



### **TOP FIVE TIPS FOR HIRING AN ATTORNEY**

Sometimes, the process of hiring an attorney is just as stressful as the situation that led you to look for an attorney in the first place. There are so many attorneys. How do you know who to hire? Do you hire the attorney who advertises on the side of a bus or do you dig a bit deeper? AND, what really matters and what should you really look for when hiring an attorney?

1. **Know what type of attorney you need.** Law, like medicine, is extremely specialized. The days when one attorney could practice every type of law are gone. The law changes too quickly and the stakes are too high for any one lawyer to know everything about every type of law. As a result, most attorneys focus on just a few areas of the law (although the Washington State Bar Association prohibits lawyers from using the word “specialize” in their advertising to explain what areas of law they practice, most lawyer advertising does include the areas of law where they focus their practice).

You should be very wary of any lawyer who promises too much or advertises for cases in nearly every field of law. It is an indication that their skill level in any one particular area may not be sufficient to handle your case, especially if it falls in a practice area in which they have only dabbled. Instead, search for attorneys who practice the type of law that is matched to your legal problem and who have experience in that area of law.

2. **Check out social media sites.** Fortunately, there are enough social media sites available to consumers that they can shop for attorneys before actually contacting one. We think the following sites are helpful to people looking for lawyers:

- a. **Avvo** – [www.avvo.com](http://www.avvo.com)
- b. **SuperLawyers** – [www.superlawyers.com/washington](http://www.superlawyers.com/washington)
- c. **Facebook** – [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- d. **LinkedIn** – [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)
- e. **Google+** – <https://plus.google.com>

These sites indicate the lawyer’s field of practice, their experience, their credentials, and endorsements from colleagues and former clients.

3. **Look at law firm websites.** Nearly all law firms have websites now. The quality and content vary significantly. Some obviously have a larger amount of “puffery,” while others have more substantive content. Although it is tempting to be swayed by the amount of settlements or verdicts posted on a

website, potential clients need to keep in mind that each and every case is different and that it is those differences, as much as the lawyer's skill, that determine the outcome of any given case. More importantly, no lawyer can guarantee a specific outcome or dollar figure on a case.

When viewing a particular lawyer's biography, pay particular attention to their professional activities and credentials. Do they belong to any professional associations? Are those associations relevant to your legal issue? Have they held leadership roles in those organizations or have they just paid dues to become a member? Have they lectured or written on areas of the law that are relevant to your legal issue? Have they won awards for their work as attorneys? Being an active participant in professional associations is a good indicator that the attorney is well versed in the latest trends and techniques applicable to your case, and that they care enough about their clients to go the extra mile.

4. **Talk to your friends.** Ask your friends if they have hired attorneys or have attorneys as friends. Find out if they were pleased with their attorney. Did their attorney communicate with them well and explain the various steps of the case? Were they treated with respect? Did their attorney work hard for them? Did their attorney appear to be experienced in the particular area of law that matched their legal need? Were they pleased with the outcome of the case? A friend's recommendation can't necessarily substitute for doing your own investigation, but it can give you a place to focus your search.
5. **Contact the attorney and ask questions.** Most law firm websites have a "web form" or a way for you to contact them. Some of the social media sites also have an email link to the attorney. Of course, you can also call and ask to speak to the attorney. Although the attorney cannot give you legal advice or tell you the outcome or value of your case without reviewing all the materials related to your case in depth, the attorney should be able to answer some basic questions about the area of law that applies to you, explain the process involved in resolving your case, and tell you about their law firm and how they handle cases. They should also be willing to explain their fee structure. Their responses, and their responsiveness, should give you a better idea of whether this attorney would be a good fit for your case. You can also meet with several attorneys before making your final decision.

**If you need a lawyer, please contact Nelson Boyd, PLLC at (206) 971-7601 or toll free at (877) 971-7601 and see our website at [www.nelsonboydlaw.com](http://www.nelsonboydlaw.com). If we can't help you, we'll be happy to refer you to another lawyer who can.**