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# How I Founded a Law Firm: 'Take Your Time to Build Foundational Skills,' Says Edward Dudensing of Dudensing Law

"Take your time to build foundational skills, trial work, legal writing, and business basics, but don't let fear paralyze you. I spent nearly a decade practicing law before launching my own firm, and I'm glad I did. Know your niche, build systems early, and be willing to bet on yourself. You don't need to know everything; you just need to keep learning and moving forward."

6 minute read | January 30, 2026 at 11:00 AM | By **ALM Staff**



Edward Dudensing of Dudensing Law. Courtesy photo

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## Edward Dudensing, Founder and Lead Counsel at Dudensing Law, Sacramento, California

**Practice area(s):** Elder abuse and neglect

**Law school and year of graduation:** University of California, Davis School of Law, 1994

*The following has been edited for style.*

### When did you found your firm? Why?

I founded Dudensing Law in 2003. The biggest catalyst for founding a law firm was a desire to do meaningful, values-driven work. I had recently left the District Attorney's office, where I prosecuted a range of cases, including elder financial abuse, murder, and sexual assault, and I wanted to continue helping vulnerable communities. Around that time, my wife, a physician, shared troubling stories from her hospital about substandard nursing home care. Those two influences merged into a calling. I didn't want to just litigate; I wanted to build a firm that existed to protect the elderly. Starting my own practice gave me the freedom to fully pursue that mission.

### Were you a partner or in a leadership position at another firm before founding your firm? If so, which one? How long were you there?

While I wasn't in a formal leadership title before founding my firm, I was in roles that demanded leadership. I served as a deputy district attorney in Sacramento, handling major cases independently, and earlier worked as an associate at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe. My time in both positions shaped my approach—especially the autonomy and accountability I gained as a prosecutor.

### Were there any surprises you faced after becoming a law firm founder?

One of the biggest surprises was how much of my time would be spent not practicing law, but running a business. I started with zero employees, picking up arbitration work to keep things afloat. I quickly realized that good leadership meant building systems, valuing staff, and creating a workplace that reflects our values. If I expect nursing homes to be well-run and well-staffed, my firm has to live up to the same standards.

### What's been the biggest change, day-to-day, in your routine since becoming a founder of a law firm?

The biggest change I have experienced day to day is shifting from solely litigation to managing a business and team. My days now involve mentoring, systems work, and business strategy. That said, the role also gives me freedom to pursue projects I value, such as teaching, writing The Rutter Group treatise on elder abuse, and advocating for public policy reforms to protect vulnerable citizens. It's a 24/7 role, and it's also a labor of love.

### What do you think was the deciding point for launching your own firm? Was it a specific case? A personality trait? Making connections with the right people?

It was a combination of factors: my courtroom experience and writing skills from clerking and prosecuting gave me confidence, while my desire for autonomy and meaningful impact provided motivation. Personal influences, particularly from my wife, helped solidify my focus on elder abuse. I didn't rely on a single case, but rather on being willing to gamble on myself. I trusted that my combination of experience, motivation, and risk tolerance could turn into something meaningful, and it has.

### How do you utilize technology to benefit the firm/practice and/or business development?

We're all-in on tech at Dudensing Law. From transitioning to Filevine for case management, to AI-assisted workflows, to digital discovery platforms, we invest heavily to stay efficient and effective. I'm part of the American Association for Justice's (AAJ) technology and science section, and I believe staying current with innovation is essential, especially in complex litigation.

### What advice would you give to someone whose goal is to start their own firm?

Take your time to build foundational skills, trial work, legal writing, and business basics, but don't let fear paralyze you. I spent nearly a decade practicing law before launching my own firm, and I'm glad I did. Know your niche, build systems early, and be willing to bet on yourself. You don't need to know everything; you just need to keep learning and moving forward.

### Who had the greatest influence in your career that helped propel you to launch your own firm?

Many people influenced me, but a few stand out. My mom, an ambitious, hardworking woman who raised me with the belief I could do anything, set the tone early. Judge Robert C. Broomfield, who I clerked for, taught me objectivity and disciplined writing. At Orrick, I had mentors who modeled professionalism and celebrated my move to start my own firm. And my wife continues to influence my work; her stories about hospital patients helped guide my focus toward nursing home abuse and neglect.

### Knowing what you know now, if you had a chance to advise or mentor your younger self (at any stage), what advice would you give to yourself and/or what would you do differently?

Be flexible. Most lawyers are risk-averse and reluctant to change fields, but I made three major career pivots: from clerking to Big Law, to the District Attorney's office, to founding my own firm. Each gave me new tools. I'd tell my younger self to embrace that discomfort. Trial experience, writing discipline, and business acumen are a powerful combo, but only if you stretch yourself to get them.

### Do you have a prediction on how the legal industry will evolve over the next several years?

AI will change how we process information, making research and document workflows faster, but it won't replace human advocacy or judgment, especially in jury trials. The bigger pressure point is access to civil justice. As the system becomes more complex and costly, firms will need to innovate while also preserving access for everyday victims.

### What is the one behavior or trait that you have seen derail other leaders' careers?

Fear and excessive risk aversion. The most successful lawyers I know take measured risks and stay adaptable. I've also seen talented attorneys fail because they neglected the business side, including things like staff management, risk compliance, and client care. Leadership isn't just about being a great lawyer; it's about building something sustainable.

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