of great stuff that is either left over or used from the local hotels).

I had a choice between a much smaller office (about 10x10) or a larger office (about 800 sq.ft.). I figured the one I took was the best option. I got the landlord to defer the rent for the 1st two or three months to allow time for me to get rolling there. My rent was approx. \$1.69/sq. ft initially (\$1.00/sq.ft. + \$0.69 CAM). That's recently gone up as the local electric utility realized that they were not reading one of the building's meters. So now the CAM is about \$0.90/sq. ft.

I have been trying to rent out the additional office space for about a year. No luck so far. I know another attorney in the area who's interested but she's harder than heck to get a hold of. If and when I can rent that out I will most likely be able to afford someone to come in to answer phones and help with filing & other paperwork on a part-time basis.

The biggest reason I took the plunge was that being able to actually work at home was unpredictable, between the animals and my boyfriend's mood swings. I was also really tired of meeting clients at Starbucks. It's definitely a struggle some months but I feel it's really worth it. I still do some work at home, including my billing, but when I'm at the office I get a lot more done.

Jane E. Tate, Kailua, Hawaii

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I work out of a commercial office and out of my home. Currently, the computers are networked, and I am "paperless" (...or close to it.) So, everything is scanned, and there is a digital image of all documents. (Thanks go to several members of this list for help setting everything up.)

Sometimes I just come to the office to get mail, do some scanning, and then I leave. I have access to everything at my home office that I do at my commercial office.

Frankly, it does not matter where your remote office is located if you network and are "paperless." On Sunday my wife and I were at a local café with our laptops. (Yes, I am a complete nerd.) I networked to my office computer and was able to do everything I could do if I were physically at the commercial office. I can email, review files, fax (efax), sign documents (adobe).

Michael D. Day, Meriden, Connecticut

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There's another reason. If you work at the office, you can leave the work there and GO HOME. If you work at home, it is always there and it is, at least for me, impossible to get away from it.

Marc Stern, Seattle, Washington

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But my office is upstairs by itself, and I can turn the ringer off, close the door, and leave at night. A home office can be a lovely place to be during the day. Last week we had a beautiful stretch of warm sunny weather. One lunchtime I stepped outside to toss the birds some apple peelings and noticed all the dead leaves in that part of the yard. I grabbed a rake and cleaned up a bit of yard, enjoyed the sun and the exercise. Last spring and summer, as I brewed coffee or tea or when my back needed some stretching, I'd step outside to plant another row of lettuces, or weed a flowerbed, or snip herbs for drying and come back with my hands smelling of fresh rosemary.

However, if you can have both, a small town office would be nice. Sometimes I'd like to be able to trot over to the office and plug in, or when I'm in a hearing take my lunch break at the office and spread everything out for a re-look and a visit with the client. Or when I get all the way into Missoula to file something and realize I fluffed the caption, I could zip over to my other office and fix it.

Hey, how about The InflatOffice?? Comes with its own pump. The little shelves and cubbies puff up and there's your stapler, your inflatoprinter . . . where's my IP attorney . . .

Carolyn Stevens, Lolo, Montana

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