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Job Hunting Advice For Law Students and Young Lawyers

By Frank Ramos, Jr.

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DEDICATION

To Ana
You would support me
no matter what career I pursued

To David and Michael
Chase your passions

Prologue

Young lawyers from around the world ask me questions about the profession. The question I get asked the most – "How do I get a job?" Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, this was a common question. Since the pandemic, I am asked all the time for job hunting advice. I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I do have some suggestions on improving your chances of landing the job you want. I'm not offering any magic pills or silver bullets. A lot of what I recommend takes time, energy and effort. A lot of what I recommend is far from foolproof. You may do everything I recommend and still not get a job, much less the job of your dreams. But what I offer is some hope. What I offer is tried and true advice that, if followed, will increase your odds of getting hired. And be careful with any consultants, particularly ones who ask for money up front, who guarantee you the job you want. If you're approached by these folks, run, don't walk, in the other direction. There are no guarantees in life or in this world. All you can do is work smart and work hard to improve your chances of going from resume to interview to job offer.

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Why Write this Book?

COVID-19 has turned a strong legal job market into a weak one. For some, it always has been a tough job market. As a managing partner of a boutique litigation firm in Miami, Florida, I receive countless resumes, and on LinkedIn I answer many questions about landing a job. I witness job seeking mistakes over and over and misunderstandings about what employers want, what grabs their attention and what turns them off. There are both little and big things law students and young lawyers can do to drastically improve their chances of getting noticed and getting an offer. It isn't complicated. It isn't mysterious. But yes, it will take time and work. But if you put in the time and effort, you will increase the odds of being hired. This book will show you how.

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SECTION 01

The Most Common...

The Most Common Question I Get Asked

The most common question law students and young lawyers ask me is:

"How do I get the job I want?"

Permutations of that question are:

"How do I land the job of my dreams?"

"I've always wanted to be a (fill in the blank) lawyer. How do I get a job in that field?"

"What do I need to do to land an interview and nail it?"

What these questions indicate is that candidates appreciate that there are right and wrong ways of pursuing a job, and they're looking for insight on the best tactics, ideas, concepts and approaches to job hunting. And they're right to believe that if they secure good advice and follow it, they're more likely to get a job. The fact is that candidates who didn't attend the best law school and didn't get the best grades can land great jobs. Good jobs aren't reserved only for those who attended the Ivy League, secured top grades and were on law review. Some of the best lawyers I know attended average law schools and received average grades. That didn't stop them from becoming forces of nature in their legal communities. You can do the same and achieve the same results. You control your destiny. You can achieve great things despite modest beginnings. You can pursue your dreams even if your law school, your grades, your family, your friends and your recruiter say otherwise. You owe it to yourself to work hard to land a good job where you will grow, develop, mature and become a force. We'll discuss how best to do so in the coming pages and chapters.

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The Most Common Answer I Give

When asked how to get a job, I always offer the same answer, the old adage, "it's who you know." Typically, the two types of candidates who get a second look are those with exemplar credentials and those who know someone. If I know a candidate, I'm much more likely to consider their resume, and if I can't help them, I'll suggest other attorneys and firms that can. You help people you know. We all do. So that's why getting a job starts and ends with who you know.

But you say you don't know anyone who is in a position to hire you. I have two responses to your objection. First, you know more people than you think. Second, you can get to know those who can hire you.

Go through all your contacts, and see who can either hire you or refer you to someone who can. Then, get involved in your local bar associations, get to know people, and when the time is right, ask for a job or ask for a referral to someone who has a job to fill. That's it. That's how it's done. See who you know and get to know others. Keep reaching out. Keep laying the foundation for relationships. Keep fostering those relationships. Sooner or later someone you know will offer you a job or direct you to someone who will. In fact, this whole book can be reduced to three sentences:

- It's who you know.
- Reach out to those you know.
- Get to know others and reach out to them.

That's job hunting 101. That's all there is to it. That's the whole kit and the caboodle. It's simple. It's not easy. It takes time and hard work. But it is simple.

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Common Mistakes Job Seekers Make

Job seekers make some common mistakes, including

- Not defining with specificity where, geographically, they want to work
- Not knowing the area or areas of law they want to pursue
- Not knowing the type of firm, in terms of size, practice areas and reputation, they want to work for
- Not knowing, budget and finance wise, how long they can remain out of work before they have to lower their expectations
- Not taking time to study the local job market
- Not having someone else review their resume
- Not having several writing samples ready to go
- Not asking family, friends, colleagues and contacts about job opportunities
- Not reaching out to a headhunter
- Not seeking a mentor to assist with the job seeking process

These are the common mistakes I hear job seekers make. Each can be addressed and rectified and if resolved, can stop being stumbling blocks to landing a job.

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Common Misconceptions about Getting a Job

As much as law schools tout their career planning and placement offices, most do a poor job in transforming their students into stellar job hunters. Getting a job is a full time job. It requires a plan and time and effort to execute the plan. When I applied for an associate position as a 3L back in 1996-97, landing a job was brutal. It was a tough market. Firms had cut back on hiring, and there were too many law students chasing too few positions. I sent out resume after resume and went on interview after interview. I received my share of rejections and got turned down more than I care to remember. But the silver lining is that I ultimately landed a good job, and 23 years later, I'm still thriving in the practice.

If there is a takeaway from all of this it's this – adjust your paradigm to accept you're going to work really hard for a whole lot of rejection. But if you can toughen your skin, accept hearing the word "no" over and over and keep pressing forward, you're going to be fine. Remember, you don't need 100 jobs. You don't need 10 jobs. You just need one job. Focus on getting the right offer for you, even if it's only one in the midst of dozens of rejections. The right job for you exists out there. Believe me, it's out there. Sometimes a "no" is a blessing, preventing you from accepting a job you would hate. Sometimes a firm turning you away is the best thing they could have done for you. There are a number of firms I thought for sure would be a great fit for me. These firms turned me away. I later learned the associates who accepted their offers were miserable and didn't stay long. Sometimes "no" is the best word you can hear. Learn to embrace the word "no," learn from it and move on to the next opportunity.

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SECTION 02

The Job Market

The Job Market

The overall economy tends to be a lagging indicator of the legal market. A recession is generally felt in the overall job market before it is felt in the legal job market.

There are a few reasons for this. First, most firms have sufficient cases and clients to weather a short term economic downturn. Second, if firms layoff attorneys, they will incur expenses hiring and on boarding their replacements when the economy improves. It makes more sense to cut expenses and reduce salaries than immediately start firing lawyers. Third, the established law firms have undergone several economic downturns and have learned not to overreact to them. So when the overall job market is down, it's not as bad in the legal market. If a lawyer has a job when the downturn hits, he is more likely to keep it than an employee in another sector or industry. This is the good news. The bad news, though, is that when there is a downturn in the economy, law firms stop hiring. The pipeline dries up. Recruiters stop hearing from firms. To get a job in this market requires effort and persistence. There are still jobs out there. They are just fewer and harder to come by. They take effort to track down. But they're there. No matter how bad the economy, all hope is not lost.

