

THE JOB SEARCH

It might be helpful to think of your job search as an ongoing research project throughout your legal training. In addition to attending to academic priorities, use your time in law school to experience many facets of the law. You can begin to build your legal network by joining legal associations, attending panels, and networking with lawyers across the spectrum of legal work. Clinics, moot courts, and simulation classes allow you to experience the law as part of your academic work. Summer and part-time jobs, externships, and volunteer work provide opportunities to learn about various areas of the law and provide you with experience and contacts that will be helpful in securing a permanent position after graduation.

SELF-EVALUATION

As you gain training and experience, continually evaluate your goals by asking:

- What skills do I want to use? What interests do I bring to the practice of law?
- Where do I want to live?
- What is my ideal work environment?
- What kind of colleagues would I enjoy?
- What “quality of life” issues are important to me?
- Where do I see my legal career heading?

EVALUATE YOUR LEGAL OPTIONS

The variety of positions available to new attorneys is extensive and includes traditional legal jobs, nontraditional positions in which you can use your law degree, and a range of options that do not directly involve the practice of law. Acquire sufficient information about the different professions, the markets, and possible options to make informed choices. The more you know about a specialty, a type of employer, or a particular firm, the more prepared you are when applying for jobs.

JOB-HUNTING STRATEGIES AND METHODS

Job availability ultimately depends upon economics. But even in hard times, there are jobs available. The needs of organizations are always changing; opportunities in some areas of practice increase while others decrease, new areas of law emerge, and people retire or change jobs.

While you are in school, spend time each week researching employers. After graduation and the bar exam, spend close to full time on your search. Those of you who have never really searched for a professional job may need to develop some basic methods and strategies.

Apply to as many employers as possible. Keep an open mind until you talk with an employer, have seen the office, and have even toured the city in which the employer is located. *Do not make the decision for the employer by not applying.* You cannot turn down what you have not been offered, and narrowing your options early in the process may lead to unnecessary disappointment. Widening your options while staying focused leads to more offers and more choices.

NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

People prefer to hire someone they know. The more an employer knows about a job candidate, the more confident they will feel in hiring him/her. Make yourself known (your skills, goals, and desires) to as many potential employers as you can. You can expose yourself to potential employers through networking and informational interviewing. Remember, the job search is about more than submitting a cover letter and resume in response to a published job listing.

BAR ASSOCIATIONS, LAW STUDENT DIVISIONS

The American Bar Association, together with many state and local bar associations, offers a range of publications and other services, some of which are designed specifically for student members of their law student divisions. A number of associations provide mentor and similar programs that put law students in direct contact with practicing attorneys who will help them with their career development.

FINDING JOB LISTINGS

Attorney positions are advertised in legal newspapers, periodicals, and online, particularly in trade papers, journals, and on industry websites. Many of these can be found in the Law Library and on the Career Services website, <http://www1.wne.edu/law/career-services/index.cfm>. The Career Services website links you to a variety of sources of legal information and job listings. The Directory of Legal Employers (published by the National Association for Law Placement) www.nalpdirectory.com and the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory www.martindale.com list legal employers. Symplicity, <https://law-wnec-csm.symplicity.com/students>, the school's online job listing program, contains information about jobs, fellowships, internships, externships, and clerkships, and practice areas and contact information for many firms.

LEGAL HIRING TIMETABLE

Academic Year Law Clerks

Employers seek part-time clerks throughout the academic year. Most part-time positions are with small firms located in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Occasionally, government agencies, associations, and public interest organizations hire part-time clerks.

Summer Law Positions

As a general rule, the larger the employer, the earlier that employer will interview and hire students for its summer positions. Large law firms, federal and state government agencies, corporations, and a few public interest organizations can anticipate their hiring needs well in advance and, consequently, can complete most of their hiring in the fall. Small- and medium-size employers tend to hire their summer clerks later in the school year.

Permanent Positions

Large law firms, federal and state government agencies, and a few public interest organizations complete most of their hiring for permanent positions in the fall. Small employers, in all sectors, hire recent graduates much closer to their date of availability to work. Some smaller employers only hire graduates after they have taken and passed a bar exam or have been admitted to the bar.

USING JOB FAIRS EFFECTIVELY

In the last few years, many employers have used job fairs as a practical way of screening a large number of applicants. Students who participate in job fairs also benefit, as you have the opportunity to personally present your skills to a number of potential employers. Most annual job fairs are held at approximately the same time each year. Career Services will advertise dates as they are received.

