

Making it Happen: Headhunters' Perspectives on the Job Search

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Panelists

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Market Conditions and Your Skills

- Layoffs and unease have resulted in a torrent of resumes for the few open position in law firms, funds or corporations
- Think broadly about how you can use your *tangible legal skills* in more active areas of the market

Major Markets

- New York Metro Area
- Chicago
- Los Angeles

Goals: Self-Assessment

- What are you looking for?
 - A job to pay the bills
 - An opportunity to advance your career
- Specifics:
 - Work-life balance
 - Compensation
 - Geography
- Where can you compromise and where must you avoid compromise?

Skills: Self-Assessment

- Be realistic – **The Bill Parcells Rule:**
“You are what your record says you are”
- Now is not the time to think of your Dream Job
- Now is the time to consider how to continue your career
- Keep it simple but think expansively:
 - What is your practice area(s)?
 - What industries do you work with?
 - Do you have unique skills that are valued by the market (such as language skills)?
 - What do you like to do?
- Use your network to see in what other areas your skill set may apply

Re-Tooling

- Re-tooling is more likely where skill sets can be used in a new area
 - *M&A Lawyers are working on buying or selling assets in bankruptcy*
 - *Real Estate Associates have learned to do workouts*
- Re-tooling from one practice area to another without transferable experience is difficult in any market
 - It's easier to do within a law firm
 - It's easier to do for Junior Associates
- Re-tooling Challenges for Mid and Senior Level Lawyers

How to describe a layoff?

- In this market there is less of a stigma to being laid off
- Nonetheless, as with any difficult issue, you need a concise, understandable explanation that will reflect well on you
- Your “story” must match that of your references
- Different types of layoffs
 - Easy – My department was eliminated
 - Moderate – There’s been a general work slowdown at my firm and my seniority level was eliminated
 - Difficult – When your firm has announced “performance-based” layoffs
- Prior reviews and references matter

So What Do I Do?

- **The Coach K Rule: “Believe that the loose ball that you are chasing has your name on it”**

- You will find a job if you get:
 - *The Right Information*
 - Tailored Resumes, Deal Sheets and Cover Letters
 - Emails for Networking and Informational Interviewing
 - *To the Right People*
 - Your Network
 - *At the Right Time*
 - Your job is looking for a job

The Right Information

- Preliminary Research
 - Use your experience, research skills and network to determine what is available and what various types of jobs require
- Determine Your Theme
 - I have the skills to do this because...
- Do the hiring person's thinking
 - Once you have a base of knowledge from which to act, you can make your case – the hiring person will not brainstorm for you

The Right Information

■ Resumes

- Read in 20-60 seconds
- Emphasize skills needed for particular job
- Format
- Descriptions
- What to leave in?
- What to take out?
- Deal Sheets or Description of Cases

■ Cover Letters

- The cliché problem
- Solutions
 - Target to particular job
 - Specify you want the position
 - Say why you are leaving your job
 - Storytelling

The Right People: Who is in Your Network?

- **Everyone** is in Your Network
 - High School, College and Law School friends *and* all other alumni
 - Family
 - Neighbors
 - Prior colleagues *and* alumni of each place you've ever worked
 - Anyone who you choose to contact
 - For example, if you read an article and think it useful to contact whomever is quoted, you should do so
 - You'll be pleasantly surprised

How to Network Effectively?

- The Good News: People want to help others and are flattered when you ask for advice
- Informational Interviewing
 - See following sample introductory emails
 - Never ask for a job; ask for advice instead

Sample Introductory Email 1

Mr. Smith,

I hope this finds you well. As you may remember, we worked together on the Gigantic Project transaction last fall. I am writing as I am interested in the real estate private equity fund market in New York.

[Quick sentence on your experience]. Although I have enjoyed my tenure with [your current job], I am doing my research into alternatives given the current market. With your career path and experience in the area, I would like to know if you may be able to offer me your advice.