Attorney Market

The attorney market is not a monolith. At any given point, there is one or more practice areas that are hot and hiring. After the real estate crash in 2008, everyone, it seemed, was handling foreclosures. Today, in the wake of COVID-19, everyone is handling bankruptcies or employment matters. The jobs available to you are driven, in no small part, by what's hot in the legal sector, and that's driven by the economy and various trends, including commercial, societal and political trends. You may have a strong feeling about pursuing a career in a given practice area and the economic realities may direct you in a different direction. Be open to different opportunities. A lot of seasoned attorneys are practicing in areas they did not plan to specialize in and are happy doing what they are doing. If life throws you a curve ball, be prepared to swing at it.

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Covid-19

COVID-19 really threw us for a loop, didn't it? Could anyone have predicted a pandemic shutting down the world economy and infecting and killing so many? Before COVID-19, the job market was booming. Record low unemployment. Everyone who wanted a job had one. In fact, a lot of industries, including the legal industry, were having a hard time filling all their openings. And then, just like that, it all came to an abrupt, screeching halt. Everything shut down and law firms stopped hiring. Many laid off staff and attorneys. From Happy Days Are Here Again to Brother, Can You Spare a Dime. But there is legal work out there and some firms are hiring. Many companies are suing for coverage for business interruption under their insurance policies. Law firms who represent and sue insurance companies are busy. COVID-19 has also created an environment for many employment-related legal issues and claims, so firms in the employment sector are also busy. So, yes, COVID-19 has hurt many firms, but it has buoyed others. COVID-19 has made many of us insurance, employment and bankruptcy lawyers.

Job Markets Are Cyclical

If you're not accustomed to job markets, understand this – they're cyclical. There are bad markets and good markets. There are lean times and fat times. Some of you will be lucky to job hunt during a strong market and some of you will have the misfortune to job hunt during a weak market. For those of you in the job market during a boom period, congratulations. Consider yourselves fortunate. For those of you in the job market during a bear market, my condolences. But there are two takeaways. First, jobs exist even in a poor market. Second, a poor market will make you stronger – it will improve your grit, your perseverance, your resolve and your courage. You need these characteristics to be an effective advocate, and these characteristics are earned by being tested and going through the fire. So, yeah, it sucks. But you'll be a better person and a better attorney for it.

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Getting a Job in a Weak Market

In a weak market, you have to work twice as hard to secure half as many interviews. The gold rush is a dim memory, and you're mining for overlooked nuggets in the river bed. The most important thing you can do in a weak market is reach out to all your contacts and create new ones. A weak market demands you rely on your network. Headhunters don't take or return your calls. The online job boards are bare. Often jobs are filled before a firm places an ad or hires a headhunter. To land these jobs, you need to learn about them in real time and to do that you need contacts who know of these job openings as they occur and to do that, you need to develop and work your network. Weak markets demand upping your networking game. We'll discuss this in detail later.

Getting a Job in a Strong Market

In a strong market, you have more options. Headhunters call you. Friends reach out to you. The online job boards are full. Firms list openings on their websites. There are more opportunities, pay is better, and your options improve. Before COVID-19 hit, we were in the longest running strong legal market in my career, which came on the heels of the longest weakest job market in my career. The 2008 real estate crash was followed by a weak legal job market that lasted years. Around 2015, the legal job market took an upswing and never looked back until COVID-19 changed everything. But for COVID-19, there was no reason to believe the legal job market was going to cool. Many expected a strong legal job market through 2021, possibly through 2022 and maybe even beyond.

The strong legal market will be back. How do I know? Because in my 23 years of practice, I have lived through several cycles of strong and weak legal markets. The worse the downturn, the stronger the recovery. I'm not an economist, but I've experienced firsthand the ups and downs of our legal market, and the storms always pass and the sun always emerges. And yes, the storms will return, but the sun will return too.

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SECTION 03

What Firms Want

What Firms Want

Firms want attorneys that fit into their culture, strategic plan and system and that have the hard and soft skills to serve their clients. The selection process, if conducted properly, should select attorneys that best fit the firm – much like finding the missing puzzle piece. Often, firms select the wrong puzzle piece, which hurts both the firm and the candidate. If you're unemployed, getting a job, any job, may feel like a blessing. The fact is, though, getting the wrong job is more like a curse. Both firms and candidates have to discern whether the candidate is a good fit for the firm.

What the Hiring Partner Wants

The hiring partner wants to hire associates who have...

- strong academic records
- strong oral and written communication skills
- well written and well reasoned writing samples
- held leadership positions in college and law school
- strong work ethic
- a positive attitude
- poise
- grit
- confidence
- relevant experience
- researched the firm and its attorneys
- values consistent with the firm's
- the requisite skills
- the foundation to acclimate to and learn the firm's processes and procedures

No surprises on this list. The more boxes a candidate checks off, the more likely a candidate will be hired.

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What Partners Want

The partners want to hire associates who have...

- relevant experience in their practice areas
- worked for and represented similar clients
- the ability to adapt to a partner's particular proclivities and style
- the flexibility and disposition to work well with and within the partner's team

Partners are looking for the right pieces for their practice group puzzles.

What Associates Want

Often associates are asked to interview associate candidates. What are associates looking for? They want candidates that...

- play well with others
- have pleasant dispositions
- don't have bad attitudes
- don't have inflated egos
- have the potential of becoming close friends
- make their jobs easier
- will carry their weight
- will not throw them under the bus
- will not go out of their way to outshine them

If partners are on the fence about you, associates can either push you over the finish line or hold you back from crossing it. Having associates in your corner can get you a job you thought was out of your reach.

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How Firms Hire

Most firms don't hire until they absolutely have to, and once they commit to hiring a new associate, they are often in a rush to do so because they took too long to start the hiring process. This means that the window of opportunity between a job being posted and it being filled is narrow. There are some firms that take their time, a long time, to hire, but many firms rush through the hiring process. Therefore, regularly check for opportunities, and if you find one that suits you, pursue it immediately. And remember, everyone you interact with at a firm, from the receptionist, to the legal assistant, to the paralegals, to the associates to the partners – all of them potentially plays a role in your selection (or de-selection). Treat everyone with respect, kindness and patience.

What Firms Look For

Looking at the lists about what hiring partners, partners and associates look for in candidates, one can summarize what they are looking for, what firms are looking for, as follows:

Law firms search out talented, confident, well spoken, gritty lawyers who have the skill set to serve their clients, share the firm's values and have the capacity and work ethic to pursue and help the firm attain its vision and achieve its mission.

