

SEARCHING FOR OPPORTUNITIES

JOB SEARCHING

A job search is a marathon, not a sprint. It needs to be approached with professionalism and endurance. The process begins, at least on some level, on the first day of law school and continues for many until after the passage of the state bar exam. Law school is demanding, and academic performance can be fundamental to one's ultimate success. A well-developed career and professional development plan is essential to serving the ultimate goal of most law students—to be a practicing attorney.

There are many components of a job search, and every individual will go about the process of securing employment in a different way. Our goal is to provide some recommended job search strategies, specifically by highlighting the importance of networking, and the opportunities provided by job fairs and conferences. At the end of this section, you will find a self-assessment to help you identify your strengths and determine what you value most in a career. Taking the time to consider what you value is essential for finding professional satisfaction.

EXPANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

Only about 20% of jobs that exist in the United States are advertised in newspapers, trade magazines, or on the Internet. The other 80% are in the “hidden” job market and are never advertised. That's why it's so important to let as many people as possible know that you are searching for employment. This technique is called **networking** and requires that you interact with people in a variety of ways. Some students may choose to begin communicating and networking online, but there is no substitute for in-person communications.

Networking isn't always about finding a job. It's about making connections with people who can give you valuable information, provide you with a different perspective on a problem you encounter, share new ideas, or maybe someday hire you.

Personal contacts can be the most valuable resource during your job search. People who are familiar with an industry can be the most beneficial, especially if they are currently working within the area in which you want to secure employment. They can provide you with even more contacts through their professional circles. Your personal contacts should include:

- ✓ Office of Professional Development advisors and staff
- ✓ Faculty and Administration
- ✓ Classmates
- ✓ Alumni
- ✓ Family and friends

Many students find that networking happens naturally when they are participating in something they enjoy. So join the local or state bar association and actively participate in a section group, or volunteer with a community organization, be it law-related or not. (Many attorneys are active in community volunteer organizations.)

REMEMBER – Networking does not mean asking for a job. Instead you are making contacts with knowledgeable people for the purpose of sharing information and gathering leads.

TIPS FOR EXPANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

- **Let everyone know your interests!** That way, when someone hears of an opportunity in one of your niche areas, they will think of you and pass it your way.
- **Remember that everyone is important!** Never assume a person is not a valuable resource in your job search. You may be surprised at the sources of many valuable job leads.
- **Help other people get what they want.** It's an old saying, but one that is often true, "What goes around, comes around". If you happen upon a job opportunity that is not up your alley, but could work for someone you know, pass it on, and hopefully others will do the same for you.
- **Make it easy for your contacts to help you.** Explain exactly what it is you're looking for. "Do you know anyone in the Public Defender's office?" is much easier for a contact to answer than "do you know of any jobs that would be good for me?"
- **Know your professors.** It's easy to show up to class and then leave, but professors often have many community and business contacts, especially in their area of expertise. In addition, it is vital to develop a relationship with professors as you will (almost certainly) need their endorsement as a reference at some point.
- **Take advantage of unpaid internships and volunteer opportunities.** It doesn't matter what you do, so long as you are putting yourself out there and meeting people who wouldn't have otherwise encountered. This will also help you gain valuable experience.
- **Always follow-up with new contacts.** Send an e-mail, or make a telephone call within 48 hours of meeting someone new. This makes you look professional because it shows that you follow through on things and it reduces the possibility of your new contact forgetting you.
- **Stay organized.** A new contact will do you no good if you can't find them later – try to keep a record of those you meet as well as when/when you met and what was discussed.
- **Say thank you to those who assist you in your job search.** Never forget to thank all your sources. A simple thank you note is appropriate in most situations.

OUTREACH TO LAW ALUMNI

Many students have found Toledo Law Alumni to be a great resource. The key to interacting with law alumni is having appropriate goals and expectations for the interaction and knowing how best to approach them.

NATIONAL ALUMNI NETWORK ON-LINE:

- *The College of Law maintains a list of law alumni across the country that are willing to help you build your professional network and learn about the practice of law. This resource is available at: <http://www.utlaw.edu/alumni/referral/index.asp>*

DO'S AND DON'TS WHEN INTERACTING WITH LAW ALUMNI

- *DO be at your professional best in any form of communication.*
- *Do send an introductory letter or e-mail indicating your interest in learning and ask for a good time to follow-up.*
- *DON'T ask if they can give you a job.*
- *DO be mindful of their schedule/time-constraints.*

SAMPLE NETWORKING E-MAIL/LETTER

ROBERT BRANDON

October 30, 2009

Mr. George Allen
Wilson & Johnson
123 5th Avenue
Naples, Florida 34102

Mr. Allen:

I am a May 2009 graduate of the University of Toledo College of Law, and I received your name and contact information from the Office of Professional Development in the College of Law.

As an alumnus who is established in Naples, I am hopeful you can give me advice on relocating to your city. In February, I will sit for the Florida bar examination, and I plan to move to Naples shortly thereafter. My frequent visits to Southwest Florida over the years, and my experiences with the welcoming people, have confirmed there is no place I would rather begin my career.

