

How Do I Get My First Legal Job? **The #1 Secret for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams**

At last! The answer you've all been waiting for (so sorry we made you wait this long) – drum roll, please – the absolute best way to find a job you will love is...NETWORKING!

What Is Networking?

Networking involves contacting people you know, or with whom you have some connection, to request assistance with your job search. These individuals do not need to have a job to offer you, and they need not be particularly high-ranking or influential professionals. Any professional contact is helpful if she can provide you with advice and information about a particular practice area, career path, or job market and introduce you to additional contacts.

Why Is Networking Important?

There are several reasons why building your network of professional contacts is vital to your job search and your career. However, one reason stands above the rest – networking is *the most effective method of finding a job*. Many students report that they secured their part-time, summer, and permanent post-graduate positions through their professional contacts. The number of law students, and attorneys, who obtain their jobs through networking makes sense when you consider that the majority of positions in the employment market go unadvertised in the “Hidden Job Market.”

The “Hidden Job Market”

The simple fact is that most employment opportunities are not advertised through traditional means. This requires finding creative ways to discover opportunities that are available and are a good match for you. You may have heard that over 80% of all job opportunities are not advertised and what you find on the Internet and in the newspaper classified ads is only the tip of the iceberg. While the hidden job market may or may not be as massive as many believe, the truth is that it does exist, it is large, and you must be aware of it!

The existence of the hidden job market means that responding to job advertisements on the Internet, in newspapers, job listing binders, recruitment programs, and sending out targeted mailings is only *part* of a complete job search. *The best way to learn about unadvertised positions is to form a network of people who will get you connected to the job opportunities you want.*

What Should You Expect from Networking?

It is very important that you have realistic expectations before you begin developing professional relationships. When networking, *it is reasonable to expect:*

- Advice
- Information about career fields, the market, and hiring trends
- Feedback about a resume, cover letter, and interviewing skills
- Assistance in formulating an action plan for a specific field or organization
- Referrals to others who might assist you
- Professional mentoring (mentoring refers to a developmental relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced partner referred to as a mentee or protégé).

It is not reasonable to expect your contacts to find you a job. You are sure to turn people off when the only question you pose is: “Do you know of any openings?” Not only will you likely receive a negative response, but it is possible that you will lose an opportunity to establish a lasting relationship or gain other valuable information.

How Do I Start Networking?

Informational interviewing is one way to build your network of professional contacts, and is the process through which career planners and job seekers learn about different areas and types of legal practice, as well as career opportunities. Informational interviewing can provide:

- Insights into a career field of interest including skills needed, entry-level positions, employment trends, job opportunities, etc.
- A realistic view of the work world and career field you are investigating
- Assistance with academic planning and ideas for volunteer, summer, part-time, and internship opportunities related to specific fields
- Professional contacts and increased confidence in interacting with professionals
- A better chance to “be in the right place at the right time”
- A foot in the door
- Information about special concerns (i.e., salaries, part-time or flexible hours, minority issues) that may not be appropriate to raise during a formal employment interview

Often, one is able to gather information through informational interviewing that cannot or should not be discussed in a formal job interview. For example, during an informational interview with a judge, it is appropriate to ask exactly what interning in his/her chambers may involve; however, if you are at a formal interview with a judge, you are expected to know the duties required of a law clerk.

The Dos and Don'ts of Informational Interviewing

DO...	DO NOT...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO conduct a self-assessment exercise prior to informational interviewing to explore your interests, values, and skills so you will be better prepared to discuss them with others.• DO be honest with yourself and your contacts regarding your reasons for wanting to talk to them. An informational interview is not a job interview.• DO make appropriate contact. To introduce yourself, either call or write to the prospective contact. Ask for 20-30 minutes of their time. It is often more appropriate to write an email or letter in situations where you do not know the person well.• DO be prepared. Do your homework before meeting with the interviewee: research the individual (by “googling” her), as well as her current and former employers so that you know something about her background, practice area, and career path. Create a list of questions that highlights what you have in common and what you are hoping to learn from her.• DO dress as if it were a job interview.• DO follow-up. Always write a thank-you letter. Keep the person up-to-date on your job search. Remember to let them know when you do find what you are looking for.• DO keep good records. Record details about your conversation so you can keep track of your contacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO NOT ask for a job. Information is what you are seeking and is the only thing you should ask for.• DO NOT be late or skip the appointment.• DO NOT forget to send a thank-you note after the meeting, and remember to follow-up.• DO NOT stay longer than 30 minutes unless your contact indicates that it is okay.

What To Ask In An Informational Interview

Ask about the individual's employer, practice area, background and how she got where she is now, for advice for someone at your career stage, what she sees for the future in her particular career field, and for names of additional people with whom you can meet.