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What Kills Your Chances

There are do's and don'ts when applying for and pursuing a position. Let's start with the don'ts. Do not:

- have typos in your resume or writing samples
- apply for a job you're clearly not qualified for
- apply for a job if you fall far short of the minimum requirements
- ignore any item or bit of information the employer asks for
- delay in responding to e-mails, voice mails or text messages from your head hunter or firm contact
- pester your head hunter or firm contact
- be rude
- be impatient
- be late to an interview
- let fear overtake you at your interview
- have a weak handshake
- use weak body language
- avoid eye contact
- have poor posture
- slouch
- avoid answering direct questions
- talk too much about yourself
- make the interview about you
- focus on what the firm can do for you
- ignore studying the firm website and the attorney profiles

What Enhances Your Chances

Having covered the don'ts, let's cover the dos. The following improves your chances of landing a job:

- studying and embracing a firm's mission, vision, values and principles
- couching answers to interview questions though the prism of the firm's mission, vision, values and principles
- studying the firm's website
- studying media coverage of the firm
- discussing what you can do for the firm
- addressing how you enhance the firm's value and help it better serve its clients
- share personal anecdotes that reflect your grit and perseverance
- own your space whether you stand, sit or walk
- exude confidence, both in speech and body language

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It's Who You Know

I cannot emphasize the following enough. If you take away one thing from this book take away this – it's who you know. Who you know stops your resume from being thrown into the trash, lands you an interview and sometimes leads to the words "you're hired." Reach out to and rely on your contacts and ask them if they have opportunities or know of someone who does, and if so, if they will put in a good word for you. Network and build new relationships and when the time is right reach out to these new contacts about job opportunities. People hire those they know, trust and like or someone who comes recommended from someone they know, trust and like. Who you know is a life principle as old as time.

It's All About Relationships

Getting a job, getting a referral, getting business, getting invited to write or speak – it all starts and ends with relationships. Business is based on relationships. And landing a job is based upon relationships. Firms are comprised of individuals, and individuals hire others they know, like and respect – they hire others with whom they have relationships. So in addition to focusing on your resume and your interview skills, focus on who you know, how to get to know them better, and how to get to know others. The odds are much better landing a job through someone you know than through a blind letter, e-mail or resume.

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SECTION 04

Job Search Mistakes

Common Job Search Mistakes

Landing the right job starts with avoiding common mistakes. What follows are common job search mistakes and how to avoid them.

Applying to Every Firm

It's tempting to apply to every job opening. It's tempting to send out dozens, even hundreds of e-mails with your resume. This shotgun approach does not work. It requires a lot of time and effort for little if any payoff. First, firms can smell generic e-mails and letters from job hunters a mile away, and they typically are deleted or tossed. Second, landing a job at the wrong firm is potentially worse than not landing a job at all. Don't take a shotgun approach to job hunting. Use a rifle instead and shoot for the firms that are a good fit for you and for your wants and needs.

Applying to the Wrong Firm

Some candidates apply to the wrong firms. What are the "wrong firms?"

- Firms that have an unethical reputation
- Firms where the principals have been disciplined by the state bar
- Firms with excessive turnover among their associate ranks
- Firms that have a reputation for acting unprofessionally
- Firms that treat their associates as cogs
- Firms that don't mentor, teach and instruct their associates

How do you discover if a firm you're applying to fits one of these categories? Read everything you can about the firm online. Some firm's reputations precede them and their true colors are splashed on chat boards, message boards and the like on the internet. Also, check with your network. Having a wide and deep network enables you to conduct the due diligence you need about a firm before taking the plunge with them.

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Not Conducting Your Due Diligence

You have the burden and obligation to research the firms to which you apply. You don't want to start at a firm and within a week or two realize you made the wrong decision accepting an offer from them. This happens too often. Candidates didn't do their research and didn't listen to their gut during their interviews and accepted jobs they never should have accepted. Use and rely upon all the resources at your disposal to conduct your due diligence. Research the firm via:

- Google
- Legal research search engines
- Firm's website
- State Bar which lists history of the firm's lawyer's ethical violations
- Published opinions
- Published articles
- Online chat and message boards
- Blawgs
- Social Media
- Your network

Not Knowing What You Want

Before you send out your first e-mail, letter or resume, know what you want in a law firm. Interviewers who speak with young lawyers who don't know what they want are generally left with a poor impression and pass on those candidates. Firms don't typically hire candidates who don't know what they want in terms of the type of firm they want to work for, the areas of practice they want to pursue and what their career goals are. Yes, I understand not everyone knows what they want to do. Yes, I know there are so many firms and practice areas and it's hard to choose one type of firm or practice area over another. But firms don't care that you have a lot choices and that it's hard to choose. They want to know you're focused on choosing them and their practice areas. Leave your doubts at the reception area.

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Not Knowing Your Skills

Each of us has a set of skills. Each of us has certain talents. Each of us has our set of strengths. Define what your skills, talents and strengths are and then search out jobs that make the most of them. Take a journal and a pen and write down what you're good at. Write down what others have complimented you for. Write down what you've done well. Write down your awards, your victories and your recognitions. We are most fulfilled when we apply and develop our talents at our jobs. To do so, you must first know what your talents are. So do a self assessment and then search out firms and jobs at those firms which will embrace you and develop your talents.

Not Knowing the Market

Some job seekers have a vague understanding and appreciation of the job market, but they don't invest the time and energy to learn more about it. Study whether the current market is strong or weak and what sectors are strong or weak. No matter what the overall economy, there is a sector of lawyers doing well. In the worst of markets, bankruptcy and employment practices are often humming. Go beyond a general understanding of your current market, and study the job ads being posted and shared. After a couple of weeks you will detect a pattern of what firms, what types of firms and what geographic regions are hiring. You may see the same firms always hiring. It may be they are constantly expanding or it may mean they're a turnstile for young lawyers. It's great to work for a growing, expanding firm. It's terrible to work for a firm that treats you as if you're fungible. Read the local legal newspaper. Read the national legal newspapers. Read the content on the legal news websites. You can't learn too much about the legal market.

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Not Relying on Contacts

Many folks feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or shy about asking their contacts for job leads. Get over it. Your best chance of landing a good job is through a friend or through a friend of a friend. The good jobs often aren't posted or shared or pushed out into the open job market. They're generally filled quickly and often filled with lawyers whom someone knew or learned about from a colleague. When you look for a job, work your contacts. E-mail, call, text or message them. Ask them if their firms are looking.

Ask them if they know of firms that are looking. Ask them if they can reach out on your behalf to their contacts. Will some folks you reach out ignore you? Sure. Will some be annoyed? Yes. But we're talking about your career. We're talking about you putting food on the table and paying your utilities. If you send innocuous, pleasant e-mails to your friends and colleagues and some are annoyed you're asking them for help, that's on them, not you. That speaks volumes about them, not you.

Generic E-mails, Cover Letters, and Resumes

Generic e-mails, cover letters and resumes are easy to prepare and send out. They are also immensely ineffective. An e-mail to a firm should be geared toward that firm. A cover letter to a firm should address how you meet that specific firm's needs. A resume should be tweaked to highlight the accomplishments and skills best suited for a given firm. Firms receive so many cover letters and e-mails and resumes, and so many are discarded. To avoid being thrown in the round file, draft your communications so they connect you and the reader and make the reader feel you are writing directly to her.

