

How do I find an ethical and reputable attorney?

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People usually hire an attorney without inquiring of others whether the attorney has a good reputation and simply assume that the attorney they end up speaking to is ethical. It is hard to learn of a bad egg partly because other lawyers are reluctant to state a negative opinion in fear of the potential fallout stemming from an honest one. Safer to say everyone is great, and let you take your chances with who you hire. So what can you do?

Some ways to find the right attorney is to obtain a referral. But the weight you should give a referral depends on how well the referring entity really knows the attorney, and of his day-to-day practice. Another is to simply ask questions of a prospective attorney, but this too may be a rather limited way to learn of the ethics or reputation of an attorney. It may provide some insight, but it is the walk and not the talk that matters. Another way is to check with the state bar association whether the attorney is in good standing and/or whether he carries malpractice insurance.

Now let's say you hired the attorney. Now you can try and keep a look out for what you consider ethical behavior. Some items to look for are: 1) Did the attorney carefully screen the claim or facts you presented? In other words, did he seek to make sure the facts and/or claim *you* presented was indeed truthful or accurate? It may be nice to have a sympathetic ear, but your lawyer should keep you grounded, and not simply tell you what you may be indicating, knowingly or not, what you want to hear. 2) Does the attorney warn you of potential issues or problems that could arise? This includes expenses; how expensive are certain tasks to complete, just how expensive could the pursuit of a certain course of action become? 3) If you filed a complaint in litigation or a petition in bankruptcy, did he provide you a copy and/or review it with you before it was filed? It is a no-no to do otherwise. United States Trustee v. Lynn (*In re Bellows-Fairchild*), 322 B.R. 675, 677-82 (Bankr. D. Or. 2005)(petitioner signing bankruptcy schedules prior to their completion found to be serious ethical breach and resulted in attorney being enjoined from practicing in bankruptcy court).

Some items that are *not* good indicators of an ethical attorney are: 1) How much advertising they purchase. Advertising does not make someone ethical. 2) Whether he agrees with you about everything, including your subjective opinions. A good lawyer will play devil's advocate and probe for problems or potential weaknesses in your case, and will be weary of overconfidence. 3) Whether he promises results or creates for you expectations of favorable outcomes. It may sound great to hear you're going to win the case or have no problems in your legal endeavor, but it doesn't indicate you have an ethical or even competent lawyer. 4) A willingness, sometime an over-willingness, to take your case. A cautious lawyer typically indicates an ethical one. If they are too eager for your business, they may not be careful or cautious enough or really care what the merits of the case are.

Through all your trial and error, when you do find an ethical and reputable attorney (and maybe even capable), hold on. A lawyer who is willing to go the extra mile for you is worth his weight in gold. Typically, developing a good working relationship with a lawyer breeds trust,

which enhances the attorney-client relationship. There is something to be said for the saying 'everyone needs a lawyer in the family.' So, you may not have an attorney in the family, but having an established working relationship with an attorney is a valuable asset for anyone.

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What makes an ethical attorney? What makes an ethical lawyer? What makes a good attorney? What makes a good lawyer? How to find a good attorney? How to find a good lawyer. Signs of a dishonest attorney. Signs of a dishonest lawyer. Signs of an unethical attorney. Signs of an unethical lawyer. Disreputable lawyer. Disreputable attorney.