Sample questions are:

- How did you get your job at (organization name)?
- Were you an intern at (organization name) before you were hired full-time/permanently?
- Did you work or intern at other organizations before landing your current job? If so, where? How did you get those positions? Where was your first job?
- Did you have particular skills/background in the area in which you are working?
- How have you advanced within the organization? Does your organization promote from within? How long did it take you to make partner? How do you envision your future career path?
- What exactly does a (area of specialty) attorney do? What are the different aspects of the job? What does your typical day look like?
- As a judicial clerk, how do you spend your day? Do you get to spend time with the judge, perform research, or attend court?
- What is the philosophy of your organization? Does your organization have employee training and support?
- What does your organization look for when hiring new attorneys or interns? What traits does a successful applicant possess?
- How is the job market for (career field) in (geographic location)? Are there areas of the law in (geographic location) that are considered "hot" or "up and coming" these days?
- Are there any professional associations I should join that would put me in contact with other women attorneys/minority attorneys/career changers/international attorneys?
- What is the typical salary range for a (position) with a (small/medium/large organization) in (geographic location)?
- **Do you know of any other people to contact who might be able to assist me with information?**
- Would you review my resume and provide feedback? Don't forget to follow-up by updating your resume, incorporating the suggestions, and sending her a copy.

What to Do After an Informational Interview: Follow-Up

Always send a simple thank-you letter.

Example:

"Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me yesterday. I appreciate the information and advice you provided about the market for _____ attorneys in New York. I will follow-up with Mr. Smith as you suggested and

I have already called for information about the Women’s Bar Association. Again, thank you for your time.”

Do not forget to let them know what happens to you.

Example:

“I am writing to thank you for your generous assistance during my recent job search. I met with Mr. Smith and he knew of several job possibilities. I interviewed with Larry Green at Blue, Clark & Jones and I was offered a position in their _____ division. Thank you again for your help. I look forward to seeing you at the next Women’s Bar Association meeting.”

Informational Interviewing: Be Organized

To ensure that you are getting the most out of the effort you have put into networking and informational interviewing, you should be sure to keep detailed notes on each and every one of your contacts. To do so, you must be organized and meticulous. The following Networking Log is one way to make sure that you don’t forget a contact.

Contact Name	Employer	Position	Contact Information	How You Met	Follow-Up 1	Follow-Up 2
Jane Smith	John & Doe P.C.	Associate in Patent Law Group	John & Doe P.C. 1000 J St. NW Washington, DC 20001 jane.smith@john-doe.com (202) 123-4567	03/03/2009 at AIPLA Spring Meeting workshop on patent law policy	Sent thank you note on 03/15/2009 and invited her to coffee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04/01/2009 Coffee at Starbucks • Discussed practicing patent law in law firm; her former job practicing law in Russia • Sent thank you note 04/02/2009
Amanda Friendly	World Trade Organization	Patent Policy Analyst	WTO 2500 J St. NW, Washington, DC 20002 amanda@wto.org (202) 987-6543	03/31/2009 at DC Bar CLE titled “International Patent Law”	Scheduled lunch for 06/20/2009	

You should update your Networking Log every time you make a new contact or interact with one of your existing contacts. Be sure to note each time you correspond (e.g., by email, phone or letter) and meet (e.g., for a scheduled lunch or coffee, by coincidence at an event) with each of your contacts and write down what you discussed.

You should review your Networking Log every week to see which contacts you have not been in touch with lately and re-connect with them. You can always tell them something about yourself (e.g., you earned an A on a paper, you had a job interview, etc.), something about them (e.g., you saw they were quoted in the ABA Journal), or something about their practice area (e.g., you saw that Congress just passed a new law in their field).

The Bottom Line: Four Easy Steps to Networking Success

1. Identify “Networkee.” Select someone that does something you are truly interested in.

2. Approach. If at a reception or other in-person event, approach the person and wait for a break in the conversation. If you are trying to set up a future conversation – good for you! Just call, email or write the person and ask if they have a few minutes to talk to you about their career. For a sample invitation to network, please see Appendix B.

3. Converse. Be yourself and let your personality shine through, *but you need to have three things prepared in advance:*

- First, a pitch about who you are. For example: “I am a first-year law student who is really interested in going into corporate law. I would love to hear more about how you started your career.”
- Second, questions to keep the conversation going. This includes questions about the person’s career path, education, work, organization and any advice they have for you. For a list of suggested networking questions, please see Appendix C.
- Third, when the conversation is wrapping up, ask your networkee if they know anyone else that you might be able to learn more about _____ (fill in the blank with whatever you are interested in!) from.

4. Follow Up. Following up is crucial and it entails more than a simple thank-you after your chat (although that is essential!).

- Send a thank-you note or email to your networkee. This serves two purposes: 1) they’ll understand how much you appreciate their time and therefore, they may be more inclined to put you in touch with some of their contacts; and 2) it will ensure they have your contact information so that they can easily get in touch with you when an awesome opportunity comes up! For sample thank-you note language, please see Appendix K.
- Keep them apprised of your job search efforts, particularly if they suggested you meet with other people or apply for certain positions. Definitely let them know when you accept a job – you may be able to help *them* in the future!
- If you come across something that relates to your conversation, forward it to your networkee – it will remind them of you and it will underscore your interest in a particular legal topic.