



THRIVE ANEW ENTERPRISES

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR ATTORNEY

1. PREPARE A LIST OF YOUR CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS.

Write down what it is you want to know about your case and about the attorney by making two lists. Your list about your case should contain all the questions you need answered regarding your particular situation. Your list about the attorney should include such things as the attorney's experience and billing practices and anything else you want to remember about the attorneys you speak to.

2. SPEAK TO MORE THAN ONE ATTORNEY.

I love it when I am the first lawyer seen and I am hired at our first appointment. However, when someone isn't ready to hire me, I encourage them to shop around. If you are not sure who you want to hire, interview a few attorneys to see who is available to work for you. I suggest scheduling 20-30 minute appointments with prospective attorneys. Ask them the same questions. The advantages of speaking to several attorneys are several: each attorney will probably give you some new information; each time you talk to an attorney you will become more adept at presenting your situation efficiently, and; you will be able to absorb more of what they are telling you.

3. REVIEW WHAT THE ATTORNEYS HAVE TOLD YOU.

Consider how each attorney generally views your case and use all that information to form your view of your prospects. The information you receive from those attorneys probably would not have been anticipated by you or found in a book. That will help you develop a reasonable expectation of what to ask for when negotiating and what might happen when you go to court.

4. COMPARE WHAT THE ATTORNEYS HAVE TO OFFER.

Compare the hourly rates, retainer requirements and experience levels of the attorneys you have interviewed and how they bill their services. Newer attorneys will often work for lower rates and a lower starting retainer, but then they might bill you for more time to complete the same work because they are less experienced. Also, if the retainer is low, then you'll be getting a bill that much sooner. More experienced attorneys typically charge a higher hourly rate and a larger initial retainer because they might be more efficient with their time and they might have a more realistic understanding of the legal process.

5. ASK EACH ATTORNEY HOW THEY BILL THEIR TIME.

Attorneys sell their time. They generally bill for all the time they spend on your case, but they organize the bill differently. Many attorneys have standard billing procedures, such as a minimum charge for a task. Some attorneys include a number of tasks, phone calls, drafting, etc. in one itemization and others charge for drafting the document, charge you separately for proofreading the same document and charge you a third time for signing the document. You may appreciate that detail, or you may not.

6. CONSIDER HOW BIG THAT ATTORNEY'S FIRM IS AND THE AMOUNT OF PERSONAL SERVICE YOU ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE.

Big firms can offer an economy of scale when it comes to providing paralegal services, etc. but they usually charge a much higher hourly rate and sometimes require a security deposit in addition to their retainer so

that they are guaranteed payment every billing cycle. Also, ask who will be representing you: will it be the partner of the firm you've just met, or will it be their junior associate with little experience who is billed at the partner's higher rate? Who will go to court with you—the experienced partner or the new associate?

7. AND FINALLY, COMPARE HOW WERE RECEIVED BY THE ATTORNEY AND HOW YOU FELT DURING THE INTERVIEW.

No matter what kind of situation you have, when you hire an attorney you will be placing your trust in them. You will also be sharing very personal information with the attorney you hire and it is very important that you feel comfortable sharing that information. Is it easy for you and the attorney to communicate? Does your attorney understand your values? It is essential that you and your attorney operate on the same page so that your attorney can advocate for what is most important to you.

Whoever you hire to represent you, you should feel good about the choice, now and in the future. Hiring the right attorney for you the first time can save you emotional energy, lots of money and hours of footwork in the future.