

I've Never Hired a Lawyer - Is Now the Time?

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First let's make a distinction between:

- Talking to a lawyer, and
- Hiring a lawyer

People consult lawyers all the time for a host of reasons. If you're thinking you might need to hire one, the first thing to do is talk to some. Set up some initial consultations, which are often free of charge, to see if that lawyer is the right one for you.

If the consultation is not free of charge, consider whether it might be money well spent for the information you could learn. Law is a complex thing with many exceptions, obscurities, unique details etc. Only a lawyer with experience in the field that concerns you can give you the facts and guidance you may need.

Interview some lawyers

If you make 3 or 4 appointments with possible lawyers, present your situation to them, and listen to their responses, you will probably know by the end of that whether you need to hire one. And you'll know whether one of those 3 or 4 will be the right one.

In getting ready for those initial consultations, you'll need to think about your situation. One of the first things to ask yourself is: What's at stake here?

Pros and Cons

Try making two columns on a piece of paper.

- Why I need a lawyer
- Why maybe I don't need one

Write down all the ideas that occur to you as to what you might gain by hiring an attorney, and what you might lose by it. Don't censor yourself, just write down all the thoughts that come to you, both pro and con. It's a good way to clear the mind and get a better focus on what's really important and what's perhaps just some temporary bee in your bonnet.

Beware the statute of limitations

If you've been harmed in some way and feel you should be paid compensation, be aware that there's almost certainly a time limit for you to file a claim. From the date of your injury (whether physical, financial, or whatever kind of injury), there's a clock ticking off the days and weeks during which you may file for redress.

It may be several years, or in some instances may be only several weeks. At any rate, this is a good first question to ask a lawyer when you have an initial consultation. The answer will give you an idea of how quickly you must proceed in filing any claim.

Remember too that if you do hire a lawyer, time will be required for him or her to gather information and prepare a lawsuit for you. This preparation must all be done within the statute of limitations.

Financial considerations

Like all professional services, those of a lawyer cost money. If that gives you pause, follow your thoughts on the subject.

- How much money is at stake in your situation?
- What exactly would a given lawyer charge you?
- Would you be paying fees as things progress?
- Would it be a percentage of any compensation you might be awarded?
- What's the comparison between what the lawyer might cost and what you might receive?

While these are all questions to ask yourself, you won't necessarily be able to answer them, and they're all questions

you can ask each lawyer you interview.

Alternatives to hiring an attorney

- Many community groups (e.g., civil rights groups, elder groups) offer free legal advice
- Many businesses use mediation or arbitration to resolve disputes
- Many industries are regulated, so you could talk to someone at the state regulatory agency

Depending on what your situation is, these resources may fill your need, or may give you missing pieces of information that help you make a decision on hiring a lawyer.

Do you want legal defense or compensation for an injury?

Most lawyers specialize in certain fields. By asking around among your friends, neighbors, co-workers etc., you could learn the names of law firms who specialize in the type of law relevant to your situation.

If you do hire a lawyer, you'll want one who has extensive experience in the type of legal work you need. For example, if you've been hurt in a car accident, you won't want to hire a lawyer who specializes in insurance defense, because that mindset is diametrically opposed to the mindset you'll want in your personal injury lawyer.

Whatever your situation is, take some time to think things through, but not too much time before having some initial consultations, because of that statute of limitations. Once that time limit is up, there'll be no recourse at all for you. If you or someone you know is interested in consulting a personal injury lawyer, please feel free to contact Jay Trucks personal injury attorney of Clare, Michigan. (<http://www.jtrucks.com>)