For your reference I have attached a copy of my resume^[1]. I would greatly appreciate your time in speaking with me. Please let me know if and when you are available for a short call.

Thank you and best regards,

[1] This resume should be targeted to the practice of the email recipient.

Sample Introductory Email 2

Mr. Smith,

I hope this finds you well. I am writing at the suggestion of Alan Surchin, with whom I went to Duke Law.

[Quick sentence on your experience]. Although I have enjoyed my tenure with [your current job], I am doing my research into alternatives given the current market. I am interested in information about bankruptcy and restructuring careers in New York and would like to know if you may be able to offer me your advice.

For your reference I have attached a copy of my resume^[1]. I would greatly appreciate your time in speaking with me. I will contact you within the next week to follow up.

Thank you and best regards,

[1] This resume should be targeted to the practice of the email recipient.

Sample Introductory Email 3

Mr. Smith,

I hope this finds you well. My name is Alan Surchin, a fellow alum from UVA (Class of 89). I am interested in information about white collar criminal practices in New York and, given your experience in the practice area, would like to know if you may be able to offer me your advice.

[Quick sentence on your experience]. Although I have enjoyed my tenure with [your current job], I would prefer to focus my practice on white collar work.

For your reference I have attached a copy of my resume [\[1\]](#). I would greatly appreciate your time in speaking with me.

Thank you and best regards,

[\[1\]](#) This resume should be targeted to the practice of the email recipient.

Following up

- The importance of following up an email with a phone call
 - How to end a call? Referrals and name dropping
- The importance of saying "Thank You"
- The importance of keeping in touch
 - Use social networking sites such as LinkedIn or Facebook
- Keeping Track
 - The who and when
 - Your conversation
- Deepening the relationship
 - If you can be helpful to your new contacts, share information with them. They are more likely to reciprocate.

Networking Where you Work

- For junior associates in particular it is important to avoid getting isolated in your practice group, especially if that group is inactive
- Network – meet for lunch or coffee or just drop by someone's office – with those attorneys in other, active practice groups. See how you can help. This may be the opportunity to save your job at the firm if layoffs come. It can also put you in the front of the line should the firm "re-tool" existing associates for more active practice areas

Networking with Recruiters

■ The Good

- A recruiter's job is to gather intelligence on the market every day
 - Accurate view of the market in your practice area
 - Accurate view of what you can do with your skills
- Advisor
- Advocate with his clients

■ The Not-so-good

- Very few jobs on the associate firm or in-house level now
- Instinct of many recruiters is to send you out to as many places as possible

■ So....

- Ask what recent (past 6 months) placements the recruiter has made
- Better off getting referred to a recruiter by a trusted friend

The Internet & Job Boards

■ Pro's

- Great source of information on economic activity
- Look for "leading indicators"
 - If a law firm just added space, they may need to hire
 - If a firm just added a practice group, they may need support

■ Cons

- Internet submissions generate too many resumes for hiring firm to manage
- Look for alternatives to sending your resume via the Internet
 - Look to see how you are connected to the company via LinkedIn and similar social networking tools

Interviewing Effectively

- Two Major Questions
 - Why are you looking?
 - Why should I hire you?
- Your Questions
 - If I started today, what can I help you with?
 - Additional questions reflect your knowledge of employer
- Your preparation
 - Extensive but genuine; don't treat information like trivia
 - Find out with whom you're interviewing and learn their backgrounds
 - Research social networking sites to see if you have any friends or contacts in common
- ***The interview is about satisfying the employer's needs, not advancing the candidate's needs. Accepting a job offer is about advancing the candidate's needs. Therefore, focus your interview on how you can help the employer.***

Special Issues with Senior Lawyers

■ Obstacles

- Reporting into someone junior to you
- Having “too much” experience

■ Solutions

- Networking your way around problems: the importance of having an internal advocate during your candidacy
- How to appear “non-threatening”

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