

Choosing An Estate Planning Attorney

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If you have decided to put your affairs in order and finally accept the fact that estate planning is something most of us would be better off having than not, the next thing you might be wondering about is how to choose an estate planning attorney. The first thing to remember is that your estate-planning attorney is a person with whom you will share a great deal of personal information. The bottom line is whoever you choose, you should feel comfortable talking to him/her about your needs and concerns and if you don't he/she is not the right attorney for you. Your attorney is your legal confidant and is duty bound to take your confidence with them beyond their own estate plan, which is shorthand for they must take your secrets to the grave with them. But it doesn't matter what their duty is if you don't feel comfortable telling them what you need in the first place. If you begin to feel uncomfortable talking to your would-be estate planning expert, you should begin to shop elsewhere.

The second thing to consider is that not all attorneys are created equal with respect to their ability in estate planning. A good first step in finding an attorney who will be a good fit for you is to ask people who you already know and trust. Ask the leader of your church, your doctor and your friends if they have had occasion to use an estate planner and ask what they think of that person. If you get a recommendation, don't stop there. Look your would-be attorney candidates up on Martindale Hubbell (www.martindale.com) to find out where they went to school, how long they have practiced and what fields of law they specialize in. Of course, these answers don't tell you everything you need to know about your potential confidant, but having some information is better than flying blind into the world of attorneys. If the attorney who was recommended does not specialize in estate planning, then it may be that you don't want that attorney to create a financial plan for you and your family.

Another good way to find an attorney or firm in your area that specializes in estate planning is to take a look at the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) (www.naela.org). The NAELA is a site that attorneys visit to keep up on issues involving elder law and estate planning and it is a great place to find an attorney who is versed in estate planning. At the NAELA website there is a place to type in your zip code and find local attorneys who specialize in elder law and estate planning, which includes their contact information as well as a map to their door. Once you have that list you might cross reference it with a Martindale Hubbell search and ask those you know whether they have heard of any of the attorneys on the list. In addition to that there are other good sites on the Internet where you can gather information about the subject before you meet with an estate planner.

However, the best advice that anyone can give is to find someone who you relate well to and who you feel comfortable sharing personal information with. Remember, your estate planner is someone whose judgment you need to be able to rely on; they are someone that will present and recommend legal options to accomplish goals that you set out for them and they need to be the kind of person who can ask you the right kinds of questions to get the job done and the kind of person you will feel comfortable answering. If you don't feel right about them, even if you just don't seem to relate well to them in some small way, it is probably best to look elsewhere for your planning needs. The bottom line is to trust yourself and your instincts and impressions about your attorney. Part of the service that you are purchasing is the ability to feel comfortable about how your estate planning will be managed and carried out, so make sure you find someone who makes you feel confident that you are dealing with a professional who you can trust. About Ronald E. Hudkins;

Ronald Hudkins is a retired military police enlisted member that was assigned as a staff researcher. He has coordinated with military and criminal investigators, set on court marshals and worked closely with the Staff Judge Advocate Generals Office (JAG). He has a keen sense of legal matters- their interpretation, initiatives and guidelines.

For imperative financial planning needs he suggests his book "Asset Protection and Estate Planning for All Ages." Additionally, he offers a Free Newsletter at his web site: <http://www.AssetProtectNow.com>