

WHAT IS A LAW FIRM?



Introduction to the Law Firm

If you have spent much time around lawyers, you will find that they are never short of opinions or advice. The saying goes: if you have 12 lawyers in a room, you will get 12 different opinions. One thing lawyers agree on: every lawyer is unique. The same is true of many law firms.

every lawyer and law firm is unique

To help you get an understanding of lawyers and the various levels of lawyers and types of staff you may find within a firm, take a look at this article on

marketing to lawyers: [Market to Lawyers: 5 Specific Tactics \(Hint: Text-only Email\)](#).

The People

Law firms are only as good as the people who work in the firm. Lawyers need lots of help to get the mountains of work that need to be done. Clients come in all shapes and sizes and require different types of people to help manage their cases.

Take a look at this article to get a better understanding of how law firms are utilizing support staff. [The Changing Role of Support Staff](#).

The Information

Law firms are unique in that they handle various types of information. From physical items for estate and family law clients to digital files to databases and hard drives containing hundreds of thousands of files.

Lawyers are governed by ethics rules, which require the lawyer and members of a law firm to meet certain guidelines with respect to client information. The American Bar Association writes the Model Rules of Professional Conduct and those rules are adopted, in substantially the same form, by most states.

Lawyers have an ethical duty to keep client files confidential and safe from unauthorized disclosure

To get an overview of the lawyer's responsibilities (and therefore anyone supporting the lawyer), take a look at this article: [SAFEGUARDING CONFIDENTIAL DATA: Your Ethical and Legal Obligations](#).

Note also that the ABA has amended the Model Rules of Professional Conduct for lawyers to specifically require lawyers to maintain technology competence. Indiana has recently adopted that rule which will be effective in 2018 for Indiana lawyers. Read the article [Ethics in a Tech Age: What Every Lawyer Should Consider](#). We'll refer back to this article later in the semester, but for now, focus on the introduction and the heading "Model



People

Information

Technology

Rules' Technology and Confidentiality Amendments".

Also, take a look at this information from the American Bar Association on [Client File Retention](#). Don't read the whole article, it is more for reference.

The Technology

Take a few minutes to think about the kind of technology you would find in a law office. Make a list of the things you think necessary to operate a successful practice. What types of technology would be standard in a normal business? What would be different in a law firm environment? What type of equipment would you find or need in a typical law practice environment?

Post your list and answers to these questions and use your answers as the basis for your forum posts this week. Your forum post doesn't have to be a book, but just an overview to show you have put some thought into this question and are beginning to understand *Foundations in Legal Informatics*.