



Free Legal Advice

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Thanks to the internet, many business professions have witnessed profound changes. Insurance and financial products like mutual funds and accounting services face tough competition as consumers become more knowledgeable and more able to manage finances themselves. Could this happen to the legal industry as well?

According to Joseph Khlaif, a Ryerson commerce graduate and vice-president of the legal-service website Dynamic Lawyers, it is already happening.

Lawyers can be costly and often work in billable hours, charging the client for administrative tasks like phone calls. They can charge between \$200 and \$300 per hour, with some lawyers billing as much as \$600 per hour, according to the CBC's Georgie Binks. These fees are often unaffordable for students, seniors and low to middle-income individuals. Online legal websites may be a good place to start looking for a lawyer, and to compare costs.

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Toronto-based Dynamic Lawyers was designed to empower consumers who could not easily access lawyers or legal services. Everyday Ontarians make free and anonymous posts regarding their legal issues. They then receive multiple quotes from local lawyers who are registered with the website. The lawyers compete with each other for the bids which helps drive down the cost. Costs of obtaining a quote is paid through the lawyers' monthly membership fees.

The website also has a blog and posts statistics and reports about the legal community.

For those who would rather write their own contracts without the use of lawyers, there are downloadable and customizable legal forms and guides prepared by lawyers and stripped of complicated jargon.

Khlaif says the website is a win-win: "Lawyers can capitalize on the low cost advertising, while clients receive free multiple quotes for specific legal issues."

Other online legal websites worth checking out include: legal.advicescene.com, duhaime.org, legalline.ca and legaltree.ca.