THE ALUMNI JOB SEARCH

A job search is a big undertaking. This document aims to give you an overview of some of the steps you will need to take in that search and some resources that can help you begin your journey. What to expect during your job search depends on the type of search you will conduct, and the possibilities are nearly endless. Regardless of the type of search, a legal job search can be time consuming and at times frustrating. Landing your next job will take a combination of keeping up continuous efforts and keeping a positive attitude.

IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

Before you start talking to people or looking for a position, it is important to identify your goal of the search.

Consider the following before you begin your job search.

YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE
- What tasks or duties have you found most satisfying and enjoyable?
- What tasks and duties have you found the least satisfying and enjoyable?
- What have you learned about your strengths and weaknesses as a co-worker, as a supervisor and/or as a supervisee?

YOUR INTERESTS
- If money were no object, what would your dream job be?
- When hearing about others’ jobs, what types of positions have you thought would be wonderful opportunities for you if only you could get them?

YOUR PERSONALITY TYPE
- Are you an introvert or an extrovert?
- Do you need set procedures and deadlines to perform well, or do you flourish in more open-ended situations?
- Do you enjoy supervising others, or do you have difficulty delegating work?

YOUR EXPECTATIONS
- Are you considering a different type of employer? Are you committed to working in a law firm, a non-profit, government, in-house, or non-legal position?
- Are you willing to change your practice area for the right position?
- What are you able to do based on your financial position? How much do you need to earn?
- Where do you want to live?
**Self-Assessments**
To help you with this process, you may consider taking a self-assessment – an aptitude and personality test – on your own. There are many (free and not-so-free) resources available online. Here are a few examples:

- Jung Typology Test
- Keirsey Temperment Sorter
- The Four Tendencies
- Major, Lindsey and Africa’s Ten Questions You Should Ask Yourself Before Choosing a [Legal] Practice Area

**UPDATE YOUR RESUME**

Your resume is generally a one-page document that highlights your most relevant skills, experiences and accomplishments for your job search.

A legal employer is likely to spend less than 30 seconds on his or her initial review of your resume. Your goal is to advocate for yourself through a visually appealing, impactful document.

**Legal Employers Prefer One Page Resumes**

Keep your resume to one page in most cases. If you are applying to public sector employers and have enough experience to fill a two page resume, you can use a two page resume. If you have 5-7+ years of experience, and need to use at least half of the second page to fully describe your skills and accomplishments, you may want to consider a second page. In any situation where you use a two page resume, be sure you use two full pages.

You may also opt to use an additional page to describe the specific cases, deals, and publications you have worked on in more detail. If you choose to include this additional page, include the header from your resume and title the page “Representative Transactions” or “Representative Matters.”

**Post-Graduate Experience**

Once you have gained post-graduate experience in the legal field, it is appropriate to switch the order of your Experience and Education sections to highlight your experience first, rather than your educational credentials.

Some attorneys wait until they have about five years of significant work experience. If you have been working for less than five years, consider formatting your resume based on the potential employers you are trying to reach. Which aspect of your resume do you think they will be most interested in? You will likely find that you have more than one version of your resume tailored for different positions.
Bar Admissions
If you are looking for legal positions, include a section listing your bar admissions. Provide the state or court, if relevant, and the year of your admission (e.g., “Illinois, admitted 2014” or Northern District of Illinois, admitted 2016).

If your admission in a state is pending, list the date of the bar exam you took (e.g., “Illinois, sat for February 2021 bar exam, admission pending”). If you intend to take the bar in the state in which you are looking for a job but have not yet done so, it is important to let potential employers know that you are serious about practicing in their state, so list the bar exam you intend to take (e.g., “Illinois, registered for July 2021 bar exam”).

Other Sections
Consider the position and employer, and only include sections or experiences that you believe are directly relevant to the position. What do you think the employer would be most interested in?

Examples of Other Resume Sections:
- Publications
- Language skills
- Professional Associations
- Relevant Awards and Nominations (i.e. “Elected to the Board of the Chicago Women’s Bar Association” or “Nominated for Illinois State Bar Association Young Lawyer of the Year, 2015”)
- Significant CLE Experiences (i.e. “Completed NITA deposition workshop” or “Led ABA seminar on Sarbanes-Oxley compliance”)

Create a Deal/Case List
In beginning a search, it is important to think about all of your professional experience so that you can update your resume, tell persuasive stories about your skills and experiences in interviews, and eventually clear conflicts in a new position.

Make a comprehensive list of the clients for whom you have worked during your career. If you are still in your current position, your organization’s timekeeping, billing, or document management system may help you create this list.

Think about the work that you did for each client and make notes about your significant deals, cases or projects. Look back at old work product, closing documents, or court filings to help you remember.