I would welcome a chance to meet with you to discuss your practice and thoughts on work in Naples. I will be in Naples for a few days immediately after the bar examination. If we are unable to meet, I would greatly value the opportunity to speak over the phone. Thank you in advance for your time and assistance. As someone excited and anxious about starting his career, I truly appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Robert Brandon

Job Fairs & Conferences

Job Fairs are designed to give you the opportunity to meet and talk with many employers at one convenient location. Information on a variety of job fairs and networking events are posted under the programs and events section of the Office of Professional Development website. (See www.utlaw.edu/students/career/programs)

Before the Fair

- Find out in advance what firms will be represented at the fair. Research the employers you want to meet to help focus your energy.
- Have one or two questions in mind for each employer. The questions should reflect your career interests and the research you have done.
- Know what you want in a job; i.e. location, small, large, public or private, etc.
- Target your professional goals toward the companies that interest you.
- Keep your expectations realistic. Job fairs are for making contacts with other professionals, not getting on-the-spot job offers.
- Be prepared to fill out application materials at the fair and prepare multiple copies of your error-free resume.
- Bring a notepad and pen for taking notes and writing down names.
- Be prepared to discuss goals, skills, and abilities in a brief interview situation.

During the Fair

- Dress professionally. How you look determines how others perceive you.
- Talk to your colleagues about opportunities; they may have additional contacts.
- Keep a record of the positions you have interviewed for. Names, business cards, position descriptions, brochures and catalogues are helpful for future reference.
- Be professional and courteous at all times. You never know who you are talking with.
- Never bad-mouth colleagues or other organizations.
- Collect as many business cards as you can and use them to make notes specific to that employer or your conversation with that person.

After the Fair

- Send thank you letters, follow-up letters, and resumes after the job fair in reference to positions that interest you.
- Don't stop networking after the job fair! Continue your job search utilizing the many resources available through the Office of Professional Development.

Popular Career Fairs

- Midwest Public Interest Law Career Conference (February)
- Loyola Patent Law Interview Program (July)
- Cook County Bar Association Minority Job Fair (July)
- Equal Justice Works Public Interest Law Career Fair and Conference (October)
- American Intellectual Property Lawyers Association Job Fair (October)

JOB SEARCH QUICK TIPS

- ***A Job Search is time consuming!*** It's not uncommon to spend 20 to 40 hours per week on your job search for many months at a time. Contact the companies you want to work for AFTER you do your research.
- ***Organization is critical!*** An appointment calendar and binder will help you track your company and contact information along with advertisements and correspondence.
- ***Fine-tune your resume.*** Resumes are personal advertisements sent to employers for the purpose of securing an interview. Office of Professional Development will be happy to preview your resume.
- ***Check-In with the Office of Professional Development.*** The Office can notify you of upcoming job fairs and events. Job postings and information on various career websites can be found through our office.
- ***Always be professional.*** You never know who may have input into a hiring decision. Everyone is worthy of your respect and professionalism (there are no "little people"!)
- ***Utilize as many job searching tools as possible.*** From newspapers to the Internet, it is essential to have multiple resources working for you at the same time.
- ***Maximize face-to-face contact (NETWORK!).*** Don't rely solely on passive means to find a job (newspapers, the Internet, etc.).
- ***Practice your telephone skills.*** Messages should be short and focused. Learn to be gracious, even if you have become tired and frustrated – respond calmly and respectfully in all circumstances. Scripting before you call is helpful.
- ***NEVER exaggerate, inflate, or lie.*** Accurate representation of your skills, experiences and abilities is essential.
- ***Always have back-up plans.*** Remember that your skills are transferable and you may be marketable in a variety of places.
- ***Be patient, yet persistent.*** It can take from 6 to 9 months to secure professional employment.
- ***Your career search may end when you accept a position. It is important to you're your networking contacts fresh for future opportunities and to do what you can to help others in their search for information and resources.***

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment is a process through which you become aware of your:

- strengths and weaknesses
- skills and abilities
- interests and values
- goals and aspirations

Self-assessment is important in identifying your strengths and matching them to positions. It gives you the ability to determine what you value most in a career. It gives you practice in articulating your background in a persuasive, coherent manner so you are well prepared for interviewing.

Take the time to make a list of your likes and dislikes:

Reflect on all the jobs, internships and volunteer experiences you've had. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What stands out? - What is your preferred work environment? 	LIKES	DISLIKES	

Think about activities you participated in and the classes you took at school.

How did you contribute as a team member and what were your roles in campus or volunteer organizations?	
What did you learn about yourself and what skills did you develop?	
What motivated you to excel in a certain project or as a leader?	
How were you able to solve problems and/or conflicts or how you might react differently to them in the future?	

Consider your most important achievements, both personal and academic.

Do your achievements relate or translate to a specific career path?	
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Answering these questions and assessing your conclusions can give you a sense of direction to guide you throughout your job search. Determining where you want to go and what you have to offer will help set parameters for your job search and for articulating your strengths in interviews.