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SECTION 05

Recruiters

Recruiters

There are pros and cons to working with recruiters, also referred to as headhunters. On the plus side, they know about offers you don't. They can help you with what to write and say and what not to write and say. On the down side, they get paid to fill spots, and some are more interested in doing that and getting paid than with your needs and wants. Furthermore, many are too busy to give you the time and attention you hope for. From the candidate's perspective, recruiters are honestly a mixed bag, and the best answer I can give you about whether to work with a recruiter is that it comes down to the recruiter. Some are great. Some are good. Some are indifferent. Some are mediocre. And some are just plain self interested and see you as a meal ticket. I'm not going to name names, but I have dealt with enough recruiters to have seen the whole spectrum of them, and my advice to you is the same advice I offered when it came to applying to firms – do your due diligence before working with one or more recruiters.

Should You Use a Recruiter?

Using a recruiter is a personal question. Some candidates work well with them, some don't. Some recruiters work well with candidates, some don't. I've both used a recruiter to land a job and land associates, and over the years, have been schmoozed by many of them who want our firm's business. I've read my share of articles, blog posts and items about them, the good, the bad and the ugly. Personally, I believe they play an important, and sometimes critical role, in bringing together firms and candidates. When asked by candidates whether they should work with recruiters, I provide the same advice – research them online, reach out to several, work with several and see for yourself whether it is a good or bad idea for you in your set of circumstances.

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The Pros and Cons of Recruiters

First, the good news about recruiters

- They have relationships with the big and well paying firms.
- They are aware of opportunities you won't find online.
- They conduct due diligence both on firms and candidates and may have a better sense than you whether you are a good fit for a given firm.
- They provide advice on cover letters, e-mails, resumes, interview skills, etc.
- They do some of your leg work by bringing opportunities to your attention.
- They help you see and avoid the landmines.

Now for the Bad News

- They have a financial incentive to place you, even if an opportunity isn't the best fit for you.
- They're busy. Some are slow in responding to calls and e-mails.
- They pay the most attention to their best candidates. If you didn't go to a top school, get top grades, weren't on law review or moot court and don't have an impressive resume, you may not receive much attention from them.
- Some are rude, some are unprofessional and some are only in it for themselves. Fortunately, there are only a few bad apples, but you owe it to yourself to make sure that you're not dealing with one of the bad apples.
- They're not your guru, therapist, or confessor. The relationship is largely transactional.
- Firms pay them, not you. Recruiters will be the first to say that doesn't affect their loyalty and commitment to you. For some, that's true. For others, not as much.

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How Should You Use a Recruiter?

If you decide to use a recruiter, how should you use them? First, listen to them. They'll provide you insight about the current job market, what firms are looking for, tips for your cover letters, resumes and writing samples and will provide you context and encouragement for your job search. Once you send them a resume, writing sample and law school transcript, you likely won't hear from them unless they have an opportunity they want to share with you. Depending on the job market, your qualifications and the strength of your resume, you may receive a lot of calls or e-mails from them or you may not. Consider a recruiter as a supplement to your personal efforts to secure a job. They compliment what you're doing, not replace it. If you don't hear from them at all, it's ok to check in with them, but only occasionally. If they have an opportunity for you, trust me, they will let you know.

Should you Use Multiple Recruiters?

Recruiters may balk at this suggestion, but I generally recommend you work with more than just one. Different recruiters have different relationships with different firms. Different recruiters offer different perspectives and advice on the job market. Different recruiters approach placement differently. It behooves you to have more resources, not fewer. When working with multiple recruiters, make sure you don't have more than one recruiter submit your resume to the same employers. A legitimate recruiter will ask for your permission before sending your resume to any prospective employer. If they ask about an employer another recruiter has already sent your resume to, let them know. Will some recruiters spend less time on you if you're working with other recruiters? Possibly. Is that a risk worth taking? I would.

What Recruiters Do and Don't Do

Recruiters help you land a job at a firm or company with whom they have a relationship. Recruiters, the proactive ones, try to establish new relationships with new firms all the time. They cold-call and cold-e-mail, and ask their contacts to reach out to their contacts, and bring additional firms into their stable of prospective clients. They help you land jobs at those firms.

Think of them as car dealerships. I go to a Honda dealership, and I can ask to see Honda Odyssey minivans. I cannot ask to see BMW coupes. And so when you work with recruiters, know they

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only have so many brands and models to sell you. And vice versa, they have a limited pool of candidates they can sell to their firm clients. Their job is to find overlap with the opportunities they are trying to fill with candidates who fit those opportunities. When working with recruiters, you have to be honest with yourself about whether you have the credentials, skills and qualities that meet the needs of a given recruiter. If you don't, they may politely agree to help you, but you'll likely never hear from them again. You are a commodity to them. I'm sure there are a lot of recruiters who would take umbrage with this remark, while others are probably clutching their pearls. But the fact is you are. They are in the business of selling candidates to firms and you are a means to a paycheck for them. Don't forget that. And of course before I get a bunch of hate mail from recruiters saying how dare I couch them and what they do in these terms, let me add the disclaimer that many recruiters want to help you, place you and see you succeed. They're not monsters, only out for themselves. But never forget that you accepting a job at a firm they placed you at can mean thousands, possibly tens of thousands of dollars, to them. Never forget that.

How Recruiters Help

If you work with one or more recruiters, help them help you. Get them what they ask for (a spotless resume, a perfect writing sample, law school transcript), explain what you're looking for (type of firm, size of firm, type of practice areas), salary requirements, your timetable, any upcoming trips or vacations you're taking that prospective employers will want to know about and anything else to avoid surprises down the road. Be open and helpful to the recruiter and she will tell you whether she can help, the types of firms she works with, her typical timetable and the likelihood of her being able to place you. An open, honest conversation with a recruiter who takes the time to listen to you and your needs will help you immensely in your job search because you will learn about yourself, your prospects and about the job market in which you find yourself.

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SECTION 06

Laying the Foundation

Lay the Foundation to Get a Job

There are steps you can take, some small, some not so small, that will improve your odds of landing a job. These tips will help you put your best foot forward when sending out resumes and interviewing.

Google Yourself

Get in the habit of regularly googling yourself. In fact, create a Google alert that will notify you whenever your name appears in an article or publication online. You want to know everything about you on the internet, because prospective employers may research you online so as to know everything about you. If there is something bad or questionable online, you may be able to address it with the owner or host of the website that contains something negative about you. There may be something negative you shared online that you can remove. And remember, if it's online, assume your employer will see it. Just because you have social media posts set to private, or you use a pseudonym to tweet or blog, don't assume prospective employers won't find them. And don't be surprised if an employer asks for access to your private posts and you never hear from that employer again if you politely decline.

Enhance Your Online Profiles

If a prospective employer does a Google search of you, the items at the top or near the top of the search results will be your LinkedIn and Facebook profiles. Don't believe me? Try it. With this being so, you want to make sure you have positive, robust profiles.

For your LinkedIn profile, consider it your online resume. It has numerous fields for you to complete. Complete as many as you can. Include a professional photograph. Provide a robust bio. Be active on the platform, because your activity is reflected on your profile page and activity

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demonstrates engagement, initiative and thought leadership. On your Facebook profile, include information about your background and educational history, and again, use a professional photo.

And I don't want to hear about privacy and how they're your social media accounts and you can do what you want on them and no one has a right to judge you about what you post on them. Go sell that somewhere else, because no one is buying. Think of landing a job like speed skating in the Olympics.