Make a List of References
If possible, ask someone from your current position to serve as a reference. If that’s not possible, ask someone from your previous work experience who can speak to the relevant skills for the position you are trying to get. You may have different reference lists for different types of positions.
Talk to the people you have identified as references. Tell them about your search and your career goals. Ask them if they are comfortable serving as your reference and make sure that you are comfortable with what they will say.

**Resume Content and Format**

Focus on the skills and experiences you have that are important for the position you are applying for.

**CONTENT**

- Begin every description with an **action** verb: wrote, argued, led, etc.

- In describing your experience, focus on the skills or experiences important to the position to which you are applying. Read the posting, job description, key responsibilities of the position or organization website carefully for clues regarding skills or experiences you have that line up with the expectations, work, or mission of the organization or job to which you are applying.

- Do **not list** an objective, personal interests, or “References available upon request.”

- All information must be **100% accurate** (including GPA and employment dates).

- Prepare to discuss **everything** on your resume in an interview. (If you include the thesis you wrote as a college senior, be ready to talk about it.)

- List your major successes, e.g., “Successfully argued summary judgment motion before Judge Nowicki” or “Led team of three junior associates in negotiating and closing $4.2 million real estate acquisition.”

  - **Be mindful of confidential information** like client names and matter descriptions.

- In addition to paid positions, the experience section of your resume can include clinical work, internships/externships, research assistantships, volunteer work, etc.

- Consider whether your honors and activities need to be explained, e.g. explaining that “Bronze Tablet” honors signify that you graduated in the top 3% of your undergraduate class or that participating in the law school activity “Streetlaw” involves teaching inner city high school students about the legal system.

- Remember: employers think of resumes as your first work product. Typos, spelling mistakes, and grammatical errors are NEVER okay.

**FORMAT**

- The format of your resume should make it both visually appealing and easily readable.

- Never use a font smaller than 10pt – attempts to save space with small fonts and narrow margins may affect the readability of your resume or make it appear crowded.

- Use white space, underlining, bold, CAPITAL LETTERS, *italics*, and font size thoughtfully.
• Be consistent in format, punctuation, and use of emphasis (underlining, italics, capital letters, etc.) from one position to another and one section of your resume to another.

• Avoid using the existing resume templates in Word. The templates don’t allow for the necessary editing and adjustments needed on a legal resume and can, in fact, show a lack of effort and creativity in producing the best possible resume.

• Spell out months.

• Use contact information that will make it easy to reach you (and make sure your voicemail is professional).
  - Information about managing your University of Chicago email address can be found on the Alumni Email Website.

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USE YOUR NETWORK

Network
The best resources during your job search are the people who know you, your work quality, and work ethic. Talking to them in a professional way about your career goals will be the best opportunity for you to find out about job opportunities.

Networking is about building relationships, and it takes practice.

Who is a Networking Contact?
• Lawyers: family, colleagues, former colleagues, opposing counsel, co-counsel, law school classmates, alumni, and former professors.
• Non-lawyers: clients, former clients, college classmates, friends, and neighbors.
• Future contacts: whoever you meet throughout your networking interactions.

Anyone is a potential network contact.

Finding Contacts?
Be active in your professional networks, both virtually and locally.

Start with the people you know. Identify people who may either be able to provide relevant information on your job search or refer you to others who can, and make sure to follow-up and meet with the people they recommend to you.

Introduce yourself to people you would like to know, like college or law school alumni who work in the practice area or location you are interested in, or contacts from professional organizations you belong to who do work that you find interesting.

Attend legal conferences, state and local bar associations, affinity bar associations and practice-specific organizations, and make it a priority to meet people.
Use the [University of Chicago Alumni Directory](link) to search for alumni contacts.

Use [LinkedIn](link) or other social media platforms to find people you would like to meet and see how your connections can help you with introductions to those people.

**Networking Resources:**
- [The University of Chicago Alumni Directory](link)
- [LinkedIn: Facebook for Lawyers](link)
- [Attorney at Work: LinkedIn for Lawyers](link)
- [Five New Tips for Using LinkedIn to Find a Job](link)

**What do I say to someone I contact?**

Tell them your goals. Describe what you are looking for in 2-4 sentences. Highlight your strengths in a persuasive, yet concise, way. This is your job-search elevator speech.

Call your friends and set up a time to meet. Once you have caught up on the latest news, start talking about your job search. In addition to describing what you are looking for and what you consider your best work-related skills (e.g., your job-search elevator speech), ask them politely if they can think of any positions, anyone they know that you should talk to further, or have any additional ideas for careers or employers you should explore further.

Reach out to new contacts, whether these are contacts suggested by your initial contacts or people you have identified on your own to meet.

Start with an e-mail or phone call to new contacts, explaining why you are contacting them and ask if they would be willing to meet with you or to talk with you on the phone for a few minutes to talk about their career/practice/organization.

