

Career Aid

Job Search Strategies

There is no specific job search strategy that will work for every applicant; nor be applicable to every situation. Therefore, it is important to consider all of your options and meet with a career services counselor to create a job search strategy that works for you. In addition, flexibility and perseverance go a long way toward finding the right match for your skills, interests and values. This is particularly true when you are working full-time and looking for a new job. A job search is a full-time job. Therefore, allow extra time for your search if you plan to continue working while seeking new employment. Keeping these thoughts in mind, there are three general steps that are critical to most job searches: Assessment, Research and Implementation.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Prior to sending out resumes and embarking on interviews, it is important to have a clear idea of what you want to do, and what type of work environment you find most enjoyable. This knowledge not only helps narrow your target audience, but it also provides you with a succinct statement to provide employers when they ask, "So why do you want to work here?"

Talking with a career services counselor should be the first step you take in this process. Informational interviews (see the "Informational Interviewing" handout for details) and talking with friends, faculty and former employers can also help you identify your likes/dislikes, strengths/weaknesses, etc. Also, ask yourself questions related to your academic training and previous employment to gain insight into the types of future employment you might find most challenging and yet, rewarding. A few sample ones are:

- "What were your favorite classes in law school? Why?"
- "Do you enjoy working for a particular cause? A particular population?"
- "Do you prefer to work directly with clients or on transactional documents?"
- "Where do you see yourself ten years from now?"

In addition to talking with a career services counselor, attend the informational programs offered by the career services office. **There are good publications in the Career Services Resource Center that can help with self assessment.**

RESEARCH

Once you have a better idea of what you want to do and how you want to market yourself, you will want to research employers who fit your preferred criteria. Utilize the Resource Center to: peruse publications for articles; look through the

numerous Directories, books and guides; and search the Internet using different search engines or online resources for detailed information about legal and non-legal employers (also check the CSO web page for direct links to legal jobs web sites and legal employers' web sites).

In conducting your research, you will want to go beyond the standard knowledge of an employer's location, practice area(s) or specialty. For instance, use Lexis to review cases they recently had, scrutinize the NALP survey for how many lawyers are assigned to different practice areas, find articles about the employer, their practice or a controversial case. Read the attorneys' biographies through Martindale-Hubbell prior to an interview, etc. Your knowledge will show employers that you've done your homework and are sincere in your interest of working for them. In addition, this information will help you personalize cover letters and *revise* your resume so that it reflects what your target audience is seeking.

IMPLEMENTATION

So – you know what you want to do, you know what type of employer you're looking for... How do you get your foot in the door? The following services and suggestions are some of the most effective methods for finding employment. To cover your bases, it is suggested that you incorporate many of these into your job search.

1. Network

This is often the most common means of securing employment for Georgia State graduates, let alone for graduates from other law schools and professionals in other fields. The Alumni events, bar associations, legal seminars and almost any social event provide an opportunity for you to talk with others about your career goals and obtain information about specific employers or practice areas. Don't overlook the obvious: classmates, professors, community members and organizations to which you belong. Although contacts may not have the ability to offer you jobs, they may open doors for potential jobs or introduce you to the person making the hiring decision. Remember to ask for referrals to other practitioners to further expand your network. (Note: Read the Networking handout for additional information)

2. Target Mailings

Unsolicited mailings can be an effective way to uncover employment opportunities. Be organized and selective in your mailings. Target the mailings to specific employers and tailor your cover letter accordingly. Send only as many letters as you can comfortably follow up within a week. Follow up with a phone call to determine the status of your resume and request a face to face interview. Utilize the Metro-Atlanta Law Firm Directory, NALP Employer Directory and Martindale-Hubbell to assist in the identification of desired law firms. Also, utilize the resources, directories and employer files which are available in the Career Services Office.

3. Job Postings

Advertisements from employers are posted on the CSO Symplicity job posting system within 24-48 hours of receipt. Job postings are also printed and placed in binders found on the

Resource Center shelves in our office. These listings represent a sample of “known openings” whereas the networking and targeted mailing strategies cover the “hidden job market.” There may also be “blind listings,” in which the employer does not wish to be identified, but will collect resumes from interested applicants through the Career Services Office.