Prior to a Job Fair

- Prepare a short “pitch” on what you want the employer to know – what you have to offer and why the opportunity interests you.
- Research the employers of interest who will be at the fair.
- Conduct informational interviews with people working in fields in which you are interested.
- Update your resume.
- Practice interviewing. While abbreviated, interviews at job fairs are your first chance to persuade employers to hire you.

At a Job Fair

- Dress as you would for any other employment interview.
- Arrive early. You can sometimes get on a recruiter's interview schedule if they are not already filled. At consortium job fairs, you may be able to secure additional interviews.
- Approach the recruiter and sell your skills, interests, and experience. (Remember, this is an interview.)
- Ask the recruiter for a business card or their name and title, and an indication of how to follow up.

After a Job Fair

- Send a thank-you letter to the recruiter, reaffirm your interest in the position, and confirm the agreed upon follow-up arrangements.
- If referred to another employee of the organization, send a resume and cover letter indicating who referred you and why.
- Follow up with the employer as agreed.

MAIL CAMPAIGNS

With a general mail campaign, applicants rely heavily on the resume to do their job search for them. A mass mailing consists of sending an unsolicited cover letter and resume to a random list of employers in the hope that there is a position open and that your background will appeal to one of the employers. *Mass mailings generally have a low rate of success.* If you receive a response (many students report receiving no answers at all), it will often be a polite form letter telling you that your resume will be kept on file.

A focused mailing to potential employers, detailing your qualifications for a position in their organization, involves additional work on your part but often results in a greater number of responses. After you have researched the market, send a resume and cover letter to firms in the geographic and specialty areas of interest to you. Send out a manageable number of letters at a time so you can do the necessary research and follow up.

You can include in the closing of your letter that you will follow up. Then call or email to confirm that the employers have received what they need. This may give you a chance to present yourself as a viable candidate to the hiring authority. Be sure you rehearse your telephone calls ahead of time; it will tell the employer a great deal about you. Are you poised and self-confident? Are you organized? How well do you express yourself? The self-assured candidate who follows up makes a good impression.

If there are no vacancies at the moment, things may change in a month or two—keep a record of your contacts and when you are due to follow up. You never know when a letter or a telephone call will reach an employer at an opportune time, so be diligent in following up your letters with telephone calls.

APPLICATIONS

Address your letter to a named person rather than to a position. In the event a name is not given in the advertisement, you will need to research the name of the hiring attorney or other contact person. If you are not able to learn the name of the proper person to whom you should write, you could address the letter to one of the attorneys whose names you can find. Another option is to learn whether any Western New England alumni are working at that firm. You could then either call one of our alumni for the name of the person to whom you should write, or you could send the letter initially to one of them. "The Alumni Finder" on the Law School's website lets you search our alumni by employer, location, and practice area.

During your job search, be sure your voicemail greeting, cell phone, and email convey a businesslike and professional image.

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Some agencies place attorneys, including newly admitted attorneys, in temporary positions. Increasingly, new law graduates, particularly in certain areas of the country, are finding that their first job may be a short-term one (that can last from a week to a year or more) obtained by using one of these employment agencies.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Employment decisions have consequences for the person who does the hiring as well as for the applicant. Just as with any professional decision, the hiring attorney's judgment, reputation, and budget are at stake. Often the person who interviews you will have a good deal of objective information about you by the time you meet. You may have spoken on the telephone, sent a resume or cover letter, submitted an application, or been referred by someone who knows you. Because you have been successful in obtaining an interview, you can assume that the employer is already positively disposed toward you before you arrive.

An interview provides the employer with the subjective information needed to assess your candidacy fully. By meeting you in person, the employer will be able to note intangible qualities that cannot be seen on a resume, including your drive, maturity, and capacity to foster confidence in clients. In addition, the employer will evaluate your personality and how you will fit within their organization.

Decision makers have a good idea of the kind of person they are seeking, how the person should appear, act, or function, and the skills he or she should possess. Interviewers often develop an idea of a good candidate against which they compare applicants. If you have done thorough job-hunting research, you should have a good idea of what the employer wants and whether you will fit into the organization. The further you are from fitting the employer's target, the less likely you are to be selected (*and the less comfortable you might be working in that organization.*)

THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE

You will change positions several times in the course of your life, if you have not already done so. The more comfortable you become with the process of finding and applying for jobs now, the easier it will be each time after that. The Career Services' staff is available to help you highlight your competencies and prepare yourself for all aspects of your job search.