



## Feature

### The Insurance Attorney: A Job Profile

Insurance attorneys may be self-employed or work as partners in law firms. Educational requirements for insurance attorneys include a four-year undergraduate degree and a three-year law degree. In addition, one is required to pass a written bar exam, although the specifics of this requirement differ from state to state. There is stiff competition for students wishing to enter law school, as well as for law graduates wishing to secure work as attorneys.

#### The Work of an Insurance Attorney

Insurance attorney jobs provide the link between the legal system and the insurance industry. Insurance attorneys mainly work for insurance companies, advising the management of those companies on the legal aspects of their insurance policies and transactions. The attorneys take into consideration decisions made by the courts and study and recommend changes in the wordings of insurance policies, both to protect their companies against unwarranted claims and to conform to the law. These lawyers also prevent undue payments by advising the personnel in the claims department on the legitimacy of the claims made by policyholders. The job also involves advising the personnel involved in coming up with the companies' legal documents, such as insurance contracts and release documents. A given insurance attorney may specialize in a specific area such as contracts or claims.

An insurance attorney also acts as an advisor and advocate for his or her employer regarding insurance claims, surety bonds, insurance fraud, and like matters. While acting as an advisor, the insurance attorney is responsible for advising his or her client on legal rights and options and for suggesting the best course of action for the client. When acting as an advocate, the attorney actually represents his or her clients in civil or criminal court, presenting evidence to defeat any charges or claims brought against the client.

#### Licensure

In order to practice as an insurance attorney, one needs to have been licensed by the state in which one is operating. To qualify for a license, insurance attorneys are usually required to pass a written bar exam. The exams are usually administered to individuals who have a college degree and have graduated from an American Bar Association licensed law school or one certified by the given state's legal establishment. Although there are no mandatory nationwide bar exams, many states require one to have passed the

Multistate Bar Examination (MBE). Some states also require Multistate Performance Testing to gauge the practical abilities of insurance attorneys.

#### Advancement

Insurance attorney jobs are very lucrative in general. Most recent graduates will work in-house for an insurance company or start as associates of a given firm and work with more experienced attorneys. With time, associate insurance lawyers can climb up the ladder in an insurance company or be made partners in their law firms.

In some large corporations, some insurance attorneys make use of their legal knowledge in managerial and administrative posts. This helps them to gain administrative experience and is vital for those wishing to rise through the administrative ranks.

#### Job Outlook

The number of insurance attorney jobs is expected to increase in the coming years, although competition in the job market will continue to be stiff. Due to the increase in the number of people requiring insurance services, insurance attorneys will continue to be in high demand overall.

The remuneration package for insurance attorney jobs varies according to the location, size, and type of the company or firm at which a given insurance attorney is employed. Insurance attorneys starting their own practices may need to moonlight in order to sustain themselves as they build their customer base. The average salary for an insurance attorney is \$60,000 annually. In addition to this, most insurance attorneys will also receive benefits, including healthcare coverage and retirement plan contributions.

Cyclical economic swings may adversely affect insurance attorney jobs. Jobs may be more abundant during times of



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natural calamities and may dwindle in number in times of increased costs to insurance companies.

For attorneys who wish to establish private practices, starting in small towns and then gradually expanding to suburban regions might be prudent. Smaller towns offer better chances of survival since they will see little interest from the big firms that prefer to operate in much larger towns.

## Conclusion

Due to the stiff competition in the insurance attorney job market, applicants with strong academic achievements at respectable law schools will have better chances of securing employment.

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