

Career Aid

Networking

Many terrific opportunities are never advertised. It's been shown that employers would rather hire someone recommended to them by colleagues than advertise in the newspaper or conduct on-campus interviews.

In fact, NALP surveys show that almost half of all law students got their jobs through self-initiated contact with employers or by referral from a friend, relative, career services, or faculty member.

You probably already "network" without being aware of it!

Every time you make an effort to meet someone new, or to stay in touch with someone you know, you're "networking." Don't be shy about telling acquaintances about your career plans, or introducing yourself to strangers who might practice in your preferred area. And did you know that effective job-seekers use the same skills to "network" that rainmakers use to get and keep clients? Effective networking requires diligence! Contacts must be nurtured in hopes of providing long-term benefits.

Frustration with the job search might tempt you to retreat to the safety of your closest inner circle. Don't disappear!! Get out and network!!

Step 1: Develop Your Contacts

- *Alumni*

Use the GSU Law alumni or State Bar directories to locate grads in your targeted areas (geographic and specialty).

- *Attend Social and Professional Events*

Attend social and professional events to make new contacts and learn about other employers.

- *Bar Associations*

Join state and local bar associations as a student (generally at a reduced rate). Attend job searching workshops and professional conferences, as well as social functions. Check out the Bar Associations in the areas where you're looking. Some may keep resumes on file for local legal employers.

- *Classmates*

Keep in touch with law school friends who are employed. Check in with your college (or high school) alumni office and contact people who might be able to provide guidance.

- *Community Service/Pro Bono*

It's a good thing to do and you may volunteer with professionals who share your interests and are in fields you want to pursue.

- *Career Services Professionals*

Career services professional will know alums likely to hire graduates and have other contacts within the legal community.

- *Continuing Legal Education*

Attend CLE seminars to gain contacts and information. See if you can volunteer in some way, both to learn about the subject matter and to meet attorney panelists or attendees.

- *Family, Friends, and Acquaintances*

Let them know that you are looking for contacts and information.

- *Former Employers and Colleagues*

Call them for information and more contacts.

- *"Headhunters" (Legal Placement Agencies)*

Headhunters often know a great deal about private law firms and companies. Although they usually work with more experienced attorneys, they can be a good networking resource.

- *Professors*

Those you know and for whom you've done good work will usually be glad to recommend you.

Step 2: Informational Interviews

The purpose of an informational interview is to gain information about a particular practice specialty, work setting, geographic market, or other career factor. (*AIR: Advice, Information, Referrals*) Utilize the list developed in Step 1. Informational interviewing is also a great way to enhance your contact list. It is not a job interview.

To arrange an informational interview, contact your target *without a resume*. Clearly state your connection or common ground with this individual and explicitly state that you are seeking information and advice, not a job!

Research the target's organization before the interview. Outline a checklist of questions you want to cover and take notes. Ask about daily routines, the advantages and disadvantages of the particular practice, and the talents necessary to work in their field. Ask about the organization's culture, history, future and work environment. Ask if they will refer you to other resources and people in the field.

Step 3: Always Follow Up!

Always send a thank you message - whether by note, e-mail, or voicemail! Periodically, e.g., about every few weeks or so, call and keep your contact aware of your progress. Your contact might alert you to possible employment opportunities within the organization or field of practice.

Experience: Just Do It!

While you're networking your way into an ideal job, get relevant experience by volunteering part-time (consider earning money on the side), working as a

"contract" or "temporary" attorney on a project basis.

Stay Organized!

- Keep an up to the minute calendar of critical dates!
- Maintain a "job search" file or notebook for: contact and networking information; employer information; correspondence; phone calls; interview dates; thank-you notes; work experience and other activities.
- Update your resume; have business cards made; buy good stationery for thank you notes. Keep extra copies of your transcripts, writing samples, and other materials on hand at all times.
- Team up with other students or graduates! View your peers as potential advisors and sources of support. Try forming a "job search group" with friends to stay motivated!