

Career factors of being a lawyer



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Decisions That Matter: The Lawful Challenge of Determining my Future

It is important to understand that the legal profession as it is today did not always exist. Distinct legal systems emerged early in history, but legal professions of great size and significance are relatively modern.

Unfortunately, the first lawyer in history remains unknown (paraphrase) (Taylor). The initial founders of law make their appearance in Ancient Greece and Rome spanning the time period of 200 BCE to 600 CE (paraphrase) (Sawer, Geoffrey, et al.). As the legal profession evolved in ancient Rome it also became more regulated. According to Taylor, trained litigator from a large east-coast law firm, between 1190 and 1230 the church and the state of Ancient Greece and Rome “doubled their efforts to control and regulate the profession” (short quote). There were strong efforts in professionalizing the legal career following the surge of control. One might ask approximately when did lawyers begin practicing in the United States? The history of attorneys is filled with changes and fluctuations. Thus, the first lawyers were not actively practicing in America when the British colonies were first established. Many people in the newly formed colonies demonstrated hostile behavior towards lawyers as claimed by Taylor. Some colonies were more accepting than others, but overly cautious when determining regulatory controls. As the colonies began to thrive financially the need for lawyers grew; unfortunately, most lawyers were untrained and a client was taking a risk on the quality of a lawyer they hired. Eventually, the prejudices against lawyers started to dwindle and the legal profession began to shape into the career it is today.

Becoming a lawyer typically takes 7 years of full-time study following completion of high school. Four years of undergraduate study, followed by three years of law school. The state of Tennessee requires lawyers to complete a Juris Doctor (J. D.) degree from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA). ABA commendation denotes that “ the law school meets certain standards” (short quote) (Bureau of Labor Statistics). A bachelor’s degree is required for entry into the majority of law schools, including several prerequisite courses geared towards the direction of pursuit. All law schools require applicants to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). The Bureau of Labor Statistics states, “ this test measures applicants’ aptitude for the study of law”. Prospective lawyers take the “ bar exams” which is a licensing exam that is specific to the state of testing. Lawyers who pass the exam and receive a license to practice law are “ admitted to the bar” (BLS). By the jurisdiction’s highest court a person must be admitted to the state’s bar in order to legally practice law. Requirements vary greatly by state and/or jurisdiction. Convictions, academic misconduct, and a history of substance abuse are some factors that may disqualify an applicant from being admitted. Lawyers who strive to practice in multiple states typically take the exam for each state. It is vital that lawyers, after graduation, remain up to date on the legal developments that may affect their practices. Continuous legal education courses are offered by several local bar associations and law schools to keep the practicing lawyers on their toes. These courses help lawyers stay current with recent developments.

A lawyer is someone who is “ licensed to practice law, and whose obligation it is to uphold the law while also protecting their client’s rights” (paraphrase)

(Bureau of Labor Statistics). Some duties associated with a lawyer include: providing legal advice and counsel, researching and gathering information or evidence, drawing up legal documents related to divorces, wills, contracts, and real estate transactions, and prosecuting or defending in court (paraphrase) (Bureau of Labor Statistics). The exact terminology for the word “lawyer” varies throughout the world. Attorney, counsel, or solicitor are all common names associated with lawyers. A lawyer has a variety of duties that go beyond the basic court trial. Researching information, drafting documents, mediating disputes and providing counsel to clients about their legal rights are just some responsibilities involved depending on the branch of law the individual pursues (paraphrase) (Bureau of Labor Statistics). The legal profession has demonstrated rapid growth throughout the last century and is comprised of multiple areas of study in which broaden the perspective of many. Like with any other pursuit, becoming a lawyer is an enormous oath in terms of time commitment and financial investment; however, it has the potential of being an extremely rewarding career because of the prestige, intellectual challenge, and the diversified practice areas.

A career as a lawyer has been a hallmark of prestige for generations. The demonstration of an impressive degree in addition to a certain authority over others has consistently placed lawyers in an “elite circle of professionals” (short quote) (Kane, “A”). Lawyers demand respect and embody the definition of success. Lawyers place themselves in a unique professional status and are often consumed with the glamorous image perpetuated by the media. Because there is a degree of respect that is automatically bestowed upon lawyers within our society, how could I not strive to be part

of such a high standard? Much like in life, the way you carry yourself is the way others will perceive you and your personality. I, personally, make the decision to live my life day by day to the standard of excellence. I expect nothing but the utmost best from myself (some might say I am a perfectionist). Based upon the way I am able to carry myself throughout the most developmental stages of my life there is no doubt in my mind that I do not want to pursue something of such stature. I believe becoming a successful lawyer is the career that is best suited for myself because I am constantly challenging myself to compose myself in a rather classy and appropriate way.

Working as a lawyer is one of the most intellectually rewarding jobs known to man. Kane states, “ from helping to patent a trade secret, or devising a trial strategy, to forming a multi-million dollar merger, lawyers are problem-solvers, analysts, and innovative thinkers whose intellect is crucial to career success” (long quote) (“ A”). I, as a student, choose to apply myself to my coursework once again striving to achieve excellence and nothing less. It goes without saying, students who choose to pursue a law major can expect to be challenged. In every course, students are presented with difficult concepts and are expected to think about, discuss, and analyze that material from a variety of differentiating perspectives. Every student has the opportunity to take a sequence of courses that develops a solid foundation in the methods, content, and skills used to understand the logistics of law. The schooling is specifically structured such that students progress through introductory, intermediate, and advanced coursework. Each level supports increasingly sophisticated and in-depth knowledge and development of skills.

