

Effective Job Search Techniques

After identifying and utilizing all available resources, the second part of an effective job search campaign involves developing effective strategies that will enable you to reach potential employers and identify possible openings. Two keys to successfully finding a position are developing a plan that is realistic and doing something to reach your goals every week.

There are three main levels of job searching:

Level I: Job Vacancies

This is the most common method used for finding available positions, and the most competitive, least effective method if used alone (remember, it is estimated that over 80% of job openings are never advertised).

Job Listings and Help Wanted/Position Available Advertisements

- A. Answering Help Wanted Ads in local papers, non-local papers, Bar Association newsletters, job hotlines, current job listings (including Career Services') and professional or specialty journals
 - some people are successful, but over 80% of all current job openings are never advertised
 - read through all listings from A to Z because job titles vary greatly
- B. Placing your own ad (position wanted) in newspapers and professional journals - not very effective, but may work for some

Employment Agencies/Placement Services

- A. Using employment agencies and placement services
 - make sure they have the types of openings you are looking for, not just paralegal or non-legal (unless that is what you are looking for)
 - be careful if you are asked to sign a contract; you should consider having it reviewed by an attorney first
 - if you receive a job offer, make sure the placement is Fee Paid - you should not have to pay a fee (ask up front whether placements are fee paid)
 - just remember that the agency's client is the employer, not you, so they may not always have your best interests in mind
 - realize that you give up control of your job search and cannot follow up as effectively with the potential employer
 - some services do mailings for you, but you can do a more targeted mailing yourself
- B. Database Placement Services/Networks
 - download your resume online or send it into a national service and employers then pay to review your resume
 - remember that in a tight job market eager employees come to employers; employers usually do not pay to review applicants who fail to contact their organization directly

Professional Associations (Placement Services, Journals, Special Directories)

- government bulletins, association placement services, PSLawNet (public interest listings), or some other form of centrally advertised openings
- available through professional associations, alumni organizations, or other services
- may not be comprehensive, but good as a possible supplemental resource

Career Services (On-Campus Recruiting, Job Fairs, & Job Listings, including per diem positions)

- A. On-Campus Interviews - students submit resumes, employers select students and come to campus to interview these students

- very competitive - mostly large firms and some agencies
 - can be successful for some students (generally 15% of 2Ls, much less for 3Ls)
- B. Job Fairs - offered by law schools, student organizations, professional associations (ask about them in Career Services)
- C. Full-time, part-time, summer and per diem job listings - openings listed in Career Services or on-line for students to apply directly; good opportunities, not as competitive as on-campus recruiting

Level II: Identifying Unadvertised Positions

This method requires significantly more effort up front, but it can be very effective. It involves utilizing many of the available resources to target potential employers, writing effective, targeted resumes and cover letters, contacting employers directly and always following up to increase responses. Identifying organizations and developing effective strategies and approaches to reach those organization are the keys to an effective job search at this level.

Sending Resumes with cover letters inquiring about possible openings

- A. Targeted Mailings - forwarding your resume to employers in specific geographic and areas of legal practice, alumni of your law school or college, or members of relevant organizations are excellent examples of a targeted mailing. This method, also called a self-directed, targeted job search, generally also requires targeted cover letters. It should not be confused with a mass mailing, which is simply mailing hundreds of letters to all firms or employers in a geographic area with no specific focus or target.

Note: It is important to get a name of someone to address your cover letter to if possible; check their web site, the NALP directory if they are a large firm, or call if you are otherwise unable to identify the person to whom you should apply (a hiring attorney, recruiting coordinator, or other person in charge of hiring).

- B. Follow up - (via telephone) if you do not hear from the employer within approximately two weeks, you should call to make sure they received your application and possibly to ask for a status update.
- C. Names, addresses and telephone numbers - can be obtained through sources such as employer web sites, Lexis, Westlaw, Martindale-Hubbell, regional directories, membership lists, phone books, alumni directories.

Apply directly to employers by contacting them (via telephone or in person)

- can be very successful if properly prepared - thorough research is required
- depends on type of position, area of law, type of organization

Contact your Career Services office

- can provide resources and services to help identify potential employers through on-campus recruiting and job fair records, print resources including directories, and counseling
- will help you learn to write effective resumes and cover letters, develop and practice successful interviewing skills, and conduct an effective job search

Contact executive search firms specializing in legal employment

- not a useful option for a first job
- may be helpful only if you have extensive, relevant experience
- search firms contact employers for you so you give up control of the process

Level III: Creative Job Seeking

Develop contacts by soliciting information about your field from people who:

1. Know a great deal about your field because they're in it; or,
2. Would have the power to hire you or could recommend you if they knew of an opening.

Premises about the Job Market - remember, most jobs (80%) are not advertised. Employers prefer to ask their colleagues or rely upon people they know to fill their vacancies.

Premises about the Job Seeker - needs contacts to get a job. Probably does not know very much (or enough) about the field he or she is considering. Should be looking for a job that would maximally satisfy and challenge him or her.

Approach - develop contacts by soliciting information about your field of interest from people who know a great deal about the field because they're in it and might have the authority to hire you or would recommend you if they knew of an opening.

Career Services Office

- practice panels - learn about areas of law, work settings; develop contacts and keep in touch
- workshops and individual counseling appointments - develop skills needed to create and utilize networking and informational interviewing techniques

Part-time positions, externships, clinics, internships, temporary agencies

- gain experience and make contacts
- form relationships with specialists in the legal field
- make inside contacts at firms/organizations and possibly move into full time openings - they get to know you and your work, you get to learn about them

Pro Bono programs, non-profit organizations, other volunteer opportunities

- provides opportunity to develop legal skills while helping others
- meet professionals practicing in the organizations for which you would like to work
- get involved and show your commitment to an area of practice

Self-employment (starting a solo practice)

- generally requires some knowledge about law and small business management
- advantage: independence
- disadvantage: risky, high start up costs

Networking and Informational Interviewing (see next section on “Networking and Informational Interviewing”)