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## SLE Podcast Episode 89

### A LOOK AT 6 KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRIVATE PRACTICE AND WORKING IN-HOUSE (Article)

#### INTRODUCTION

[00:00:20] LOUISE: Hello and welcome to Study Legal English. I'm your host Louise and today I'm going to be reading an article about the difference between working in private practice versus working in-house.

[00:00:35] But some of you might be thinking...

[00:00:39] 'Louise, what do you mean by working in private practice versus working in-house?' So, when we talk about working in private practice (which is also known as working for a law firm) we mean working for business entity (which is often structured as a limited liability partnership - LLP)

[00:00:56] and which is formed by one or more lawyers who are working towards [00:01:03] providing services, providing legal services, that's the main objective.

[00:01:09] On the other hand, when we talk about working in-house, we mean working in a legal department, inside a company

[00:01:18] or another organisation, and the entity that you work for is not focused solely on providing legal services, it's providing some other kind of service or other goods, for example, it could be a chain of restaurants, it could be a construction company, it could be

[00:01:35] Google, it could be Facebook. So, the objective is not simply to provide legal services but of course these companies and these organisations

[00:01:44] do need to have legal advice, they need legal services, so they choose to employ lawyers in-house,

[00:01:51] instead of outsourcing the legal work to a law firm.

#### QUESTION FOR LISTENERS

[00:01:57] Before I read the article, I've got a question for you listeners and that is: Would you prefer to work in-house

# TRANSCRIPT

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[00:02:07] or inside a law firm? Let me know, send me an email to Louise@studylegalenglish.com,

[00:02:15] or of course during the conversation on social media just search for 'LegalEnglsher'.

## ABOUT THE ARTICLE

[00:02:19] So, the article that I'm going to read today is called 'Six Differences Between Private Practice and Working In-house.'

[00:02:28] This article was published on the website jobs.legal500.com - it's a great website for...

[00:02:38] you've got it... looking for legal jobs! So, if you're looking for work, then do check out that website and you can access the full article at

[00:02:46] bit.ly/inhouse-lawfirm. Of course all the links in the show, will be in the show notes.

[00:02:56] So, let's go!

## #1: VARIETY OF WORK

[00:03:04] Law firms provide solicitors with an opportunity to specialise. Many lawyers enjoy working within a niche area and spend a successful career developing expertise in that area of law.

[00:03:19] For others, this specialisation might lead to monotony. Depending on the nature and scale of the business,

[00:03:28] in-house lawyers however, can have a much more rounded experience and deal with a broad range of general commercial legal issues.

[00:03:38] Because most posts allow lawyers to work within a number of practice areas, ranging from commercial transactions and acquisitions to employment matters and property law,

[00:03:51] the work of in-house counsel can be more varied than those of working in larger specialist law firms.

[00:03:58] In-house solicitors, including trainees, are often quickly given responsibility. Variety and autonomy

[00:04:07] are often prime motivators for an in-house move.

# TRANSCRIPT

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## #2: SALARY AND CAREER PROGRESSION

[00:04:15] While starting salaries for newly qualified in-house roles and  
[00:04:19] private practice positions are broadly similar, for more senior positions, solicitors working in private practice tend to earn significantly more.

[00:04:30] Salary scales for in-house roles vary depending on the sector; those working in the construction sector, for example, usually have higher starting salaries than those working in say, local government.

[00:04:44] Pigeon-holed within the organisation, it's rare for in-house lawyers to reach a senior corporate management position.

[00:04:51] Career progression is perhaps more certain within private practice, and for ambitious, commercially astute lawyers, progressing through the ranks can be exceptionally lucrative.

## #3: WORK-LIFE BALANCE

[00:05:09] Lawyers in private practice are expected to put their client's needs first and their personal requirements second.

[00:05:17] A heavy workload means that family commitments and social activities might need to be cancelled at the last minute.

[00:05:26] Compared with the relentless grind encountered by those working for city law firms,

[00:05:32] in-house lawyers generally enjoy a slightly better work-life balance. They usually have the ability to plan ahead and

[00:05:40] usually have the ability for greater freedom to control their working hours as long as the deadlines are met.

[00:05:47] Of course, when a crisis arises, they too are expected put in the hours necessary to resolve matters.