In addition to the Career Services job postings, familiarize yourself with the growing number of legal job posting on the Internet (see the section on “Research” for further details). Also, read the classifieds in the Fulton County Daily Report, Legal Journal, and the Atlanta Constitution. Quick responses to these advertisements often give you the edge.

4. Job Fairs/Organized Interview Programs

Every year, various organizations host numerous job fairs/organized interview programs around the country! They may be practice area specific, targeted at a specific population and etc. Employers who participate in these programs are seeking to hire! Check with the CSO for information.

5. Transition from Law Clerk to Attorney

Consider the merits of getting in the door before graduation or bar results are announced. Employers typically look for internal candidates before advertising openings and you will already have proven yourself through your work product. Be aware that many government agencies and public interest organizations do not have the funds to hire part time law clerks—but you can always volunteer!

6. Consider door to door searching

You must know yourself well to determine whether you can face the kind of immediate “rejection” which is foreseeable with this method. In urban settings, handle a building at a time, working the building floor by floor. While this method is not one for every job seeker, it can be effective for those who make the effort.

7. Search firms/Headhunters

Executive search firms are generally ineffective for the law graduate with no legal experience. In general, search firms are paid by the employer and are looking for experienced attorneys with a specific area of specialty. “Headhunters” may offer career counseling services but beware, these services are often costly and provide little to the recently admitted attorney.

8. Reciprocity

For applicants looking to relocate, reciprocity agreements allow students and alumnae/i to utilize the services of a career services office in the locale to which you plan to move. To establish such a relationship, stop by the Career Services Office. We will assist you by identifying the law schools which offer reciprocity and by writing a letter of introduction on your behalf to the school of your choice. The Reciprocity Request Form is available in the Career Services Office or on our Web site.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Be organized and keep good records of whom you have contacted, when to follow up and results of these contacts.

There are many details to track and creating a system, such as a simple computer or index card file, will simplify the task. Plan to accomplish several career search tasks every day but set reasonable goals for what can be accomplished in a day or a week. Then, follow through with these tasks.

Reassess your progress as the search continues. If your resume and cover letter do not seem to be getting you interviews, review these documents with the Career Services Office. If you are getting job interviews and are not receiving offers, you may be experiencing interviewing difficulties which can easily be addressed. Consider speaking with the Career Services Office to help identify these problem areas.

KEEP THE JOB SEARCH IN PERSPECTIVE

Unfortunately, a job search can be a frustrating and discouraging process. It is important that not getting an offer is not taken personally, as you often do not know the real reasons behind an employer’s decision. Maintain a balance between your job search and your everyday routine. Consistently remind yourself of your strengths, skills and accomplishments, and continue to pursue creative and relaxing outlets, such as exercising, going to the movies, gardening, etc. to keep yourself motivated. By following the suggested guidelines and making use of the plethora of resources available to you, you **will** find gainful employment.

Legal Sectors – A Brief Overview

Law Firm— generally refers to the traditional law firm setting. (Large: 50+ attorneys, Medium: 26 – 50 attorneys, Small: 2 – 25 attorneys)

Public Service/Interest— the term “public interest” is a loose concept and sometimes includes all attorney positions within the government, but it more a commonly refers to attorney positions within entities that help individuals and groups who lack equal access to the legal system due to some type of disadvantage or disenfranchisement.

Government— generally refers to both federal and state government attorney positions. The federal government is the largest employer in the world.

Corporation— general refers to attorney positions within a corporation, whether in the legal department or not.

Judiciary— generally refers to judicial clerkships and attorney positions within the judiciary.

Academia— generally refers to teaching or administrative positions within institutions of higher learning

Legal Alternatives— generally refers to non-attorney positions, whether legally related or not.

Source: GSU Career Services Office, About.com, Chicago-Kent Law College of Law