The difference between first place and the Gold and fourth place and no medal is the equivalent of clapping your hands twice. That's it. If you're off by just that much, the equivalent of two claps, you don't get to stand on the dais. Is that fair? If you're asking that question, you're asking the wrong question. That's just how it is. And the difference between getting a job and not getting a job could be those off color jokes you shared on Facebook. That's just how it is. Remove them and stop posting them.

Review Your Social Media Image

Review your social media profiles and posts through the vantage point of an employer. Another prism through which to look at your posts is through the vantage point of your parents, spouse or other loved ones. If there is anything on there that they would be ashamed of or offended by, you may want to remove it. Again, I don't care if it's set to private. This is 2020. Nothing is private anymore, and if it is, it won't stay that way. Put yourself in an employer's shoes. If you reviewed your unfiltered social media postings, would you hire you? If the answer is no, fix it.

Create an Employer Friendly Social Media Presence

Sit down with all your social media platforms and review your posts, your shares, your photos and your comments from the vantage point of an employer which may hire you. If you were in an interview, and the interviewer pulled up your social media presence and reviewed it with you, would it cost you the job? Would it hinder landing the job? Would you have to spend time explaining away something you said or a photo or meme you shared? What's more important to you – saying dumb stuff on social media or landing a job? Yes, the dichotomy is that simple.

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Revise Your Resume

Make sure your resume is perfect. A few thoughts:

- No typos.
- Use the active voice.
- Use a standard font and font size.
- Include your law school and college GPAs and class ranking. I don't care if they're average at best. Hiding poor grades reflects more poorly on you than the grades themselves.
- List publications, leadership positions and significant awards.
- Reference trial, mediation and deposition experience.
- Strike a balance between sharing your accomplishments and too long of a resume.
- Don't have any employment gaps. If you think you're going to hide a bad employment experience, you'll never even get an interview to explain what happened.
- Multiple attorney positions over a short period is a red flag. The more jobs you have on your resume, the harder it is to land an interview. If there is a reason you were let go or you left that was beyond your control (for example, the firm closed) try to note that in your resume in a non judgmental, straight forward manner.
- Tailor your resume to the firms to which you are sending them. If a firm is a trial firm, emphasize your trial experience.

Revise Your Writng Samples

Don't underestimate the power of your writing samples. A strong, impeccable, well reasoned, well organized, well written writing sample can make you stand out and land an interview. I can't emphasize that enough. Personally, as a managing partner, a great writing sample will grab my attention and generally lead to an interview. But I do mean great writing sample. Something that jumps off the page, punches me in the face and gut, grabs my attention, makes me feel something and affects my intellect. A great writing sample is the great equalizer. Someone with average law school grades can stand out with a stellar writing sample. Many candidates do not pay enough attention or put forth enough effort when it comes to their writing sample. Have a powerful writing sample and emphasize your writing skills in your cover letter or e-mail and resume.

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Secure Written Recommendations

If possible, secure written recommendations from former employers or supervising attorneys. Every hiring attorney will do their due diligence and reach out to your former employers for a recommendation. Many, these days, don't discuss former employees for fear of being sued by them, so many simply will confirm you worked at their firm and say nothing else. So if you can get one or more written recommendation letters from former employers, that will make you stand out among all the applicants.

Secure Your Transcript

Take the time to reach out to your law school and secure a copy of your law school transcript. Many firms want to see them. They're particularly interested in your first year grades and your grades in any research and writing classes.

Get a Mentor

Form a relationship with one or more attorneys in the practice area you want to pursue and who are active in the local legal community and ask them what firms to apply to, how to apply to them, how to develop your network, interview tips, etc. Having an experienced and thoughtful sounding board to assist you in your job hunt is invaluable.

Gather a Team

Sometimes, it takes a village to land a job. In addition to one or more mentors, consider working with one or more headhunters, possibly a career coach or resume coach, and with attorney friends who can help you think through options and next steps.

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Get Involved

Join local voluntary bar associations and get involved, volunteer, meet other attorneys, either in person or virtually, get to know them and have them get to know you, and build relationships. Remember, it's who you know, and if you don't know many (or any) folks in a position to hire you or refer you to someone who can, lay the foundation for such relationships through involvement in voluntary bar associations.

Get Published

Write for legal publications and journals. Having several published articles sets you apart from other candidates and demonstrates your research and writing skills, which is a crucial skill set legal employers are looking for. There are a plethora of legal publications – not just law review journals, but national, state and local bar association publications, including magazines, newspapers, newsletters, e-publications, blogs, etc. Write for them. They need articles, many articles. They would love for you to write for them. Create a portfolio of articles and consider using one or more of them as your writing samples.

Volunteer

Discover your passions and volunteer for organizations that feed your passions. Most non profits and charities have lawyers serve on their boards and volunteer on their behalves. They're great places to meet, greet and get to know attorneys in positions of power who can give you a job. Leverage your passions into job opportunities.

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Create A Contact List

Create a contact list of all the lawyers you know well. You will be surprised how long your list is. Include attorneys who were classmates in college and law school and attorneys with whom you have worked, become friends (through voluntary bar associations, charities, non profits, social media or elsewhere) and with whom you have had cases. These are potential contacts you can reach out to and inquire about jobs at their firms or jobs at firms they know. Look at that list you created. Long, isn't it? Yes, it is.

Use Your Contact List

Study your list. Which attorneys on that list do you feel comfortable e-mailing, texting or messaging and asking whether their firm is hiring or they know of a firm that is? These are folks who won't cringe when they see your message. These are folks that are kind and nice enough to respond to your message. These are folks who owe you a favor. These are folks who are in the know and know who's hiring and for what. Folks who fit into these categories are the ones you reach out to. You let them know you're looking for a job, the type of firm and work you want, and ask them if their firm or a firm they know fits that criteria and is hiring. It's that simple.

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SECTION 07

Market Yourself

Marketing Yourself

You are your best salesperson and it is up to you to market yourself to prospective employers. You need to create and fine tune your brand and push that brand out virtually and in person, through social media and through contacts with others.

Your Online Presence

Check all your social media platforms, and make sure you have professional headshots and robust and thoughtful bios on them. Also, ensure there is nothing you have posted that would give prospective employers pause. In addition, double check wherever your name or likeness appears online and see what it says, and to the extent you can affect such references for the better, do so. We all have digital footprints and each of us bears responsibility to know our own and improve it to the extent we can.

Your Network

Work your network. Go through your virtual rolodex, review your contact list, scroll through your friends on Facebook and your connections on LinkedIn, and reach out to contacts about employment opportunities. Many jobs are filled before they are posted or shared publicly. Who you know makes a difference. Through those you know, you will learn about opportunities and will have someone help you land an interview.

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Your Involvement in Bar Associations

Get involved in one or more local bar associations. You will meet and get to know firm leaders who are in a position to hire you. The difference between landing an interview and not landing one is the difference between knowing someone and not knowing someone.