**Example:** “My name is Jane Smith and my former colleague Joe Sanchez at Biglaw Firm XYZ suggested I contact you. I was a securitization lawyer for four years at XYZ and am now exploring bankruptcy law as a practice area. Joe tells me that you are one of the most respected bankruptcy attorneys in New York, and I am wondering if you have a few minutes to talk to me about what skills you think are most valuable in this field.”

If you promise to only take ten minutes of the contact’s time, only take ten minutes of their time and then tell them that you see that your time is up. He or she may be willing to share additional time with you, but allow the contact to dictate the limits of the conversation.
**Prepare for the conversation.**

Being prepared for the meeting makes you appear more professional and will make it more likely that this contact will want to help you now or in the future.

To make the most of your meeting, be prepared to ask relevant questions, tell a coherent story that is relevant to your contact, and provide concrete reasons for wanting to pursue a particular career goal. Your contacts are more likely to remember you and recommend you to their friends if they are impressed by you, your commitment, your professionalism, and your interest. A lack of focus or understanding will leave your contacts uneasy about letting you use their names when you approach others.

Remember that during a networking meeting or phone call – sometimes referred to as an informational interview – you are the interviewer. After spending a few moments talking to break the ice, it will be up to you to lead the conversation. Have your goal in mind for the meeting and questions prepared that will help you achieve that goal. Learn about your contact and his or her work before the meeting. Communicate your sincere interest in that work and in his or her advice. Be informed enough about your contact to have a good conversation about his or her job, organization, experience etc. and how it fits with your career goal – think about why you are talking to that particular person.

**After the meeting.**

At the end of the meeting, ask your contact if they are willing to refer you to other people who may be helpful.

The end of the meeting should not be the end of your relationship with that contact. Send a short thank you to your contact and follow up with news relevant to things you talked about and updates on your search. Keeping good notes about each conversation can help you decide when it is appropriate to follow up with someone and the content of that follow up.

Take the time to actually contact the people suggested as further networking contacts. It does not create a good impression if you fail to follow up on what your contact perceives as a good resource that they have taken the time to find for you.

**IV WORKING WITH A RECRUITER**

**Should I use a recruiter?**

Whether you decide to use a professional recruiter (sometimes called a placement professional, professional search consultant, or a headhunter) in your search for your next position is a personal decision. The benefit you will receive from using a recruiter can vary greatly depending on your market, the type of position you are seeking, and the effectiveness of the particular recruiter you choose.

On the plus side, professional recruiters maintain a vast network of contacts and may save organizations and candidates time in their job search process. Recruiters are often used by
larger law firms and corporations to find candidates who closely match the required qualifications and experience for a position.

On the down side, when you are hired through a recruiter you come with a fee for the organization, one which they may be less willing to pay during difficult economic times or when they can obtain qualified candidates through other means such as direct advertising or employee referrals.

(Note: Judicial clerks searching for a post-clerkship position, should not use a recruiter.

If you decide to use a recruiter, be cautious to not rely too heavily on this one avenue at the risk of ignoring other successful job search strategies, such as networking. Keep in mind that while a headhunter can be a great asset to you in finding a new position, the vast majority of legal positions are still found through other means, in particular through the networks you already have and those you will develop through your search.

**How do I work with a recruiter?**

You can talk to one or more recruiter as part of your general job search, rather than in response to a specific position. Use that meeting to learn about the employer relationships they have, their understanding of your legal market and the strategy the recruiter suggests for you in your job search. In that conversation you could agree on which employers the recruiter can send your materials.

You could also meet with a recruiter in response to a specific job opportunity. In that meeting you should try to get a sense about the recruiter’s relationship with that employer as well as more details about the position.

Depending on the particular job search, candidates may work with more than one recruiter. If you work with multiple recruiters, keep detailed records of which recruiter you authorized to submit your materials to which employer and on what date. These meticulous records will help avoid your resume being submitted multiple times to the same employer. In general, once a recruiter sends your resume to an employer, your candidacy is linked to that recruiter for a set period of time.

**How can I work effectively with a recruiter?**

Even if you decide to engage a recruiter to help you in your job search, it is vital that you remain engaged and in control of the search. First, choose the right recruiter or recruiters. Review potential recruiters’ biographies and websites – look for qualifications that you believe will help in your job search (for example, someone who has practiced in the setting or market). Ask questions – does the recruiter have sufficient experience in the industry, practice setting, or market in which you are seeking? Ask about previous placements or for references from previous clients. Ask your friends and colleagues for referrals to good recruiters. Meet with potential recruiters – do you like them? Do they have good suggestions about job search strategies? Do they seem genuinely interested in assisting with your job search? Consult the National Association of Legal Search Consultants to identify professional recruiters in your area.
When establishing your relationship with a recruiter, it is important to be clear about the recruiter’s authority and to work together to create your search strategy. Discussing a strategy ahead of time will prevent them sending your materials to an employer without your express consent.