## #4: CLIENTS

[00:05:58] Clients are the driving force for private practice. Solicitors, particularly those at smaller firms, are expected to bring in business and

[00:06:06] secure their own clients.

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[00:06:09] In-house lawyers serve only one client. This is a huge advantage, as they can thoroughly grasp their needs and better understand how the application of the law will impact the business strategy.

[00:06:22] However, if something goes wrong, there's no escape; the client is also their colleague.

[00:06:28] Because they are fully integrated into the business they're instructing, [00:06:33] in-house solicitors are able to see the long-term effects of their legal advice. As a result, the work of in-house counsel can be truly rewarding.

[00:06:42] This is simply not the case for solicitors working for a private firm, who usually only witness the short-term consequences of their work.

## **#5: REQUIRED SKILL SET**

### **• SKILL #1: TIME MANAGEMENT**

[00:06:56] All lawyers need to be able to balance their workload.

[00:07:02] In private firms, lawyers are forced to work under huge commercial pressure, especially in a fixed-fee environment where solicitors are required to meet tough billable hours targets.

[00:07:15] Although in-house lawyers do not usually have to worry about billable hours, they regularly need to work under immense pressure.

[00:07:24] They are often pulled in a number of different directions, especially when working in a small legal team.

[00:07:30] Responsible for a wide range of issues, they too must be highly organised and able to prioritise.

### **• SKILL #2: COMMERCIAL AWARENESS**

[00:07:38] Business acumen is an essential skill for all lawyers but it's especially important for in-house solicitors.

[00:07:49] Throughout their work, in-house lawyers will gain a thorough understanding of the running, aspirations, and challenges of the business.

[00:07:57] An interest in both business in general and more specifically the company and industry they're working in, is essential.

### **• SKILL #3: PEOPLE SKILLS**

[00:08:09] Law is a service industry. Communication and social skills matter for both in-house and for private practice.

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[00:08:17] However, for in-house lawyers, there's a greater focus on clear communication,

[00:08:22] with junior counsel more likely to be required to advise very senior colleagues.

- **SKILL #4: BROAD LEGAL KNOWLEDGE**

[00:08:32] Because they are sometimes the only legal professional in the company, in-house lawyers are often assumed to be experts in more than just the area they have specialised in.

[00:08:43] To gain the knowledge they might lack, in-house counsel must be motivated and resourceful to find the information they need and answer potentially very difficult questions.

[00:08:55] The final aspect where we will be looking at the differences between an in-house versus a private practice lawyer is -

## **#6: COLLEAGUES**

[00:09:06] One of the main ways in which private practice differs from working within an in-house department, is the people you work with.

[00:09:17] Whereas in law firms, lawyers will almost always be working with other lawyers, the majority of people in-house solicitors work with, are

[00:09:27] very often have non-legal backgrounds. Some may find that without the moral support of other solicitors or a larger in-house legal department, working in-house can be a lonely position.

[00:09:41] Both in-house work and private practice provide solicitors with different, yet equally fulfilling, experiences.

[00:09:51] For some, the promise of a varied workload, greater commercial involvement, and more predictable working hours, that in-house positions offer is

[00:10:01] very appealing, and many lawyers are tempted by the opportunity to develop expertise in a particular legal field in exchange for a more attractive remuneration package.

## **ENDING**

[00:10:15] Great! So that's the end of this episode. I hope you found it useful and you've learnt something new. Don't forget that you can access the full article that I've read today at

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[00:10:25] [bit.ly/inhouse-lawfirm](https://bit.ly/inhouse-lawfirm) and if you're looking for legal jobs then do check out the [jobs.legal500.com](https://jobs.legal500.com).

[00:10:37] Don't forget that if you're a Podcast Pro Member, you can access all your member benefits at [studylegalenglish.com](https://studylegalenglish.com) and finally, don't forget to answer my question:

[00:10:48] Would you prefer to work in-house or in a private practice?

[00:10:53] Let me know, send me a message to [Louise@studylegalenglish.com](mailto:Louise@studylegalenglish.com) or find me on social media, just search for 'Study Legal English'

[00:11:02] or 'Legalenglisher'. So, thanks for listening and see you next time!