Your Involvement in the Community

Get involved in your community. Not only is it the right thing to do, not only does it raise your profile in the community and reflect well on your brand, but it lays the foundation for relationships which may land you a job.

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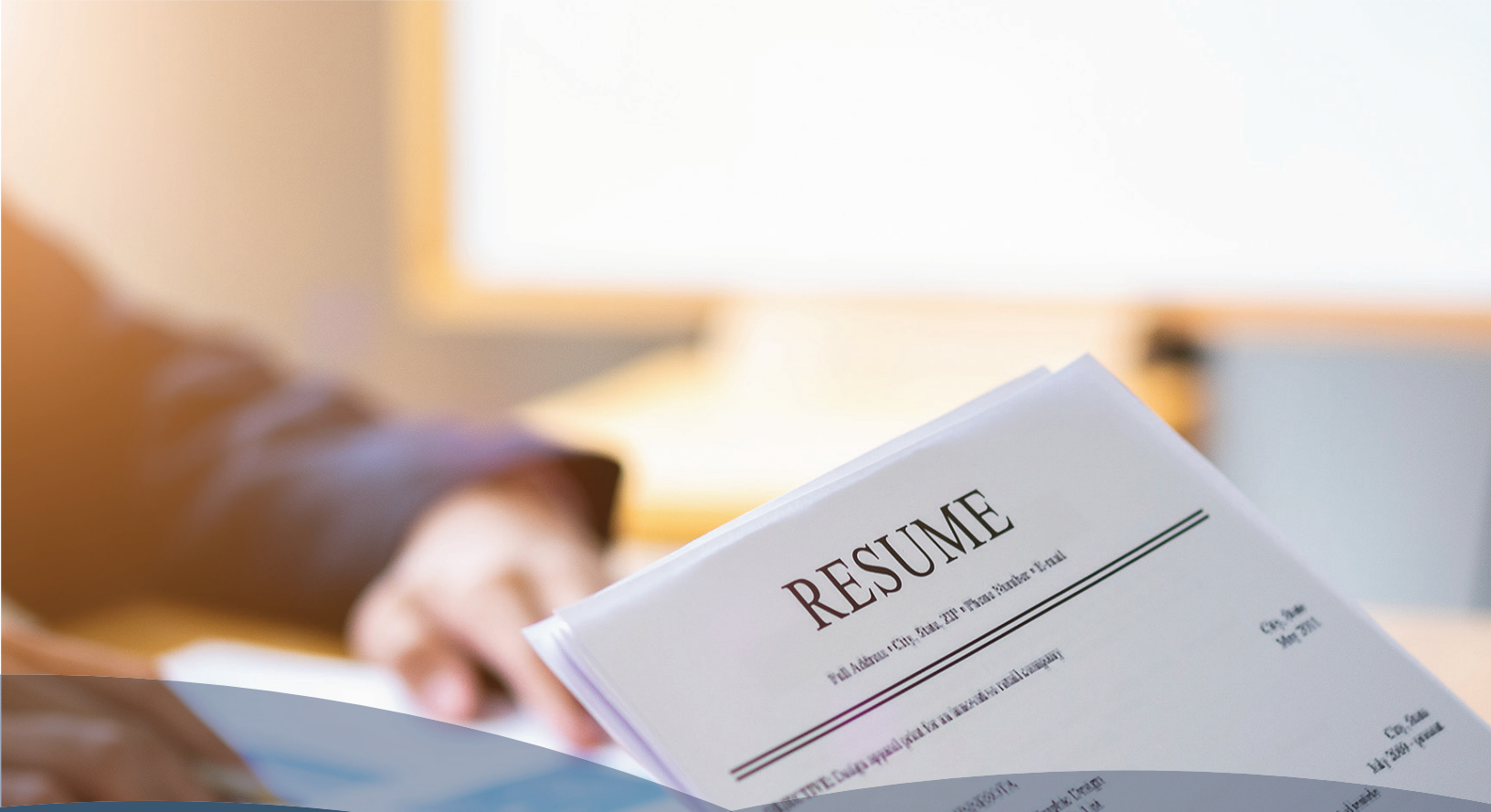

SECTION 08

Resume

Your Resume

Your resume is your ticket to an interview, and a single mistake on it can cost you that interview. A resume that misses the mark, that doesn't strike the right tone or emphasis, that doesn't focus on the right skills and experience, will be tossed into the round file. Folks say there is no such thing as perfect. But when it comes to your resume, it must be perfect.

Common Mistakes

I've reviewed hundreds of resumes. Here are some common mistakes:

- Leaving typos.
- Using a font that is too small or non-traditional.
- Having spacing and margins that are off, not aligned or inconsistent.
- Failing to include class rank and grades.
- Leaving gaps in employment.
- Too much detail.
- Too little detail.
- Not focusing on skills and experience relevant to the open position.
- Not including leadership, public speaking and writing experience.
- Not including military experience.

The purpose of a resume is to catch and hold an employer's attention. Most employers look at a resume for just a few seconds. You have 10 seconds to convince someone to put your resume in the "keep" pile and not in the "reject" pile. Don't make a common mistake to cause the resume to be discarded.

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What Employers Look for in Resumes

Yes, employers are looking for great grades from great schools, with law review this and moot court that. But let's be honest – folks with stellar resumes don't need much help with their resumes. Those who didn't graduate in the top 10% of their class from an Ivy League law school, while being an editor on their law review and winning their moot court competition need help. So what are employers are looking for, and how can you distinguish yourself when you don't have the best grades from the best schools?

Here are Some Suggestions

- Emphasize trial and deposition experience.
- Emphasize relevant practice area experience.
- Emphasize leadership roles.
- Emphasize military experience, collegiate sports, public speaking and published articles.
- List references, preferably law firm senior or managing partners.
- Tell a story with your resume.
- Couch your resume in terms of the firm's mission, vision and values.
- Tip your hand and have some reference or indicator in your resume that clearly shows this resume is specifically geared to that law firm. This resume was crafted with that specific law firm in mind.

One Size Does Not Fit All

As mentioned in the last section, each resume you submit should be geared specifically toward the firm to which you are applying. The skills, experience, the language, the values and vision included in and conveyed by your resume should be geared to the firm receiving that resume. Am I saying you need to tweak your resume each time you send it to a new or different firm? Yes. That's exactly what I am saying.

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Use the Active Voice

Use the active voice throughout your resume. A key indicator of a good writer is someone who uses the active voice. Law firms are looking for good writers. If you want to emphasize your writing, both directly and subliminally, use the active voice.

Highlight Skills

Where appropriate, highlight relevant skills. If you're applying to a trial firm, emphasize public speaking experience. If you're applying to an appellate firm, emphasize writing experience. Tailor your skills description to the ones being sought by the firm to which you are applying.

Highlight Grit

One of the most important qualities an attorney, or any person, can have, is grit. Grit is what drives someone to pick themselves up after they get knocked down. Grit is what drives that person to pick themselves up over and over. As lawyers, we will get the wind knocked out of us – by opposing counsel, by the judge, by a witness and sometimes by our own client. If you can show you overcame a significant obstacle, a challenge, or a shortcoming in your resume, do so. If you raised your siblings while your single mom was recovering from cancer, say so. If you put yourself through law school while taking care of a special needs child, say so. If life kicked you in the teeth and pushed your face into the dirt, and you got up, and spit out the blood and went back at it, if you did that, note that, somehow, someway in your resume. A personal story of grit can land you an interview and a job offer.