It is vital to understand that there are other students such as Adrienne Young, a second-year student at the University of Chicago Law School who believe:

“ Law school continues to be the most rewarding and challenging experience of my life. Despite the reoccurring belief that there are not enough hours in the day, I find my commitments only further my dedication to low-income youth and education reform. These professional opportunities, personal relationships, and academic experiences would not be possible without effective time management” (long quote) (“ 30”).

While there are going to be several bumps in the road during the pursuit of this career, according to Young and several other law students the challenges are worth the hard work and dedication in the end which I place tremendous value upon.

Increased industry partitioning and specialization have produced a broad array of sub-fields in the legal profession. Lawyers can specialize in multiple or a singular area, ranging from “ bread-and-butter practices such as employment law, foreclosure law, and civil litigation to specialties such as green law or intellectual property law” (short quote) (Kane “ A”). Because of the vast opportunity to pursue a sector of the legal profession you are passionate in. While money is one of the lesser factors driving my decisions, a great variety of opportunities can also fluctuate the earning potential of each career. Kane claims, “ lawyers are among the highest-paid professionals in the legal industry, and most attorneys earn salaries well above the national average” (long quote) (“ A”). According to the U. S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual salary for all lawyers was \$120, 910 in 2018, but the world's most well-known attorneys can surpass million-dollar annual incomes. I find it extraordinary that I as an individual have so many options and so much leeway in the determination of how my future unfolds with this career choice which outweighs any negative aspect of the career.

Similar to any great program there is always going to be that one rainy cloud that you cannot seem to catch a break from. Kane identifies, “ deadlines, billing pressures, client demands, long hours, changing laws, and other demands” as key factors in determining the practice of law one of the most stressful jobs out there (short quote). Throw in “ rising business pressures, evolving legal technologies, and climbing law school debt” and it's obviously no wonder lawyers are experiencing stress (Kane “ These”). Unfortunately, the stress and demands of practicing law have fueled increasing levels of career dissatisfaction spanning multiple members of the bar (paraphrase) (Bureau of Labor Statistics). “ Depression and suicide are common among lawyers and 44 percent of those recently surveyed by the American Bar Association said they would not recommend the profession to a young person” as states by Kane (long quote) (“ These”). Although at times becoming a lawyer seems extremely difficult, great results can be achieved with many life skills and patience. Stress is a factor that can be applied to everyday life and if stress were not a thing then nothing in the world would be difficult and I find that to be rather boring because what is life without a good challenge? I am able to effectively function when the stakes get high; therefore, this career could not be more perfect for me.

Unfortunately, the cost of a law school education has exceeded inflation in recent years (paraphrase) (Kane “ These”). Tuition at even a mediocre law school can surpass well over \$40, 000 annually (paraphrase) (Bureau of Labor Statistics). For many law students, entering practice with a five to six-figure law school debt is not uncommon. It has been found that new grads often do not earn enough to replenish their debt in “ today’s cutthroat job market” (short quote) (Kane “ These”). A law degree is no longer considered a ticket to financial security; however, ultimately I have control of my future and I am confident that with hard work and determination I have the potential to defy the odds with ease. While these circumstances might deter many students in their occupational endeavors it is not impossible. Sure, debt is something no one particularly wants a part of; however, debt is yet an additional thing that I have control of. Having the knowledge that if I am wise and act appropriately with the money I have, I should be able to make it in and out of law school with a debt that is not impossible for me to pay off in the near future.

Harrison Barnes, one of the world’s most successful, respected and sought-after. legal recruiters, states “ practicing law is not really all that bad. In fact, it can be about the clearest path to security, wealth and prestige there is” (BCGSearch). Becoming a lawyer would be a rather fulfilling occupation in which I would be required to stay on my toes while doing good. Many factors drive me to pursue such a career including earning potential, prestige, opportunity to help others, intellectual challenges, and diverse practice areas. I would be able to comfortably support the lifestyle I intend on living while being a lawyer. This lifestyle includes a sound economic standing as

well as the standard of which I conduct myself. This is where the component of prestige shines most in the development of my character. Becoming a lawyer will also be fulfilling in the sense of bestowing me the ability to help others. Accompanied by doing so in an area of study I am passionate about thanks to the variety of branches there are in the legal profession. Lastly, being a lawyer will give me the opportunity to continuously learn on a daily basis. My ability to always learn from even the simplest of things is something that I hope will never perish. This profession will find ways to expand my horizons and push me to identify solutions to issues from multiple perspectives which I find great value in. Needless to say, the qualities that lead me in the direction of pursuing the legal profession outweigh any possible setback I might face because of the value I place in a career so noteworthy.

In conclusion, the legal profession has existed for centuries and is not going away anytime in the near future. I have full intentions of going to a four-year university in which I will study to acquire my bachelor's in either business, political science, or English before registering for the Law school Admissions Test (LSAT). Once I receive my score or acceptance to one or more of the schools I apply to I will make a decision and persistently work towards achieving good grades and setting myself apart from other students. By the time I am twenty-three, I will most likely be graduating law school and on my way into the highly competitive world in which I have intentions of thriving. Becoming a lawyer is not going to be simple but I look forward to the many lessons I learn as well as making a name for myself and doing something with my life that I find meaningful. Yes, becoming a lawyer is an enormous

commitment and financial investment; however, it has the potential of being an extremely rewarding career because of the prestige of the degree, the intellectual challenge, and the diversified practice areas in which I greatly look forward to pursuing with hopes of bettering other peoples lives as well as my own.

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