

Episode Summary

Episode number: 117
Episode name: *Solid Foundations: How To Start a Law Firm From Scratch*
Guest(s): James d'Apice

What area(s) of law does this episode consider? Founding a law firm.

Why is this topic relevant? The challenges of establishing and building your own law firm are both immense and immensely rewarding - and our discussion today aims to provide valuable insights for our listeners considering this as a career path.

For those seeking the independence and entrepreneurship of running your own firm, understanding the process of founding one is crucial.

What are the main points?

- In James' view, there are three options for solicitors at a certain point in their career; go to the bar, become a partner at a firm, or start a firm.
- Starting a firm is challenging. However, there are great possible rewards.
- James' personal reflection is that starting a firm was the best move for his family. A move to the bar would have meant time away from his family - for example at long trials.
- At the bar, you're also asked questions at a very late stage of the legal process. For some people who enjoy strategic involvement in client issues, it may not be the right place.
- James' insight into the process of transitioning from a partner at a national firm to starting an independent practice is that he *"was struck by the not extremely high barrier to opening up one's own firm"*.
- Those barriers include acquiring an unrestricted practising certificate, the practice management course, and notifying the law society. At that point, in NSW, Lawcover will reach out about starting a firm.
- One other element for small law firms is the the liability limitation scheme.
- It is a voluntary scheme with large benefits for small law firms. The end result is that liability for professional indemnity insurance claims is limited to \$2 million. Many large international firms do not participate in the voluntary scheme.
- James also noted his own unexpected challenges in setting up a law firm, such as setting up a PO Box or deciding on branding and merchandise.
- Once the firm is established, the priority then becomes the development of various revenue streams for the practice.

What are the practical takeaways?

- In James' and Gravamen's case, this includes legal services, but also pre-recorded legal training, consulting on social media for lawyers, and accreditation as a mediator.
- Forecast, forecast, forecast. Goal setting in business planning is important, even if the forecasts may not be accurate, to articulate issues and guide direction.
- For James, an important part of his practice is understanding client reactions to the firm's brand values and also the necessity of being authentic and true to himself.