Additional resources on working with recruiters:

- Rules of Engagement: Tips for Working with a Legal Recruiter, BCG Attorney Search
- How to Use a Legal Recruiter, LawCrossing.com
- Five Tips for Working with Legal Recruiters aka Headhunters, FindLaw.com

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Job Search Resources
There are many online resources that can be helpful in your job search. Below are several, but certainly not all, such resources to help get started.

- Symplicity: The University of Chicago’s web-based job posting system (You can log in with the same credentials you used as a student. If you forgot your password or need a new account created, please contact OCS at career_services@law.uchicago.edu.)
- Indeed.com: An online job search engine that allows you to search job postings by state, title, company, location, employer, and salary estimate and provides a function to upload your resume to their employers search database.
- LinkedIn Jobs: In addition to providing information on individuals affiliated with organizations, many organizations also post positions on LinkedIn’s Jobs page.
- Simplyhired.com: An online job search engine.
- FindLaw.com Law Career Center: Provides job listings for a wide range of legal professionals. It also maintains a comprehensive set of legal resources on the Internet for legal students and legal professionals including case law and legal news.
- LawCrossing.com: Maintains a collection of active legal jobs throughout the world and “continuously monitors the hiring needs of more than 250,000 legal employers, including virtually every law firm, corporation, government office, and public interest organization in the United States.”
- Martindale: Search for law firms and attorneys by practice area and city.
- ABA Legal Career Central: American Bar Association’s Career website provides job postings, as well as resources regarding various practice areas, career advice, and additional resources for attorney job seekers.
- Association of Corporate Counsel: Nationwide corporate in-house job postings and information.
- Goinhouse.com: Nationwide in-house job postings.
- Local legal publications. For example, in Chicago, the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin Legal Employment Weekly or in Florida, the Florida Bar News & Journal.
State and local bar associations. For example, the Illinois State Bar Association Career Center or the Texas Bar Association Career Center and the Chicago Bar Association Career Center or Los Angeles County Bar Association Career Center.

Public Service Jobs Database (PSJD): A service of the National Association of Law Placement (NALP), PSJD is database of public service job postings and directory of public service organizations.

Idealist.org: Nationwide listing of public service positions, both legal and non-legal.

OpportunityKnocks: A job board focused exclusively on the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofit Jobs: A job board focused on the nonprofit sector.

Philanthropy News Digest Jobs Board: A job board listing full time positions at nonprofit organizations.

USA Jobs: The federal government’s official job posting website (including federal resume tips).

U.S. Department of Justice: A list of job vacancies at the U.S. Department of Justice.

State and local government opportunities can be located on state-specific websites (for example, Illinois government jobs on Illinois.gov or Texas government jobs on Texas State Job Board) or on agency-specific websites (for example, Texas Attorney General’s Office).

Practice area-specific organizations that provide both job postings and practice-related information and links. For example,

- **American Health Lawyers Association**: Job listings for health law related positions throughout the country.
- **American Immigration Lawyers Association**: Contains online job postings for positions in immigration law as well as a directory of immigration attorneys throughout the country searchable by location, languages spoken, and type of practice.
- **American Intellectual Property Law Association**: Among the many resources offered by the AIPLA is a job bank containing available positions in intellectual property law.
- **Chronicle of Higher Education**: Listing of career opportunities in higher education and other related fields.
- **Entertainment Careers**: Contains postings for internships and positions in the entertainment industry.
- **LCC Hiring Hall**: Resources for attorneys seeking information about union-side hiring opportunities.
- **Roll Call Jobs**: Legislative, lobbying and government affairs positions in Washington, DC.
- **National Legal Aid and Defender Association Directory Job Board**

Websites for federal and state courts, as well as:

- **OSCAR**: A centralized website to apply for federal judicial clerkships that lists many, but not all currently available judicial clerkship opportunities.
- **National Center for State Courts Jobs**: Provides posting for job openings in court systems around the country as well as links to state court websites and federal court system employment opportunities.

Websites providing information and further reading regarding “alternative” legal careers:

- **FindLaw: Leaving the Law**
- **Career Transitions Center of Chicago**
- CareerOneStop
- NALP Alternative Careers
- Changing Legal Job - Quitting Your Legal Employment, HG.org Legal Employment Center
- NALP, Report of the Emerging Legal Jobs Work Group
- NALP, From Lawyer to Administrator
- NALP, Advice and Testimonials from Law Graduates Who Chose Not to Practice Law
- NALP, Alternative Careers for Lawyers: Websites of Interest