

Kleps Law Office, PLLC

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Finding an office in Bellingham



I would like to tell you about how I selected a location for my law office. As of October 3, 2008 my sole employment for four months has been to build my law practice. For the first few weeks I worked from my home. I then sublet a one hundred square foot space for seventy-five dollars per month. Finally, I signed a year lease agreement for a one-hundred thirty-nine square foot office in a suite with fifty other sole practitioners. I will now comment on the range of options I considered before I signed a lease.

The Home Office (Free): Working from home is convenient and inexpensive. In this early stage of my legal career, I lack the steady client-base needed to support this arrangement. I know professionals who make the home office work.

The Virtual Office (\$100-\$300/mo for service): In several states attorneys have established offices run almost entirely through a web site. A client is given a secure, encrypted web page through which a constantly accessible record is kept regarding communication, legal work, billing, and legal documents. The attorney can work very efficiently under this arrangement and practice anywhere in the state where he or she is licensed. Also, a busy client can review a bill or documents and leave notes for the attorney any time they want. I am most excited about the virtual office because the legal work is done with such transparent communication that the client can see what they are paying for every step of the way. In five years or so I want to open a practice in my home state of Oregon where I have many school friends and family friends. I will likely incorporate the virtual office to bridge the gap between the two states.

The Shed Office (\$75/mo): I feel I am more productive when I have a space to work that is separate from where I live. During the heavy planning and studying phase of building my practice, I enjoyed the low stress of only paying the seventy-five dollar rent amount. I kept books, a desk, and equipment in this space. I could not, however, meet clients there.

The Cheap Office (\$200-\$300/mo): In obvious listings like craig's list and the Herald, I found office space for \$200. Also, I met with a real-estate agent who gave me a lovely tour of offices in the \$200 - \$300 range. My search was limited by the need to have an American Disability Act accessible office. I considered operating out of one of these offices for a year and then getting something surrounded by more professionals. I would be able to meet clients in this office but it would not impress them. Of course I could arrange with nearby firm to meet clients in its conference room (this applies to all the above arrangements).

Shared Office (Rent Depends on arrangement): A potentially ideal arrangement would be to meet an attorney that is whittling down his or her practice and would like a shared space. I did not network enough to give this option a full chance. Additionally, however, I do not want to be quick to associate myself with another attorney. I want to build a practice and learn the legal climate of Bellingham on my own for a period.

The Office Suite (\$500-\$1000/mo): This arrangement has some of the same benefits as the shared office. Other professionals will be working nearby to offer advice and hopefully referrals. Also, I can meet clients in professional-looking conference rooms.

I will certainly know more after I have been in the office suite for a year. Already, however, I can tell that attorneys take me more seriously when I say where my office is located. My office location gives me some of the status of those attorneys who also practice there. When I give out my card, clients will recognize where I work and will know that I am committed to my work. I have enough money saved to operate for about six months without any income, so I will soon have a practical evaluation to offer about whether my office location was a good choice.