The Strong Resume

The strong resume is one that tells a story. It tells the story of why the candidate fits perfectly into the firm receiving the resume. The resume shows why the candidate is the missing puzzle piece, the thread needed to complete the firm's tapestry. Rethink and re-conceptualize resumes. It's more than a list of your prior jobs, your experience and your accomplishments. It is your story, it's the firm's story, and it is a story of how your future and the firm's future are inextricably intertwined.

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SECTION 09

Your Interview

Your Interview

Your interview is your opportunity to shine. If a firm grants you an interview, it is interested in you. Don't forget or overlook that. Attorney time is precious and a firm wouldn't invite you in for an interview unless they were serious about you as a candidate. So when preparing for an interview, and when getting your nerves and fears in check, keep in mind that the reason you are stepping off the elevator into the lobby and informing the receptionist you're there for an interview is because the firm is interested in you. They're not taking pity on you. They're not doing you a favor. They're not killing time. They are interested in you. Don't forget that and use that to fuel your confidence, which is crucial to have a positive and effective interview.

Common Mistakes

I've interviewed a lot of candidates. Here are some common mistakes I've observed:

- Arriving late.
- Not having studied the firm's website and the attorney bios.
- Not knowing the firm's mission, vision and values and not knowing how the candidate can help achieve the firm's mission and vision and how she lives according to the firm's values.
- Being overly nervous or overly confident. Be confident, but not egotistical.
- Having weak body language – not offering a firm handshake, not making and maintain eye contact, not walking with your head up and shoulders back, slouching, keeping your arms crossed, mumbling, not projecting your voice, etc.
- Not following up with a thank you e-mail or handwritten note. The latter is preferable. It's more memorable and more effective.

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Partner Pet Peeves

Having spoken with partners from many firms about their hiring, here are some partner pet peeves when it comes to interviews:

- Mispronouncing the partner's name or not remembering their name.
- Mispronouncing the firm's name.
- Not knowing what the partner does or the partner's role in the firm's history (when it's spelled out in the firm's website).
- Suggesting that the firm is just the next stop for the candidate. Firms don't want to spend money training you for your next job.
- Asking what the firm can do for the candidate instead of the other way around.
- Not knowing how the candidate's job history, experience and skills help the firm. The candidate needs to make the case why she is the firm's missing puzzle piece.
- Not asking any questions, asking too many questions, asking personal questions, or asking self-centered questions.
- Being rude to the receptionist, staff or anyone in the office.

Associate Pet Peeves

In addition to partners interviewing you, associates will too. Some associates will be happy to have another associate join the fold to take work off their plate and have another ear to bend. Others will view new associates with suspicion, someone who may try to climb over them in the food chain. Appreciate that their input is important and considered by the hiring partners, you need to make a good impression on them.

Some associate pet peeves are:

- Questions focused too much on work life balance, hours, billables, etc. You need to learn about the firm's culture, but do so discreetly and read between the lines. Associates don't want the firm to hire what they perceive to be a slacker. Conversely, they don't want the firm to hire a gunner who is going to make them look bad, so if you bill a lot of hours, you can share that information where appropriate but don't emphasize it.
- A candidate making demands. Associates interviewing you have put in years at the firm and have sacrificed a lot. They don't want to hear about what you want or what you want the firm to do for you.

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- Responding to personal questions. Employers can't ask personal questions about your family. Don't ask personal questions about theirs.
- Trying to get the associate to spill the beans. Some candidates are looking for a candid perspective of the firm. Some are expecting too candid of a perspective. No associate is going to reveal state secrets to you and will be annoyed if you press them on personal issues about the firm. Ask general questions about the firm's culture and work life balance. Detailed, intricate questions where you hope an associate will rat out a partner or reveal that she is unhappy, those questions raise eyebrows and rarely get you the answers you were fishing for.
- Acting like the associate is only an associate and his role in the interview doesn't matter. There have been candidates who have treated interviews by associates as a waste of their time. That candidate will not get hired.

How to Prepare

There are some steps you can take to prepare for an interview. They include:

- Study the firm's website.
- Read everything you can about the firm online.
- Study the firm's attorney bios.
- Memorize the firm's mission, vision and values. Internalize them.
- Have your elevator speech ready for why you want to join the firm, what you bring to the firm, how you can help the firm and why you're a good fit for the firm.
- Run through mock interview questions with a mentor or attorney friend.
- Work on your body language – posture, eye contact, standing, sitting, walking. You want exude confidence. You want to own your space.
- Have some questions prepared to ask.

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What to Ask Before Your Interview

Before your interview, ask some questions to ensure the interview runs smoothly:

- Where should you park?
- Is there any construction or any traffic issues in the area?
- When should you arrive?
- Do you need to bring extra copies of your resume, writing samples and transcripts?
- How long will the interview last?
- With whom will you be meeting?
- Is there anything else you should know about the interview?

Common Questions and How to Answer Them

The following are common interview questions and how to answer them:

- Why did you leave your last firm?

  Do not blame or insult your former employer. Assume responsibility where appropriate. If your dismissal wasn't due to your work product, focus on that. If it was due to work product, be honest but explain what you learned from the experience. You have to walk the line between putting yourself in the best light while not coming across as someone who makes excuses or takes shots at a former employer.

- Why do you want to join our firm?

  Discuss why you want to join the firm in terms of the firm's mission, vision and values. Memorize them, recite them and explain why they speak to you.

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?

  You want to be a valuable member of the firm, assisting and facilitating it to achieve its mission, vision and goals while growing as an attorney and becoming a leader in a given sector or practice area.

- What's your view about work life balance?

  This is a trick question. If posed by a partner, they want to weed out associates they perceive as lazy. You don't want to be an indentured servant

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and you don't want a firm to over work you, but you don't want to remotely leave the impression that you don't have a strong work ethic.

- What do you see as the trajectory of your career?

  Another trick question. A firm wants to know you plan on retiring there, even if you're just starting out your career. No firm wants to hear they're your starter firm or your first spouse. You're in until you retire. You think that's crazy? Well, let me tell you the answer that turns off partners the most is the answer that I may do this job for a few years and then go into politics, or become a judge, or start my own business, or join another firm. The cost of training an associate is a lot. Let me repeat that. It is a lot. If a firm thinks you're looking to only stay for a season of your life, odds are you won't get an offer.

- What area(s) do you want to practice in?

  You want to practice in the areas the firm focuses on. If you don't, you shouldn't by interviewing there.

- What questions do you have?

  Not having any questions reflects you're not curious. Too many questions make you sound needy. Have 2 or 3 questions about something you read about on the website. Better yet, ask about a big case the firm won that you found during your research. Is this pandering? Yes. Do folks love to talk about themselves and their victories? Of course.

- What are your strengths?

  Focus on strengths that play into the firm's mission and practice areas.

