

Job Search Strategies for the "Rest of Us"

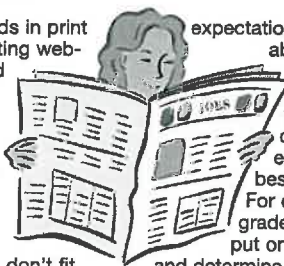
By Joan Bibelhausen

Look at the job ads in print and on proliferating websites, and buried somewhere in the fine print is the inevitable request for "superior academic credentials." Recruiter notices will add "national" or "top ten" law school. Most of us don't fit that profile and we're good lawyers nonetheless. Here are some steps that should be part of your strategy whether you have an academic pedigree or whether you're one of the rest of us.

1. **Make the decision.** Commit to changing jobs and to the work that is necessary to accomplish it. You are responsible for this entire process. Understand why you are moving and determine what must be changed. If you are disappointed or grieving about your circumstances, acknowledge it and get help to work through it, if necessary.

2. **Assess yourself realistically.** Knowing your abilities, values, and interests, and being familiar with the circumstances in which you do your best work will help you to communicate your unique features and benefits. What do YOU want? (As lawyers, we sometimes forget that it's OK to be happy.) Then create your personal mission statement for those inside and beyond your target market.

3. **Assess the market.** Where is there a need for what you offer and how might you have to change to get a job? The answer can extend to such things as additional training and experience as well as whether your



expectations are reasonable. Look at factors that you feel might limit you and figure out how to present them in the best possible light.

For example, if your grades aren't stellar, put on your lawyer hat and determine the best way to confidently present what you've got. Did you improve over time? Did you have a few bad grades that affected your average? Did you perform better in skills or substantive areas that match your target? Don't make excuses, show you're not afraid to talk about it, and move on.

4. **Write your résumé.** Create communications materials that accurately describe you in ways that are attractive to your targets. You have up to 45 seconds to make an impression. Be direct, be specific, and prioritize your achievements.

5. **Make a plan, set quantifiable goals, and keep records.** How much time will you spend each week? How many job-related contacts will you make? Share your plan and goals with others.

6. **Start developing your market.** Define and research specific employers in which you are interested. Talk to your networks—those you already have and those you must develop. They will give you information and leads based on the information you provide, so focus on what they know.

7. **Talk to employers.** These are the people you really want to connect with and you will be more effective if your network has led you there.

8. **Don't neglect the obvious sources, and use them appropriately.** Read ads and talk to recruiters but recognize that most jobs come from personal contacts. Use your law school career services office. Get involved in bar and other associations and volunteer for activities that will enable you to meet the most people.

9. **Interview and consider job offers.** Be sure that you interview well. Understand what is negotiable and what is not.

10. **Start your new job.** Give this step as much consideration as any other. First impressions are critical. Know how you will begin and remember to thank those who helped you get there. Chances are you'll need them again and if they know they made a difference for you, they'll be there.

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For more info and advice on career options, visit Career Counsel, the ABA Career Resources Center, at www.abanet.org/careercounsel.

READY RESOURCES

Objection Overruled: Overcoming Obstacles in the Lawyer Job Search. 2000. PC #V009000B. ABA Career Resources Center.

Changing Jobs: A Handbook for Lawyers in the New Millennium, Third Edition. 1999. PC #511-0425. Law Practice Management Section members receive a discounted price.

To order, call the ABA Service Center at 800/285-2221 or order online at www.ababooks.org.

Sleep for Better Job Performance

By Julie Minder

Lawyers have grown accustomed to functioning in work environments of high stress and anxiety. For many of us, the stresses of our daily lives interfere with our ability to sleep well, or we forego opportunities for sleep to catch up on our billable hours.

Chronic sleep deprivation, however, comes at a price higher than many of us realize, resulting in decreased cognitive ability and memory, and boosting the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Reducing your nighttime sleep by as little as one and a half hours for just one night could result in significant reductions in performance and daytime alertness by almost one third. Sleep deprivation may also lead to an inability to judge just how tired you actually are. You may consider your chronic sleep-deprivation normal and be unable to detect your slower reaction time and poor memory. In the long run, your job performance may be suffering and you're too tired to detect it.

Below are some tips for getting rest each night:

- Develop a pre-sleep ritual to break the connection between the stress of your daily life and bedtime. If you work right up to the minute you turn off the light, your body doesn't have sufficient opportunity to transition into a relaxing sleep.
- Don't look at the clock while you're trying to fall asleep. It compounds your anxiety and may keep you awake longer.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, which can increase the number of times you awaken during the night.
- Try to maintain a consistent sleep schedule averaging about eight hours of sleep nightly. Don't have the time? Catching a few extra hours of sleep on the weekends can minimize the effects of sleep deprivation during the week.



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BORED? HOW TO RE-ENERGIZE YOUR PRACTICE

By Heather D. Jefferson

We've all been there, sitting at our desks daydreaming about anything other than the practice of law. Beautiful spring weather is calling us outside to the golf course or a ball game. Your attention starts to drift away from the stack of work on your desk. Usually, you can re-energize yourself and your practice with a few easy steps.

1. **Spring clean your workspace.** Take 30 minutes or so to organize those piles on your desk, file papers, and toss completed reading material. Organizing

can provide a sense of accomplishment that can get you back on track.

2. **Get past the procrastination.** A looming project or court deadline can drain your energy and keep you from making progress. Completing a task you keep putting off may, in fact, re-energize you to tackle the many other matters that are awaiting your attention.

3. **Attend a local bar association event or CLE program.** Gathering with your colleagues to discuss your substantive area of practice may provide the intellectual and creative spark needed

to re-energize you. A seminar on recent developments or a brown bag lunch with your colleagues may provide social interaction and conversation on the "big picture" of your practice area.

4. **Take a client to lunch or a ball game.** Getting to know your client beyond the legal issues you research will add a personal interest to your work. You will begin to see and identify with your client and transfer that interest when working on the matter. This also works if you are a young associate with no client contact yet. Have lunch with the partner who assigns you work. Discuss the firm, your assignments, and get to know the partner's personal side.

Legal work involves so many details that lawyers lose sight of the big picture. Often just stepping back to see the value you provide will re-energize you. If you suspect that there is a deeper level of dissatisfaction with your practice, however, seek the advice of a mentor or a practice manager associated with your local bar association. You may want to reevaluate your substantive area, law firm, or career choice.

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