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# Lawyers

This document provides basic guidelines for selecting an attorney as well as a list of legal resources.

A business owner is faced with many legal issues in the course of doing business. Some of these issues may be simple to address while others more complicated. Some common legal issues you may need to address include:

- Deciding on your business structure
- Contract preparation, interpretation and negotiation (including leases and financing agreements)
- Regulatory compliance (including zoning, permits, licenses, etc.)
- Insurance issues
- Intellectual property issues
- Employment issues

While many owners think they can save money by handling these issues on their own, they often find out that the cost of not seeking professional advice ends up being far greater than the money they were trying to save.

Important Resource for Understanding Legal Issues Facing Small Businesses:  
<http://www.nolo.com>

## **Selecting an Attorney**

Selecting an attorney that is a good fit for your needs is one of the most important decisions you can make for your business.

### **To find an attorney, you may want to:**

- Inquire with your trade association for local referrals
- Ask business colleagues for referrals
- Do an Internet search, go to your local bar association or Chamber of Commerce for a list of attorneys or firms (a referral obtained here needs to come with an indication of the specific level of expertise)

Once you have done your research and have identified several attorneys, you should interview them. By doing so, you will make sure you feel comfortable talking with them and that they have the expertise to assist you with your particular legal issues.

### **Here are some questions you may want to ask:**

- How does their fee structure work?
- What is their experience with handling the sort of legal issues likely to arise in your business? Is this someone who will be able to be able to provide you with added-value services as you grow the business?
- Are they familiar with your industry's practices?
- Are they able to give you a list of references and are these clients able to give a sound reference?

### **How to use the attorney you select:**

- Be prepared (written list of issues/questions and copies of all documents) when meeting or talking
- Be very clear who is to do what and when it is to be done by
- Always ask for explanation until you understand (if necessary, ask for the advice to be in



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writing, even though this may cost more)

- Verify that the firm or individual is in good standing with the local bar association

#### **Legal Referrals**

Legal Referral Service of The New York City and County Bar Association  
Recommends experienced lawyers to the public. Modest fee charged.

Website: <http://www.abcny.org>

#### **Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (VLA)**

Website: <http://www.vlany.org>

#### **Volunteers of Legal Services, Inc.**

Website: [www.volsprobono.org](http://www.volsprobono.org)

#### **Lawyers Alliance for New York Pro Bono for Nonprofits**

Website: <http://www.lany.org/>

#### **Legal Aid Society**

The Legal Aid Society - Community Development provides free commercial legal services to qualifying clients. To qualify the business must (a) provide "economic benefit" to, at present, the areas of the Bronx or Harlem/upper Manhattan, and (b) be unable to afford a private attorney. Almost all not-for-profit enterprises and most microenterprises in these areas will qualify.

Website: <http://www.legal-aid.org>

#### **Legal Services for New York City**

Website: <http://www.lsnyc.org/>

#### **Online Resources**

##### **Find Law**

Provides attorney listings

Website: <http://www.findlaw.com/business.html>

##### **Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory**

Specializes in finding lawyers for small businesses

Website: <http://www.lawyers.com>

##### **West Legal Directory**

Provides an extensive listing of lawyers

Website: <http://www.lawoffice.com>

##### **NOLO Small Business Law Center**

Website: <http://www.nolo.com>

##### **LawHelp.org**

Assists people with low and moderate incomes find legal resources.

Website: <http://www.lawhelp.org>

##### **9-11 Related Legal Advice**

Legal advice for small businesses that were affected by the events of September 11th. Targeted to small businesses in Lower Manhattan, and is in partnership with the Association of the Bar of New York City.

Website: [http://www.stroock.com/PubServ\\_SmallBusiness.htm](http://www.stroock.com/PubServ_SmallBusiness.htm)



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**Martindale Hubbell.com**

As a legal network, it includes basic practice profile data on virtually every lawyer in the U.S. and Canada, detailed professional biographies of leading lawyers and firms in 160 countries, exclusive lawyer and law firm ratings based upon peer review, information on corporate and government lawyers, and links to law firm websites and more.

Website: <http://www.martindale.com>

**Pro Bono Legal Services**

Sept 11th and other needs

Website: <http://www.probono.net>

**NYS Bar Association**

Website: <http://www.nysba.org>

**The Foundation Center list of Pro Bono Attorney Services**

Website: <http://www.fdncenter.org>

**American Bar Association**

Website: <http://www.abanet.org/>