



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Immigration lawyers defend broad client base Today's top 100 jobs

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Philip Eichorn was sworn in as an attorney-at-law for the state of Ohio on May 10, 2004. Today he works as an immigration lawyer with a practice in Cleveland.

Eichorn graduated from The Ohio State University in 1993 but did not decide to enter law school until 2001 when he was 30. His undergraduate degree is in communications, and he originally planned to be a sports broadcaster.

"I worked as an intern during a couple of summers, but throughout my college experience, I worked in the restaurant business. I was working for a local restaurant when I graduated, and they offered me a position as a manager," Eichorn recalled. "I took the job because the money was nice. Sometimes you'll sacrifice your real dreams for the paycheck."

Eichorn today credits his experience in the restaurant business for giving him the confidence he needed to start his own law firm. He learned how to run a business, he said. "I learned how to do everything from purchasing and receiving to personnel, advertising and marketing. That foundation enabled me to springboard and go on my own."

The restaurant industry also inspired his original decision to go to law school. Eichorn said he knew he wanted a job that was less taxing physically. He wanted something he could use for the next 30 years of his life to generate income and provide for himself and his family. His brother-in-law was an attorney and seemed to enjoy it. But it was an unrelated incident that truly clinched it.

"The funny story is that I was writing the schedule for the wait staff at the restaurant while sitting in a coffee shop in California, where he had transferred. It was a Saturday morning, and I needed 14 servers for the entire day. Of the employees I normally would schedule, nine or 10 were missing, because they all had to go to DUI classes on that particular Saturday," Eichorn said.

He figured there was probably a substantial portion of people needing legal assistance. Why not give law school a shot, Eichorn told himself.

Eichorn completed law school in about two and a half years. After receiving his law degree from the University of Akron, he took a job in the Medina County prosecutor's office. He relished the trial work but, in his opinion, the financial growth was limited. Due to his relatively late start in the profession, Eichorn reasoned that he needed to make better money sooner than someone starting at a much younger age.

Wanting a job he could "really sink his teeth into," Eichorn knew that immigration law was becoming a hot issue. He decided to explore opportunities, looking at both small and medium-sized firms. In 2006, he left the prosecutor's office and went to work for a firm specializing in immigration law.

He left that law firm earlier this year to go out on his own and is pleased with the client growth his firm has experienced. Immigration lawyers can practice at the federal level and are not limited to the state of Ohio.

Eichorn appreciates the wide variety of subcategories within the area of immigration law. He deals with everything from getting clients a green card to defending a deportation process, helping a client obtain citizenship, bringing an overseas family member to the U.S., and helping U.S. employers find employees.

### Career advice

A career as an attorney requires a lot of hard work, said Eichorn. He has no regrets about waiting several years before starting law school. Gaining real-world experience is important and can benefit your career.

"You better understand the business aspect of the profession. You must also understand client interaction a lot better. You also get the opportunity to interact with a lot of different people," Eichorn said.

Trial experience is undervalued but it is critical to immigration law, Eichorn added. Trial experience allows a lawyer to see how things "shake out" from start to finish in the legal process.

"You'll get a really good view of what weight to assign to certain pieces of evidence or how burdens are carried. You learn to really look at things from a tactical and strategic standpoint rather than just going in and filing petitions."

"Lawyers are listed as one of the

occupations having the largest numerical job growth through the year 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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