- What's your biggest weakness?

  Some attorneys still ask this question. I think it's silly because the pat answer is that I work too hard, or that I'm too hyper focused, or something that is a strength masquerading as a weakness to make it seem the candidate has no weaknesses. Focus on something minor, that you're actively working on and improving.

- Tell us about yourself.

  Have an elevator speech about yourself ready. Tell a brief, punchy story, where you are the protagonist and have overcome something to reflect your grit and perseverance.

- Do you mind staying late? Working weekends?

  Partners are looking for any hesitation to see if you don't have a strong work ethic.

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Controlling Your Fear

Attorneys can smell fear. We're trained to smell out weakness and pounce on it. You need to get over your fear when interviewing. Practice, run through exercises, practice deep breathing, see a counselor or life coach if need be, but work on controlling your fear. I've seen many candidates who looked great on paper but who blew the interview because fear seized them.

Confidence

Confidence will land you a job. Stand, walk, talk and sit confidently. Own your space. Take up space with your arms and legs. Make and keep eye contact. Practice your handshake. Before the interview, go to the restroom, go into a stall, and run through an exercise where you stretch, stand up straight, stare into the mirror and fill up the space in the stall with your body. Seeing yourself larger, taking up more physical space, will boost your confidence.

Body Language

Maintain confident body language throughout. Remember:

- Good eye contact
- Smile
- Look interested and react appropriately to what is being said
- No slouching
- Stand up and sit up straight
- Use your hands and arms appropriately to gesticulate when speaking

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What to Do at the Interview

Some to-do's for your interview:

- Know where you're going, how to arrive and be aware of any construction or traffic delays.
- Arrive early.
- Make sure you brought anything you were asked to bring.
- Answer the questions asked. If you want to segue into another topic, do so only after you answer the question.
- Be polite.
- Keep your answers succinct. Answer the question completely, but briefly, and then stop.
- You're having a conversation. Remember that.

What Not to Do at the Interview

What not to do during your interview:

- Don't be nosy. If an interviewer changes topics, move on.
- Don't be too eager. Don't volunteer too much information and don't talk about yourself too much.
- Don't be too casual, either in attire or behavior.
- Avoid being awkward. Refrain from questions or answers that are odd or unusual.
- You start the interview as an outsider. Avoid making comments or behaving to keep you on the outside.
- Don't cut off the interviewers or finish their sentences.
- Don't jump into your answers. Take a second, collect your thoughts and then respond.

Follow Up after Interview

After the interview, send the interviewers thank you e-mails or handwritten notes. If you don't hear anything for two or more weeks, follow up with your contact at the firm about the status of the position.

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SECTION 10

Dealing With Rejection

Dealing with Rejection

We've all dealt with rejection. We've all applied for jobs we did not get. Understand, that this is part of the process. It's ok to be rejected. It's ok to hear the word "no." Sometimes being rejected is the best thing, because I know a lot of attorneys who landed the job of their dreams and the dream turned into a nightmare. Accept rejection as part of life.

How Do You Respond to "No."

Don't be angry at the word "no." Don't get depressed over the word "no." Don't ruminate over the word "no." It's just a word. It's not a reflection on you. It's not an estimation of your value or worth. Someone not giving you a job does not reflect on who you are. Every "no," gets you closer to "yes."

When Do You Settle?

We don't always get our ideal job. Sometimes, due to our grades, the law school we attended, the lack of contacts, a poor economy, or lack of opportunities, we may have to accept a job that we don't love but that we can accept. Life is life and life isn't fair; and sometimes you don't always get what you want or what you deserve. But you have bills, and student loans and you have obligations and you make the best of the opportunities available to you. Everyone has to make the decision for themselves, but you have to decide what jobs you will settle for, why and when you will settle for them.

What Offers You Should Never Take

If you have to settle, do not accept a job with a law firm that has a history of:

- Ethical violations
- Sexual harassment
- Discrimination
- Unprofessional behavior
- Very high turnover
- Treats lawyers and staff poorly

There are ways to learn these things. Do your due diligence. Speak to recruiters. Speak to mentors. Keep your ear to the ground. Listen to the grapevine.

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What Offers You Should Consider

When you're made an offer, consider accepting a job that:

- Pays a reasonable salary
- Offers reasonable benefits, including health insurance, bar dues, parking, etc.
- Offers mentoring and training
- Provides a stable, positive work environment
- Provides a place where you will grow and develop professionally
- Offers opportunities to pursue business development and marketing opportunities

Have a Long Term Plan

When starting your job search, have a long term plan. Ask yourself the following questions?

- What's your ideal firm?
- What's your ideal compensation?
- What firm will you accept to work for?
- What salary will you accept?
- How long are you willing to search?
- How long are you willing to wait before accepting a less than ideal job offer?
- Based on your finances, how long can you conduct a job search before settling?

You need a plan for your job search so you know when to stop searching and start accepting what is out there that may fall below what you hoped for

What's Your Timetable?

When young lawyers ask how long it will take to land a good job, I ask them how long they can be without a job. Assuming they move back in with their parents or family, and eliminate most discretionary spending, how much of an emergency fund do they have? A month? Six months? A year? You need to know how long you can survive financially without a job and that's the outer deadline by which you need to find work. Some folks will have the luxury to search for months. Some may only have a few weeks. Know your timetable and use that as a guideline for your job search.

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SECTION 11

Alternative Careers

Alternative Careers

I'm sure you've heard this, but there are things you can do with a law degree other than be a lawyer. If you're having difficulty finding a job you like in the legal industry, look in other sectors and explore other careers and positions.

You Don't Have to Be a Lawyer

I know attorneys who have left the practice to be a law school or college professor. Some have gone back to school and become counselors. Some have opened their own businesses. Some have become writers. Some have become graphic designers. Some have become life coaches and marketing experts. Some have gone into sales. There are many things you can do with a law degree. There are books and websites and professionals you can consult which can help you explore job alternatives.

Your Alternatives

Study your alternatives and determine if additional training or education are necessary and if so, the cost for that. If you're already in school debt, incurring more may not be wise. That's something you have to evaluate for yourself.

Pursuing an Alternative Career

If there is an alternative career you want, reach out to others in that field, invite them for coffee and ask them about the pros and cons of their career. If you're lucky enough to find one or more lawyers who have transitioned into this new career, reach out to them, because they already made the transition you want to make and can explain how best to do it.

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Laying the Foundation for an Alternative Career

Just as it took time, money and energy to become a lawyer, the same will be true if you transition into another career. Count the costs. Study the steps required to get there. Know what it will cost and how you plan on paying for it. If after you sit down and crunch your plan and the numbers, you decide to take the plunge, seek out a mentor to serve as a sounding board during this new adventure.

Final Thoughts

I believe that the right job for you, the job you were born to do, is out there. It may take time to find it. It may take some rejection. It may take a lot of rejection. But I know in my heart of hearts that each of us was put on this earth with a purpose, if we try hard enough and display grit and perseverance, we will find the job that fits us like a glove, the job that will serve as a vehicle to fulfill our destiny. Good luck and God bless.

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